

PROBLEMS OF LITERARY REFORM

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IN

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MODERN CHINA

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PROBLEMS OF LITERARY REFORM

IN

MODERN CHINA

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.  
in the University of London,  
Faculty of Arts

by

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June, 1955.

## SYNOPSIS

The period following the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911 was one of rapid economic and social change in China. It created conditions favourable for the development of the New Culture Movement which started during the Great War, and reached its climax in 1919. Two of the basic features of this movement were the introduction of ideas from the West and the reassessment of Chinese traditions from the standpoint of those ideas. The Literary Revolution was an integral part of the New Culture Movement, which, after an initial period of discussion and debate, undertook the task of building a new Chinese literature with a new humanist or revolutionary content, and with forms copied from, or inspired by, Western literature. The problems which this task of construction involved were many and varied. During the next few years the literature of many periods and countries was introduced into China, and the new writers experimented with numerous forms. Ultimately, those which accorded most closely with the needs of Chinese literature, and especially with the social conditions and demands of the Chinese revolution, which had a determining influence on it, were successfully adopted, and fused with the Chinese tradition. The writer who best succeeded in mastering these problems of selection and synthesis was Lu Hsün, who, while benefiting from the example of Western writers, especially Russian, at the same time retained a Chinese character and style, not only through the subject matter of his work, but also from his knowledge and keen appreciation of old Chinese literature.

## PREFACE

The period leading up to and immediately following the May 4th Movement (1919) has been neglected hitherto by western students of Chinese affairs. Yet in many ways it marked a turning point in China's modern history. This applies to the literary history of the period as much as to the history of institutions. When this study was begun in 1951 there was only one History of Modern Chinese Literature in a western language (there still is none in English), and very few detailed studies of the social development of the period which are necessary to give a literary history a sure foundation. Since that time the volume of documents on China's response to the West translated and edited by Teng Tsu-yü and J.K. Fairbank has done something to put the period in perspective but there is still a dearth of more detailed studies.

Because of this, the original aim of this thesis, to take the whole of modern Chinese literature and examine ~~it~~ in the light of social developments the way that Chinese writers have begun to create a literature in keeping with the new age, was found to be impracticable. So much of the initial spade-work had still to be done on the social and intellectual history of the period that it was impossible within the time available to do more than examine the first few years of the new literature, that is, the period of 1917 to 1925. It may be that all that has been achieved is a certain clarification of the problems of

the literary history of modern China and an indication of the lines along which future work may be profitable.

I wish to record my gratitude to Professor E.D. Edwards M.A. D.Lit. who has patiently nursed this work from its earliest infancy and given much help and encouragement and also to Professor W. Simon Dr. Phil. D.Lit. to whom I am indebted for a large portion of my sinological training and who has given me a number of useful suggestions. I would also like to thank all colleagues and friends who have given help and advice through the years.

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to describe the main characteristics of the first few years of modern Chinese literature, and to show how they relate to the rapid social and political changes which China was experiencing during the period. During the First World War China's young and still very weak industry began to develop relatively quickly, while at the same time a number of changes occurred in the structure of Chinese society. After the war in 1919, China's political development reached a point at which all the various social classes which formed the basis of the modern revolutionary movement united for the first time in demonstrations against feudal backwardness and foreign encroachments. This movement - the May 4th Movement - is generally taken to mark the beginning of China's modern culture and modern literature. In this study we shall be concerned with the period shortly before and a few years after the May 4th Movement, which both conditioned the birth of the new literature and helped to determine the lines along which it developed.

Modern Chinese literature grew up as part of a broader movement for the regeneration of the whole of China's intellectual and artistic life, usually called the New Culture Movement. One of the basic features of this movement was that it undertook a thorough reassessment of Chinese culture from the point of view of the new ideas which were reaching China from the West. It differed from all previous cultural movements not only in its scope but also in the degree to



1. The movement is also sometimes referred to as the Chinese Renaissance because of features comparable to the European Renaissance. See below, note to Chapter I, p. 1

which it was prepared to accept the new ideas of the West and to reject the Chinese orthodox tradition.

Hitherto it had been the Chinese custom to conduct ideological disputes on the basis of the Chinese classics, and particularly on the Confucian classics. In such controversies, as one writer has remarked, "each school tried to score a point by claiming for itself a sort of apostolic succession from the sages"<sup>1.</sup>, much as argument in medieval and Renaissance times in the West had been couched in terms of theology. Thus it came about that in China each age had its own Confucius, and the leaders of the Reform Movement at the end of the Nineteenth Century, while trying to justify their arguments for a degree of modernisation and reform, expressed their ideas as a matter of course in the form of a reinterpretation of the Chinese classics which would make Confucius (or possibly some other ancient philosopher)<sup>2.</sup> an advocate of progress. K'ang Yu-wei, the leader and inspirer of the movement, was a good example of this. His most remarkable work, the Book of the Great Harmony (Ta-t'ung shu)<sup>3.</sup>, was a kind of Chinese Utopia, compounded of Confucianist, Mohist and Buddhist doctrines, but strongly influenced by egalitarianism and the ideals of the French Revolution. In it he advocated the establishment of democratic government, the abolition of the national state and the family, and declared private property to be the root of all evil. Yet in spite of the idealism and "modern" features of his scheme, he put it forward as the next stage of society as forecast by

1. J. R. Levenson: History and Value: Tensions of Intellectual Choice in Modern China, in The American Anthropologist, Vol. 55, No. 5, Part 2, Memoir No. 75, p. 151. See also the same authors' account of the controversy over the authenticity of the Confucian classics in Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China, pp. 221-223.

2. 康有為

3. 大同書

Confucius, and used a great deal of ingenuity to relate his theories to a particular school of traditional learning.

This feature was not a formal point only. K'ang Yu-wei and his followers, coming from the old landlord-officials, were anxious to preserve to some extent the privileges of their class, and were extremely hostile to revolutionaries - that is, to those who advocated taking practical steps to bring this democracy into reality.

Sun Yat-sen, though starting with ideas not so very different from those of the reformers, soon advanced beyond them in the field of political theory and organization. His advocacy of the method of revolution, though having some precedent in the Mencian theory of popular mandate, was more directly inspired by the French Revolution, especially when the T'ung meng hui<sup>1.</sup> included the phrase Kuo-min ko-ming<sup>2.</sup> (Citizen's Revolution) in its declaration of 1905, and raised the slogans of Liberte, Egalite, Graternite. But Sun Yat-sen was too involved in the political struggle against the Manchus, and his organization was too weak for him to extend his ideas deeply in the cultural field, and even the political movements under his leadership at that time had only limited success. So broad was the front which he managed to piece together against the Manchus that it included scholars who were cultural conservatives, only anxious to rid China of rule by an alien race but not to effect a cultural revolution.

The New Culture Movement, on the other hand, sought to find the fundamental causes of China's weakness in her whole

1. 同盟會

2. 國民革命

political, philosophical, ethical, social and cultural systems, and it launched an attack on various aspects of these which were not merely partially inspired by the new ideas of the West, but took them as its starting point, the base from which the attacks were launched. Here it differed from all the previous reform movements. One observer wrote while the movement was at its height:-

What I would call the final, the really effective step was taken when the Chinese decided to become disciples of the totality of Western thought. And as humility always brings its own reward, they were thereby enabled to become truly masters of that new culture. So far nothing else had been done, but a slavish imitation of externals. Now, by getting at the very kernel of Western life, and by appropriating it, they became independent of it, able henceforth to pursue their cultural work with full freedom on the basis of the best available help from abroad and at the same time on creative lines of their own.<sup>1</sup>

Of course this statement needs much qualification. It was not possible to talk about Western thought as a "totality", and equally impossible to accept it totally. Western civilization and Western thought was extremely complex, owing to its division into classes and nationalities. Moreover, it was not static, but itself also undergoing rapid changes, the most fundamental of which was the Soviet revolution with its basis of socialist thought, which took place before the New Culture Movement reached its climax, and which had a deep influence on it. There was no single doctrine which could be said to represent the "West" as against the "East". It is true that the pioneers of the New Culture Movement did at first regard the ideals of the French Revolution as representing the "West", together with a number of other features of Western society, but they accepted

1. Ph. de Vargas, Some Elements in the Chinese Renaissance, in The New China Review, Vol. IV, No. 3, April-May, 1922, p. 126.

✓

them for their anti-feudal potentialities rather than because of their association with the detail of any particular Western form of society. They were concerned with "freedom" rather than with capitalism. If their ideas were vague and at times inconsistent, it was due to their pioneering enthusiasm. As the movement progressed, however, and particularly after the First World War had displayed the weakness of Western civilization, and the Soviet Revolution had opened up new perspectives, the new intellectuals began to examine Western ideas in more detail. Chinese society had progressed to the stage when Western ideas could grow social roots, and before many years had elapsed these ideas were being applied in the sense implied in our quotation, in a constructive way to the problems of creating a new society and a new culture. The new intellectuals began to fulfil their destiny as the link between the ideas of the West and the social forces in China which gave these ideas their power.

Another qualification must be made to the statement we have quoted. It was not true to say that the Chinese were able to pursue their cultural work with full freedom. Although the New Culture Movement established the intellectual conditions for the new culture to grow, and sowed the seeds for the eventual creation of a favourable environment, that environment was not created immediately, and the cultural history of modern China is linked inextricably with efforts to achieve political emancipation. This will emerge as one of the fundamental factors conditioning the new literature. One advantage which China possessed over most other Oriental countries was that she had not entirely lost



her political independence or been forced by circumstances to take her Western influence from a single country under conditions determined by a colonizing power. Although British influence was paramount in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, it was not exclusive, and China had cultural contact with many countries of Europe as well as with Japan and America. But, nevertheless, the influence of Western education in China, as well as other aspects of foreign control directly and indirectly, created a tendency towards an uncritical acceptance of Western things which hampered the free development of a new Chinese culture, and against which it had to struggle. However, when all these qualifications are taken into consideration, it remains true that China at this time was undergoing a thorough cultural revolution which succeeded in the main in its aims of establishing a new perspective for China's future development in every aspect of her national life, and of commencing the task of reassessing her past from the standpoint of modern ideas.

In this study we are concerned primarily with literature, but because of the ~~total~~ nature of China's cultural revolution it is impossible to consider a survey of modern literary developments in isolation. Accordingly, the first chapter will consider the economic and social developments alluded to above, as well as the non-literary aspects of the New Culture Movement, in order to throw more light on the literary developments of the period. The remaining chapters are an attempt to show how the conditions alluded to above, and described more fully in the first chapter, affected modern Chinese literature up to 1925,

both in determining the main trends of thought and technique, and in the work of one particular writer, Lu Hsün. Lu Hsün has been chosen because he tackled more successfully than his contemporaries the great artistic problems involved in creating a new literature. He has been called, with some justification, the Chinese Gorki, but he was also the Chinese Pushkin and Gogol.

An additional reason for stressing the economic and social developments in modern China is their importance to an understanding of the foreign influences which were predominant in this period. Influence does not take place unless the person influenced is prepared for it. It is not like waves of light which automatically produce a change in anything coming in their path, but rather like wireless waves which need a receiver tuned to pick them up. Its study must be based on the recipient rather than on the transmitter, essential though the latter is. The importance of starting from the internal conditions of a country when assessing foreign influence is stressed by Professor Lukacs in the following way:-

International influences come about by synthesis out of national tendencies, and these, again synthetically, arise from the personal evolution of the writers themselves.....

..... the primary determinents of such influences are the literary requirements of the recipient country. All truly great literature, however much of foreign elements it may absorb, keeps to its own organic line of development, determined by the social and historical conditions in the country which gave it birth.

..... it is certain that a really deep and serious impression cannot be made by any work of foreign literature unless there are similar tendencies in existence - latently at least, in the country concerned. Such latency increases the fertility of foreign influences, for true influence is always the liberation of latent forces. It is precisely

this rousing of latent energies that can make truly great foreign writers function as factors of a national literary development - unlike the superficial influence of passing fashions.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the same writer explains, the foreign influence must be able to provide something which the native literature has not been able, because of some unresolved problem or contradiction, to provide itself. This is particularly true of foreign influence in China, and this again is one of the subjects which this study will discuss.

This study has made no attempt to deal comprehensively with the various problems it discusses. The investigation of modern Chinese intellectual developments is in its initial stages, and there is need for detailed work on most of the facets of modern literary development that are merely touched on here. Comprehensiveness is, indeed, out of the question for a student who has only been able to use the material on the subject available in Europe. It is only hoped that this study will help to put into perspective some of the main questions which will have to be answered more fully when eventually it becomes possible to compile a comprehensive history of modern Chinese literature.<sup>2</sup>

As is increasingly necessary in all branches of Chinese studies, considerable use has been made of Chinese secondary sources, but main reliance has been placed on the documents of the period and on the works of the authors themselves, with the qualification, already made, that comprehensiveness has proved impossible.

1. G. Lukacs, Studies in European Realism, pp. 243-245.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE MAY 4TH MOVEMENT.

#### Economic and Social Background.

On May 4th, 1919, the students of Peking gathered in front of the T'ien An Men at the entrance to the old imperial palaces to demonstrate against the betrayal of their country to the Japanese by the war-lord government. Within a month their movement had spread throughout the country and included workers, shopkeepers, merchants and even policemen. Such a widespread conscious political movement had not been known in China before. It was the first time that all the various social groups which in the modern period have formed the basis and driving force of the Chinese Revolution were united in one movement.

The May 4th Movement, as it has come to be called, was not a political movement only. It also marked a turning point in the cultural life of the country. Since the middle years of the Great War a movement for the cultural regeneration of China based on the new ideas of the West had been in progress. Hitherto this movement, which is usually called the New Culture Movement or the Chinese Renaissance, had been confined to relatively isolated discussions among teachers and students and in the pages of one journal. With the May 4th Movement, however, this cultural renaissance spread rapidly to all parts of the country, and first the young people and the students and then the workers and other sections of society

1. The term "Renaissance" had been used by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao to apply to the revival of learning and the flourishing of textual criticism and historical studies in the early and middle Ch'ing period. Certainly there were signs at that time of the application of a more scientific approach to scholarship than hitherto, but learning was never linked to processes and techniques vital to the advancement of production, and was, therefore, not the prelude to a thorough revolution in society as the European Renaissance had been. It is not known who was the first to apply the term Renaissance to the New Culture Movement, but it became widely used after the appearance of the magazine La Renaissance at the beginning of 1919 (see below p.56). The New Culture Movement has certain affinities with the European Renaissance, both being essentially anti-feudal, but because of the advance of world history since the European movement, it was both more thorough and rapid than the earlier movement had been. Not only were the countries of Asia (all of which had, or were to pass through similar movements) able to benefit from the experience of several centuries of Western development, but especially after 1917 new prospects were opened by the advent of socialism and communism. Unfortunately there is not space here to enlarge on these few remarks, but others have been prompted to make similar comparisons - notably Hu Shih in The Chinese Renaissance, and Ph. de Vargas in Some Elements in the Chinese Renaissance (New China Review, Vol. IV, No. 3, April-May, 1922).

felt its effect. Thus the May 4th Movement marked the turning point in both the political and cultural life of China.

The New Culture Movement had two main aspects. One was the attack on Confucianism and the traditional social system which it helped to perpetuate. This attack was launched with weapons provided by the West - the ideals of individual liberty and social justice of the European Renaissance, and the new ideas of Socialism which the recently victorious Soviet Revolution brought to China. The second aspect of the movement - and the one with which we are closely concerned - was the Literary Revolution, with its attack on the old literature and the literary language, and its call for a new literature of the people, written in a language which the people could understand. The literary movement had also begun before the May 4th Movement, but like the attack on the old ideas, it did not have a widespread influence until the May 4th Movement had given it a firm social basis.

This chapter has been headed "The May 4th Movement" because it was felt impossible to discuss the new developments in Chinese literature without taking the broader political and social movements into account. Before tackling the Literary Revolution we shall first try to outline the social and economic developments in China which made this broader movement possible and which helped to determine the lines along which the new literature would develop. We shall then turn our attention to the intellectual trends which preceded the New Culture Movement, before discussing the New Culture Movement itself as a prelude to our next chapter on the Literary Revolution.

Some writers have sought to explain the Literary Revolution by concentrating on its precursors in the intellectual development of the country, such as the abolition of the old examination system and the movement for the unification of the national language, but although these certainly helped to prepare the ground for the literary reform, they could not, of themselves, provide the basis for a Literary Revolution which, within a matter of a few years, overthrew both the old literary language and the content of the old literature, and started to create a new literature with an entirely new spirit and new types of subject-matter written in the vernacular. For at the time of the abolition of the old examinations in 1905 there was no school of thought advocating a thorough cultural revolution and a complete reassessment of China's heritage from the point of view of the new ideas of the West. Nor, if a new literature could have been created was there a reading public ready to accept it. For these reasons alone it is necessary to glance at the social and economic developments leading to the New Culture Movement, and to show how they affected its ~~development~~ <sup>progress</sup> and helped to determine the lines along which the new Chinese literature would be created.

The New Culture Movement was, in part, the outcome of the political republican movement which overthrew the Manchu Dynasty in 1911. Some of its leaders had been active in the



1. See, for instance, Wang Che-fu, Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsüeh yün-tung shih 王哲甫 中國新文學運動史 p. 41, and Hu Shih, Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsüeh ta hsi, Chien-she li-lun chi, tao-yen, 胡適 中國新文學大系, 建設理論集導言 pp. 2-6.

political movement, and had participated in the opposition to Yuan Shih-kai who had betrayed the movement and attempted to make himself emperor. The New Culture Movement carried forward in the intellectual field the ideals of progress and democracy which the republican movement had introduced so imperfectly into the politics of the time. It was partly stimulated by the failures of the political movement and the frustrations of the first years of the Republic, when the country continued to be ruled by a régime not fundamentally dissimilar from that which the revolution purported to overthrow. For these failures made the new intellectuals seek the fundamental causes of China's political backwardness. One of the main weaknesses of the movement led by Sun Yat Sen was that it had not put sufficient emphasis on the need for fundamental social and economic reform, and it had not created the organization to put what proposals it had in these fields into effect. The various elements which formed the core of the financial and organizational strength of the T'ung Meng Hui,<sup>1.</sup> the precursor of the Kuomintang, were weak in comparison with the strong feudal forces in the country, which, after the revolution, gradually consolidated their control over the whole country, and ousted the revolutionaries from ~~what~~<sup>the</sup> positions they had gained. The T'ung Meng Hui, for its part, failed to take measures fundamentally to weaken the power of the landlords and war-lords, or to enlist the aid of the peasants. The one social reform in its programme which would have swept away the opposition if it

1. 同盟會 For an introduction to and translation of the Manifesto of the T'ung Meng Hui, see Teng Ssu-yü and J. K. Fairbank, China's Response to the West, pp.225-229.

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had been acted upon, namely, "Land to the Tillers" remained a paper proposition.<sup>1.</sup> In fact, the whole emphasis in the execution of the Wuch'ang uprising which heralded the revolution was on preventing the participation of the peasants in the name of maintaining law and order.<sup>2.</sup> During the uprising many of the old imperial military commanders, seeing which way the wind was blowing, defected and joined cause with the revolutionaries. In Wuch'ang itself power was handed by the revolutionaries to two men, one of whom had been a militarist and the other a constitutional monarchist.<sup>3.</sup> The process continued until the young revolutionaries, who were eager for reform, were outnumbered and dominated by the conservative elements who wished to maintain their positions of privilege.<sup>4.</sup>

The lack of consistent theory was not only a feature of the leadership of the republican movement, but a general weakness of the youth of the time. Kuo Mo-jo, in his autobiography, has written of the movement in Szechuan:

The young people of that time were mostly nationalists imbued with strong patriotic feelings and an urgent desire to make China strong. But they were also filled with egoistic illusions. They believed that all they needed to do was to cut off their pigtails, substitute a new emblem for the antique dragon-banner, overthrow the alien Manchu Government, and China would immediately be like a "waking lion" and swallow up the so-called "eight great powers" of the time - Britain, America, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Japan and Russia - as though they were so many tit-bits in a bowl of soup!<sup>5.</sup>

As it happened, immediately after the revolution in Szechuan there were mutinies among the troops, and practically

1. For a fuller assessment of the weaknesses of the T'ung Meng Hui see Li Nai-han, Hsin-hai ko-ming yü Yüan Shih-k'ai 黎乃函, 辛亥革命与袁世凱 pp. 7-11.

2. Loc. cit.

3. The two men were hi Yüan-hung and Tang Hua-lung 黎元洪, 湯化龍

4. The most important manifestation of this was Yüan Shih-k'ai's assumption of the presidency in place of Sun Yat-sen.

5. Kuo Mo-jo, Shao-nien shih-tai, p. 314.

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the whole of the province became a paradise for bandits and tyrants. Although Szechuan had been the centre of the railway controversy, which provided one of the greatest rallying-points of opposition to the Manchus, after the Manchu Government was overthrown the project of constructing a railway from Chungking to Chengtu was abandoned owing to war-lord misrule, and had to wait forty years for completion.<sup>1.</sup>

These weaknesses of the movement led by Sun Yat-sen arose from the composition of his movement. Its financial support came from overseas Chinese business and some of the nascent Chinese business circles in the foreign concessions in China. As a social group they were numerically small and extremely widely dispersed. The industrialization of China had hitherto advanced at a snail's pace, and ~~the~~<sup>large</sup> independent Chinese business houses were few. None of them could compare in size or influence with the big foreign firms operating in China.<sup>2.</sup> Moreover those that did exist were largely in the hands of officials who did not regard them as of vital importance and devoted their attention much more to their official careers. Two of these official entrepreneurs, Chang Ch'ien<sup>3</sup> and Shêng Hsüan-huai<sup>4</sup>, did it is true, concentrate their energies on the establishment of industries, and Shêng Hsüan-huai in particular built up an efficiently-managed series of enterprises, but both still had one foot in the official boot, and both eventually failed.<sup>5.</sup>

1. For a comment on the winding-up of the Szechwan Railway Company, see *ibid.*, p. 346. The railway station in Ch'engt'u was built in preparation for the line, but no train entered it until July 1st, 1952. See China Reconstructs, 1952, No. 5.
2. See Teng and Fairbank, *op. cit.*, p. 212.
3. 張譽
4. 盛宣懷
5. For an account of the activities of Chang and Shêng see Marion J. Levy and Shih Kuo-hêng, The Rise of an Independent Chinese Business Class, pp. 32-33.

With such a weak economic base it is not surprising that the revolutionary elements were swamped by the more conservative officials and gentry after the revolution. Yüan Shih-k'ai, who became President and the most powerful of the war-lords in the first years of the Republic, also had the backing of the foreign powers. The latter wanted a "strong man" to safeguard their interests and <sup>each</sup> would favour <sup>warlord</sup> with loans the ~~one~~ who served these interests best. So there began the period of war-lord rule which lasted right up to the next stage of the Chinese Revolution which commenced with the reorganization of the Kuomintang in 1924. It is not necessary within the limits of this study to follow the intricate course of the rise and fall of the various war-lord governments of this period. The condition of the country as it appeared to the Chinese revolutionaries in 1924 has been summarised in the Manifesto of the First Congress of the Chinese Kuomintang of that year:

Although the Revolution was nominally successful, the only thing which the Revolutionary Government was able to achieve was racial emancipation.<sup>1</sup> Before very long it was forced by circumstances to seek a compromise with the counter-revolutionary autocrats. This compromise was in effect an indirect concord with imperialism, and was the chief cause of the first defeat of the Revolution.

The representative of the despotic classes at that time was Yüan Shih-k'ai. The power at his command was not at first too great. The revolutionary party was unable to defeat him because they desired to do their utmost to avoid a prolongation of the civil war. This was because they did not possess an organized and disciplined political party which understood its responsibility and aims. If at that time such a party had existed it would have been



able to defeat Yuan's schemes and achieve success, and he would have been unable to take advantage of it. Yuan Shih-k'ai was the head of the Pei-yang militarists. He repeatedly intrigued with the imperialists, and all the despotic classes of the time clung to him for self-preservation. When the revolutionaries yielded power to him it is not surprising that they were defeated.

After Yuan's death the Revolution continued to meet with defeat, with the result that the country was opened to the malignant rivalry of the war-lords, who sacrificed the people to their ambition. Democratic reform became quite out of the question. Not only this, the war-lords themselves were so opposed to the people's interests that they could not stand on their own feet, and they all, without exception, conspired with the foreign imperialists. The so-called Government of the Republic was already controlled by the war-lords. They utilized it to court favour with the powers and strengthen their own positions. The foreign powers also utilized it and granted it loans to meet military expenditure. They did so in order to acquire privileges and spheres of influence.

Seen from this angle it becomes clear that internal strife was really the product of the powers. The interests of the powers in China clashed and they each pinned their faith on war-lords who killed our people for their own ends. Not only this, internal disorder prevented the development of Chinese industry, and choked the internal market with foreign goods. For this reason Chinese industry was unable to compete with foreign capital, even within China. Not only had the political life of the country been usurped, but our economy had also been despoiled to no small extent. If we cast our eyes round us we see that, since the defeat of the Revolution, the middle class is increasingly impoverished. The small-business men are gradually becoming bankrupt, and the small hand-craft workers are gradually losing their employment and becoming vagabonds, drifting into soldiering or banditry. The peasants no longer have the strength to stand on their own feet, and sell their land cheaply, their lives becoming daily poorer and the taxes becoming daily heavier. Such sorry spectacles as these are everywhere to be seen. Are we not justified in saying that the limit has been reached?

From this it may be seen that since the 1911 Revolution conditions in China, so far from improving, have deteriorated, like a river flowing to the sea. The unbridled despotism of the war-lords and the incursions of the powers become daily worse, so that China has fallen deeply into the morass of semi-colonialism. It is this that fills the whole country with the greatest anxiety, and stimulates all intelligent people into seeking for our people a path to life.<sup>1</sup>

1. For a complete translation of the Manifesto (not by any means literal), see T. C. Woo, The Kuomintang and the Future of the Chinese Revolution, pp. 262-269.

By the time this was written the preparations for political and military action to end war-lord rule were under way. They were to culminate in the Northern Expedition and the Revolution of 1927. But in the years of the Great War the Kuomintang was still without a proper programme, and spent a great deal of energy playing politics with the war-lords and the powers. However, while conservatism held the upper hand in most aspects of Chinese life during the period, there were factors in the situation which weakened it, and were in the end to lead to its downfall.

The first of these was the beginnings of the growth of a new Chinese industry. There were two factors in the situation which encouraged this. The first was that the collapse of the Manchus led to the possibility of the growth of a business class more independent of official control. Previously business had been hampered by many restrictions imposed by officials who only saw it as a source of revenue or private income. M.T.Z. Tyau quotes in China Awakened a passage from a Chinese paper published in a treaty port in about 1910 satirizing officialdom. Among the "eight thoughts of a Chinese official" are:

(i) When he hears of the construction of a railway he thinks of it being vested in government control.

(ii) When he hears of the development of a new industry he thinks of the appointment of officials to foster it.

(iii) When he sees commercial commodities he thinks of the Li-kin tariff.....<sup>1</sup>.

1. Min-chien T. Z. Tyau, China Awakened, p. 111.

Although it did not immediately abolish all these restrictions, at least the 1911 did something to create a new attitude towards industry.

Many of the new officials had a more modern outlook on industry, and the native Chinese capitalists including overseas Chinese businessmen, felt a little more confident in the country as a secure field of investment. Thus the 1911 Revolution, although having such an apparently weak economic basis, did nevertheless have the character of a bourgeois revolution with a certain liberating influence on the rise of a business class. Striking confirmation of this is to be found in the figures given by Shih Kuo-hêng in his monograph on the rise of the independent Chinese business class. His figures show that, whereas in the period before the 1911 Revolution most of the native Chinese investment in industry came from officials or merchants with strong official connections, after the Revolution the balance had swung in favour of the more independent merchants.<sup>1.</sup>

1. Shih Kuo-heng includes the following two tables in his study:-

A. Social background of the operators of 19 cotton mills established between 1897 and 1910.

	<u>Officials</u>	<u>Compra-</u>	<u>Merchant</u>	<u>Unknown</u>	<u>Total</u>
		<u>dors</u>	<u>and gentry</u>		
1897	3			1	4
98	2				2
99	2				2
1905	1				1
06	2	1			3
07	1	2			3
08			1	1	2
09	1				1
10			1		1
	<u>12</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>19</u>

B. Social background of the operators of 32 cotton mills established between 1916 and 1922.

	<u>Mer-</u>	<u>Offi-</u>	<u>Industria-</u>	<u>Govern-</u>	<u>Gen-</u>	<u>Mili-</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>chant</u>	<u>cial</u>	<u>list</u>	<u>ment</u>	<u>try</u>	<u>tary</u>	
				<u>owned</u>			
1916	1		1	1			3
17		1					1
18		3	1				4
19	2					1	3
20	4					1	5
21	8	2	1	1		1	13
22	3						3
	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>		<u>1</u>	<u>32</u>

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Of equal importance was the relaxing of <sup>the</sup> foreign control of <sup>Chinese</sup> industry which was attendant upon the outbreak of the First World War. The flow of Western manufactured goods to the Chinese market slowed down during this period, enabling Chinese manufacturers to step in to fill the gap in the market thus formed. The slowing of the foreign trade is demonstrated by a decline in both the number and tonnage of shipping calling at Chinese ports during the period 1914-1918; this in spite of a general trend of expanding clearances in previous years.<sup>1.</sup> The scale of this <sup>growth</sup> expansion may be gauged by the fact that, during the period 1913-1920, the number of factories employing more than thirty workers in Shanghai nearly trebled, while in Tientsin they quadrupled. The number of cotton mills in China nearly doubled in the same period, cotton being the most important field of investment in the new industry.<sup>2</sup>

This expansion of industry made it possible for the official report on the progress of trade compiled by the Chinese Customs, to state in 1919 in relation to the importation of cotton piece goods:-

The statistics of the year show that the products of mills in China are increasing in favour, and that their rivalry with the foreign article, though not formidable as yet, is beginning to make itself felt.<sup>3</sup>

These developments, even though they did not indicate more than a beginning in the rise of an independent business class, nevertheless had an important effect on the world of ideas. First, they brought the prospect of China making herself financially independent, given a government with such

1. According to the tonnage figures if 1913 is 100, then 1914 is 105, 1915 is down to 97, 1916 to 94.3, 1917 to 93.1 and 1918 to 88. (See Sung Yun-pin, Chung-kuo chin pai nien shih, 宋雲彬 中國近百年史 p. 168, and Chinese Maritime Customs, Statistical Series, Nos. 3 to 5, Returns of Trade (61st Issue) and Trade Reports (55th Issue), 1919. Part 1, Report on the Trade of China and Abstract of Statistics, p. 74.
2. See the figures in the table of statistics in Tawney, Land and Labour in China, p. 196.
3. Chinese Maritime Customs, op. cit., p. 7.



an aim. The Trade Returns for 1919, which we have already quoted in relation to the improvement of China's cotton industry, made the following observation about the effect of the post-war demand for Chinese exports:

The persistent demand for her food products and certain of her raw materials at any price, poured wealth into the pockets of her traders, and for the moment has no doubt greatly benefited her farmers and artisans. Stimulated by this silver shower, the legitimate desire of her capitalists and merchants to be less dependent on foreign manufacturers has produced a regular boom in industrial enterprise throughout the country.<sup>1</sup>

In 1919 China's imports and exports nearly balanced<sup>2</sup> "for the first time since statistics were available".

This step in the direction of economic independence had considerable effect in increasing the self-confidence of the Chinese middle classes in the period; not only the manufacturers and merchants, but indirectly also the intellectuals, whose interests were to some extent bound up with them. Although the early 'twenties saw a slowing-down of the tempo of industrial development and the failure of its early promise, the effect on the national movement was permanent.



1. Ibid., p. 2.

2. Loc. cit.

~~Second~~ The merchants and manufacturers had their own organizations, the Guilds and Chambers of Commerce, which, besides attending to their own local business affairs, also carried out the wider tasks of the defence of Chinese business against foreign encroachments, and participated in mass political movements by supporting the boycotts of foreign goods. The boycott of 1919-20 was an important part of the May 4th Movement which caused material damage to Japanese trade.

~~Second~~<sup>Third</sup>, the new industrialists were interested in the spread of modern education. They themselves had benefited by the support of the earlier reformer-officials for modernisation of education, and the techniques of industry made it an essential for them to extend it. So the industrialists promoted education at all levels, including the universities. For instance, H.Y. Moh, the cotton magnate, contributed a sum of money to Peking University as a special fund to finance the sending of students to Europe and America, while the tobacco manufacturers, Nanyang brothers, spent large sums of money for the same purpose.<sup>1.</sup> This was one very direct way in which the economic advances of the Great War period helped to influence the country's intellectual development.

Together with the rise of modern industry went the development of a Chinese working-class and labour movement. The working-class had existed as a class ever since the beginnings of industry in China; that is, since the end of

1. Tyau, op. cit., p. 128. For details of other endowments in the period of the early Republic, see Chuang Chai-hsüan, Tendencies towards a Democratic System of Education in China, p. 37.

the nineteenth century when foreign enterprise introduced factories, and railways were built. But it developed particularly strongly with the advance of industry during the 1914-1918 War, and became much more concentrated in the big cities. During this period, however, the organisation of the labour movement was generally weak, if it existed. Such collective actions as strikes were few and poorly led, and almost invariably ended in harsh repression. Modern trade unions were almost unknown, and the old feudal forms of trade organisation, guilds (H'ang-hui)<sup>1</sup> secret societies (mi-mi chieh-she)<sup>2</sup> and associations of workers coming from particular localities (hang-h'ou)<sup>3</sup> were still the main forms of collective life among them. Although the anarchists established a few unions after the 1911 Revolution, their influence was not widespread.

However, the existence of this new force in Chinese society was of fundamental importance for the future of the national movement, for although they were numerically still rather small they constituted a great potential political force. They were an important reserve for the movement for national independence and democratisation of China because being right at the bottom of the social pyramid they were vitally interested in political advance. If the new Chinese industrialists were squeezed by foreign competitors, it was the workers who received the full impact of the pressure. Moreover, they also suffered at the hands of the labour

1. 行會

2. 秘密結社

3. 幫口

contractors on whom they depended for employment and who took part of their wages - an extension of feudalism into industrial relations. Therefore they had everything to gain and nothing to lose from this political action.

As we shall see, the working-class took part in the May 4th Movement, and strikes in support of the movement's political demands took place in Shanghai, Peking and elsewhere. This was the beginning of the history of the modern organised labour movement which was to play an increasing role in the political development of China in the period under discussion. One of the features of this history has been the readiness of the workers to take part in political movements in order to gain advances which, <sup>owing</sup> due to the harshness of Chinese society, could not be obtained by the forms of collective bargaining usual in the West. Labour's rôle in the May 4th Movement was symptomatic of its later development, when political strikes or strikes in which a political issue was involved became more and more frequent.

The section of the new social forces with which we shall be more closely concerned is the modern intellectuals. They, like the workers and the industrialists, were the product of the social transformations just outlined, but they had a special role to play in modern Chinese history, not, in the main, as an independent economic force, but by virtue of their function as a link between the new ideas of the West and the basic social forces in China, particularly the labour and

1. See I. Epstein, Main Directions in Chinese Labour, in Science and Society, Vol. XIII, 1949.



peasant movements. In old China learning was confined to the ruling class who were literocrats as well as economic and political rulers. The new intelligentsia were their intellectual heirs, but they found themselves in a different world from that which brought privilege to their fathers. They had benefited from the new educational policies of the reformers, but because of the slowness of China's development they were unable to put this education to practical use. In their schools and universities they had come into contact with new thought which had led them to reject the old ideas, and this together with the economic insecurity which was a feature of the war-lord period, made them seek fundamental solutions to China's problems, particularly to enable China to become a modern state in which they could play a part adequate to their talents as bearers of the new learning. A few of them, among them students returned from Europe or America, were able, through their family connections, to obtain high positions, and sometimes became politically and culturally conservative.

<sup>But</sup> Because of China's backwardness the majority could not do this, and economic pressure forced them down to the status of lower middle-class, even though their fathers or grandfathers had been local gentry or even officials. Some were able to obtain minor official posts, but the war-lord period was not a happy one for such people because of the political insecurity and the repeated depreciations of currency and therefore of

1. An interesting account of the problems of the returned students is contained in an article by Hua-Chuen Mei in the Chinese Recorder in 1917. He wrote:-

Returned students differ in outlook, spirit and character, but most of them are alike in one hope and one ambition - that of civil and political preferment. From the outset of their home education, political preferment is made the goal, and certainly after a prolonged training the appetite for public office is only whetted by their greater fitness and knowledge.....

In June last year (1916) there were estimated about 500 idle returned students, and now still about 200, gathered in Peking awaiting appointment. In Shanghai there were near 100, and in Canton about 50. How many of them are in the other centres is uncertain, but there must be a considerable number..... I have known returned men in the dumps of despair, too proud to appeal to relatives for assistance, some with families far away, having to borrow from their fellows in misery. The hunger wolf has threatened more than one man, and another actually became insane for lack of encouragement. These, be it remembered, were the men who in their student days had their patriotic ardour fanned, as it were, by beautiful day-dreams into a religious zeal, and now, finding that they are neither the leaders nor the led in the country's constructive work, their purposes misunderstood, their offers of service rejected, their ideals slipping away from them in a squalid and sordid environment, is it any wonder that they become filled with misgivings as to their future, and silently mutter resentment against the established order of things? The picture is not pleasant for those eager and energetic fellows to see, on the one hand responsible posts filled by irresponsible, old-time literati, without a vestige of preparation or equipment to perform their duties; and on the other hand, to observe the kinsmen and favourites of high officials given sinecures, and they, poor fellows, perhaps stranded, are left out in the cold.....

There is a general notion that returned students have refused situations paying less than \$200 or \$300, but it is a fact - and an appalling one - that some returned men with families too, in Peking are compelled to work for from \$50 to \$80 a month, and thus forced back to the low standard of living from which they were supposed to have risen. (op.cit., pp. 163-170.)

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salaries, not to speak of the risk that salaries might not be paid at all for quite considerable lengths of time.<sup>1</sup> Others entered the educational world where the same conditions prevailed.

Students were particularly active in the National Movement because of their close contact with the new thought, and because they were working and sometimes living together under conditions favourable for discussion and common action. Peking University was particularly fortunate in this respect because of the concentration there of the leaders of the New Culture Movement. But other universities and schools also played a prominent part in the May 4th Movement, nor was the New Culture Movement confined to one institution. Those who were at the universities during the May 4th Movement were particularly active after it. Many later joined the movements of the left, playing a prominent part in organising the new trade unions and other branches of the left-wing political movement. In doing this they fulfilled their function, mentioned above, as a link between the ideas of the West, (particularly of socialism) and the Chinese working-class and peasantry, whose poverty and illiteracy precluded <sup>them</sup> from taking the initial steps to learn of Western developments.

Another important factor contributing to the political orientation of the Chinese intellectuals was their clash with their families on such questions as marriage, the

1. For the experiences of the writer, Lu Hsün, in this connection, see below, Chapter V, p.

choice of careers, etc. On these questions there was little possibility of compromise between new and old, and if the members of the older generation were inclined to insist on the preservation of their patriarchal privileges, quarrels between young and old would often lead to estrangement or even complete rupture! This was an additional reason for young intellectuals to cut themselves away from the old traditional thought and social milieu. It was a particularly acute problem for women, whose economic dependence on men in the old society made such family differences an extremely grave matter, and, as we shall see in the following chapters, this aspect of the struggle between the new and the old dominated the lives and outlook of many of them.<sup>2.</sup>

In the Manchu dynasty the activities of the new intellectuals would have been suppressed. Under the early Republic, however, though political persecution continued, together with censorship and control of thought, repression could not be carried out as consistently as before. In this respect the whole political and intellectual life of the country had benefited from the downfall of the Manchus. Owing to their disunity the war-lords spent most of their energies and time on internecine warfare and in consolidating their positions against their rivals. So, in spite of sporadic repressions, it became possible for political discussion to be

1. Discussing the position of young men (ch'ing-nien 青年 ) in the old families, Marion J. Levy wrote the following:-

In the Chinese family the new ch'ing-nien create a new situation. In the "traditional" Chinese family the individual ch'ing-nien or yu-nien 青年, 幼年 (older child) did not dare to demand to be taken seriously or think in terms of it. He thought in terms of doing what was required, and, aside from that, of leaving as much of the burden as possible to one side. Even more disruptive, from the family point of view, than the demand for recognition and respect is the insistence of the new ch'ing-nien on allegiance to, and concern for, matters outside the family. The concern for problems which take priority over the family unit mean, of course, the end of the old family unit. The acquisition of such concerns would alone serve to differentiate the new from the old ch'ing-nien. The new ch'ing-nien have now (i.e., in 1949) been a feature of Chinese society long enough for some of them to have reared families of their own. The radicalism of the earlier members of this group has not kept many of them from returning to conservative ideas with their own children, but the break once made is difficult to retrace, and a complete return to the old ways is probably rare. (The Family Revolution in Modern China, p. 255.)

2. On the position of women in the old family, Levy writes:-

A great deal of extremely loose talk and writing about the position of Chinese women has had wide circulation in the West. One of the most erroneous ideas so promulgated has been the idea of the great security inferent in the woman's position in China. The Chinese family structure has provided great stability for the family as a whole, and for Chinese society in general, perhaps as much stability as any structure can provide, but this has not been achieved without the generation of stresses and insecurity. Of the two great foci of such insecurity the status of women is perhaps the greater..... (Ibid., p. 148.)

..... The women could never legitimately look forward to the time when economic role differentiation would cease to involve for them a subordinate, dependent family status. (Ibid., p. 155.)

The vital interest of young women in these problems is reflected in their literary taste as a glance at the statistics in the note to Chapter p. will show.

carried on with a certain degree of freedom, in some localities at least. Especially after the downfall of Yu'an Shih-k'ai in 1915 this war-lord ~~disunity~~ <sup>disunity</sup> which reflected the rivalry of the powers, ~~disunity~~ increased and it even became necessary for war-lords to appeal to "public opinion" in order to gain political support. One instance of this occurred a little while after the May 4th Movement when Wu Pei-fu, attempting to establish his position at the expense of the pro-Japanese Tuan Ch'i-jui, published a denunciation of Tuan which was printed in all the newspapers. <sup>2</sup> The New Culture Movement, which was then at its height, could not under these conditions easily be suppressed. This same factor of disunity eventually provided conditions under which it became possible for the Chinese revolution to gain complete military victory.

1. 吳佩孚

2. 段祺瑞

3. See Tyau, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-168.



Two other factors in the international situation affected China closely in this period. One was the attentions of Japanese imperialism to Chinese territory and of Japanese business to the Chinese market, the other the Soviet Revolution.

If, as we have said, the 1914-1918 war released slightly the foreign grip on Chinese economic life, this was only true of the active belligerents. As far as Japan, and to some extent America, were concerned, the reverse was true. For while British trade and commercial activity declined during the period of the war, Japanese trade increased rapidly. Not only did her trade increase, but she exported capital, much of it in the form of loans to Chinese governments, and began the economic drive which was later to challenge British supremacy in the China trade. Japan accompanied this economic activity with extreme forms of political pressure. Two aspects of this pressure are particularly important. One was the seizure in 1914 of the German assets in Shantung Province, including the port of Tsingtao and the railway from Tsingtao to Tsinan. This was practically the only military action taken by Japan during the war, and yet when, after the war, the question of the disposal of these properties arose, Japan, with French and British support, demanded that they should be retained by her. It was this question which provided the spark which ignited the May 4th Movement.

Soon after this Japan presented the famous 21 Demands to China. Among them was a demand by Japan to retain the former German properties in Shantung, as well as articles

concerning Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, Fukien, the Hanyehping Iron and Steel Company, in addition to other articles of a general nature, even extending to the right of Japan to police Chinese cities. The most flagrant violations of China's sovereignty were involved, some so extreme that it is clear that Japan only included them in order to give Yüan Shih-k'ai a chance to reject them, thus giving the impression that Japan was willing to compromise. All but the fifth section of the demands were agreed to by Yüan, who at that time was planning to make himself emperor, and counted on Japanese support. Nevertheless, when the news of the demands leaked out there were widespread protests and a boycott of Japanese goods was organised. This protest movement was, however, suppressed.

The 21 Demands were a disgraceful episode in the history of the war-lord government in China, and a national humiliation which led directly to the patriotic movement of four years later.

The Soviet Revolution of 1917 and the Hungarian and German revolutions of the following years had an immediate effect on China. The end of the war was itself regarded by Chinese as a victory against militarism, and it was often linked with the revolutionary movements in Russia and the other European countries. The Soviet revolution was particularly important, and was to have increasing repercussions in China throughout the period under review. Already in the period of May 4th Marxism had started being introduced into China, and

1. For an account of the boycott, see Dorothy J. Orchard, China's Use of the Boycott as a Political Weapon in Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Vol. 152, November, 1930.

two years later the Chinese Communist Party was formed. This gave the revolution a new perspective, taking it beyond the limited aims of Sun Yat-sen. It also led to the rapid organization of trade unions and the direction of the revolution in a planned way from an organizational centre. The Communist Party proved to be a strong attraction to the intellectuals who found in its policies a practical way to fulfil their aspirations. The May 4th Movement was also affected by the foreign policy of the Soviet government. In 1919, shortly before the May 4th Movement broke out, Soviet representatives had come to Shanghai to explain the policy of the new government, and received a warm response from, among others, the students' organization as well as from the deputies of the Chinese Parliament.<sup>1</sup> In the following year the Soviet government renounced the rights and privileges of the Tsarist regime in China.

1. See L. Wiegner, La Chine Moderne, Vol. II, pp. 277-280.

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May 4th.

The May 4th Movement was the reaction of the great majority of the politically conscious people of China to the betrayal of China by the pro-Japanese government of Tuan Ch'ijui. The spark which ignited the movement was the news from Versailles that, according to the proposed Peace Treaty, the parts of Shantung which had been seized by Japan from Germany on the former's entry into the war in 1915 should be retained by Japan. The Chinese delegation had not signed the treaty, but owing to the Chinese government's previous recognition of Japan's position in Shantung, they were unable to persuade the powers to change the text: When news of this reached Peking, students held united demonstrations there on May 4th demanding the dismissal of the three officials most responsible for the betrayal. Several thousand of them took part and afterwards marched to the residence of Ts'ao Ju-lin, one of the accused officials and a signatory of the "21 Demands", together with a Japanese newspaper reporter. All three of them happened to be there. When Ts'ao refused to come out to meet the students, they broke into the house. Two of the officials escaped, but one was caught and beaten up, and later the house was set on fire.

After this a series of struggles ensued between the students and the police during which one student was killed and thirty-two imprisoned. This only increased the students' determination, and the movement spread rapidly. During the

1. 曹汝霖

2.

demonstrations the students carried out mass prop@aganda work, lecturing and spreading handbills about the issues involved. The reaction of the government was to publish eulogies of the traitors, but at the same time to release the thirty-two students in order to try to pacify the movement. However, the movement did not abate, and so the government reverted to open oppression and began to arrest students lecturing in the streets. By June 4th over a thousand students were under arrest in Peking. But at the same time the movement began to influence wider sections of the population. Workers, merchants, soldiers, police joined in the protests; in Shanghai all retail shops were closed, while on June 5th a general strike was called there which paralyzed the commercial life of the city for some days. A boycott of Japanese goods was initiated which was effective for some months.

The immediate result of the May 4th Movement was to prevent the signing of the Peace Treaty by China, but its importance was immeasurably greater than this. One writer has summed up its effect in the following way:

First, he said, it gave a great push to the intellectual revolution. In other words, the student movement helped to popularize the Chinese Renaissance. Before the "May 4th Movement" the Chinese Renaissance was confined to a limited group of intellectuals, while the great majority of the people were hardly touched by the new spirit. The student demonstrations awakened the people out of their dreams. The "New Thought Tide" prop@agated by a few magazines like La Jeunesse and The Renaissance began to flood over the country through the sudden appearance of more than four hundred different kinds of periodicals.



Second, the student movement gave an impetus to all kinds of social organizations. The students themselves had developed a nation-wide organization. The teachers, the labourers and the merchants started to organize. Organization was a sign of the nation-wide awakening of the people.

Third, the student movement helped to develop the power of the people. It encouraged the people to free themselves from the restrictions of the conventions, and to acquire a wholesome dissatisfaction with existing conditions. No matter how recalcitrant the authorities were, the student movement proved that "mass indignation cannot be defied". Even the foreign powers had to take the Chinese popular opinion more seriously.<sup>1</sup>.

The May 4th Movement continued in various forms right until 1921, when the split which had already been evident between the right wing and the left wing within it became more open. In 1921 the Communist Party was founded on the one hand, and on the other hand the reformist section of the May 4th Movement withdrew from active political and ideological struggle, gradually moving towards the position it was to take up during the later more fundamental split of 1927. Although the intellectuals did not constitute an independent class, they tended to take up political positions which reflected the basic interests of one or other of the fundamental social groups to which we have alluded. After the May 4th Movement, while some became socialists and communists and entered the working-class movement, others followed the business class in withdrawing from the struggle, and even compromising with its opponents. For although the Chinese business interests

羅文倫

1. Lo Chia-lun, as quoted in Kiang Wen-han, The Chinese Student Movement, p. 39.

supported the May 4th Movement at its height, they were not anxious to follow it too far. Although the Great War had enabled a more independent Chinese industry to become established, the end of the war reversed the trend, and, as a group they remained weak, and not independent enough either of the Chinese bureaucracy or of foreign interests to stand firm on a strong, uncompromising policy of national independence and social progress. Some of the intellectuals followed them in this withdrawal. At first they did not have an important influence on the development of the new literature, but after a few years Chinese literature showed clearly the outlines of the split in Chinese society, with one section - the one which grew into the main stream of modern Chinese literature - wishing to make literature serve the purposes of social change, and the other section advocating in one form or other the ideas of art-for-art's-sake.

Intellectual currents prior to the  
New Culture Movement.

As we have already observed in the introduction, the most important precursors to the May 4th Movement in the intellectual field were the Reform Movement initiated by K'ang Yu-wei, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, etc., and the Republican Movement of Sun Yat Sen. Both had a deep formative influence on the period which followed the downfall of the Manchu Dynasty.

Fundamentally there was less difference between the two movements than appears on the surface, for both believed ultimately in the power of Westernization to save China, and in the transference to China not only of techniques and materials things, but also of Western parliamentary system of government, and both formed part of China's incipient bourgeois democratic revolution. But whereas the majority of the Reformists were officials belonging to the old ruling class, and wished to retain the privileges they enjoyed as intellectual leaders, Sun Yat Sen's followers were largely representative of that wing of the national bourgeoisie which was entirely "out in the cold", and so his proposals took on a more revolutionary complexion, and as a representative of the more radical wing of the new national movement, he attracted wider political support than the narrower scholar reformers.

Prior to the 1911 Revolution, however, the reformers were very influential in Chinese intellectual life, for the

1. 梁啟超

new intellectuals who had broken with traditional thought were still few in number. One reason for this influence is to be found in the ideological weakness of the revolutionaries, which has already been discussed above, for there appeared among the reformers a number of brilliant propogandists and translators, such as Yen Fu,<sup>1.</sup> Lin Shu,<sup>2.</sup> and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao.<sup>3.</sup> Of these none was more influential <sup>in</sup> to the younger generation than Liang. As one writer has put it, whereas their emotional sustenance came from Sun Yat Sen, the young Chinese of the early years of this century went to Liang Chi-ch'ao for their intellectual sustenance.<sup>4.</sup>

The most outspoken pleas for social reform in Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's writing were made in the early years of his exile in Japan, particularly in the series of sixteen articles on the Renovation of a People in the Hsin-min ts'ung-pao.<sup>5.</sup> In some of these articles he called openly for revolution - though it seems that he did not mean by this the overthrow of one class by another, but rather a cleansing of the whole "body politic" by good and worthy people (jen-hsien-chê),<sup>6.</sup> and particularly the clearing away of the worst abuses of the old bureaucracy and the old ways of thought.

As is implied in the title of the essays, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao was concerned mainly with the reform of the Chinese people as individual human beings, which he believed to be a precondition of fundamental social reform. He compared the people to the limbs and organs of the body and declared that

1. 嚴復

2. 林紓

3. Chiang Mon-lin, Tides from the West, p. 53.

4. 新民說 See Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Yin-ping shih ch'uan chi

5. 新民叢報

飲冰室全集  
chuan I, pp. 1-72.

6. 仁賢者  
chin-pu,

See Liang chi-ch'ao, op.cit., chieh XI, lun  
pp. 68-72.

"if the people are weak then the nation is weak; if the people are strong then the nation is strong."<sup>1.</sup> He attributed certain qualities to the white races (and particularly to the Teutonic peoples and among them the Anglo-Saxons), such as a love of action and strife, and a spirit of independence. He believed that the success of these peoples in the struggle for the survival of the fittest among nations was due to these qualities, and he urged the people of China to develop them. He attributed Chinese failures in the modern world to the Chinese lack of the qualities of public spirit, nationalism, enterprise, courage, sense of freedom and independence, and self-respect.

Hu Shih wrote later:

His enthusiasm for the Western people and their civilisation knew no limit; and his powerful style and glowing appeals opened the eyes of thousands of readers and captured them and made converts of them.<sup>2.</sup>

Yet while he was enthusiastic for these aspects of Western civilization, he had not completely freed himself from the paradoxical dichotomy of "Chinese learning as the *substance* and Western learning as the *function*"<sup>3.</sup> of Chang Chih-tung's Exhortation to Learning. He lacked a fundamental understanding of the relation between the ideological, scientific and technological aspects of a civilization. Moreover he accepted without question as representative of the West those qualities which were, as Hu Shih put it, "almost without exception the individualistic virtues most admired in the Victorian age."<sup>4.</sup>



1. Ibid., chieh 4., p. 7.
2. Hu Shih, The Chinese Renaissance, p. 38.
3. 中学为体西学为用 For an accurate but incomplete translation of Chang Chih-tung's work see Jerome Tober, K'iu-en-hio p'ien. For an assessment of its importance in the history of modern Chinese thought see Hellmut Wilhelm, The Problem of Within and Without, a Confucian attempt at Syncretism, in the Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. XII, 1951.
4. Hu Shih, loc. cit.

Hu Shih described Liang's position in the following terms:

.... he was a product of the old classical tradition and was never free from a fundamental bias, namely that, while there were all these admirable virtues in the Western culture, the old morality as taught by the best teachers of the Confucian and neo-Confucian philosophies was still the backbone of the Chinese nation and civilization, and must not be under-valued and discarded.<sup>1</sup>

As he never succeeded in entering into the spirit of the modern world, and always held reservations about political revolution, his faith in Westernisation as the final answer to China's problems was in the end shaken. Politically he did his utmost to dissuade the young people of his time to support the revolutionary movement of Sun Yat-Sen, and when he did eventually travel to Europe in 1918, he came back full of scorn for Europe's "materialism".

Yet, although he was a member of the old Reform Party and at heart a constitutional monarchist, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's contribution to the New Culture Movement was not negative. Quite apart from his original writings, he was responsible, through the pages of the journals he edited and contributed to, for the introduction of a considerable body of Western theory.

Included in the Hsin-min-ts'ung-pao were paraphrases of the work of, or articles on, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Adam Smith and many other theoreticians of bourgeois democracy, as well as articles on famous historical figures. Liang himself wrote a book on the rise of modern Italy. While himself at heart a monarchist, many of the theories he introduced tended

1. loc. cit.

~~2. See below, p.~~

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not toward constitutional monarchy, but toward republicanism. The paraphrase he made of Rousseau's Le Contrat Sociale was particularly influential, for what particularly attracted many Chinese about the book was Rousseau's democratic anti-monarchism. Rousseau's opinion that the presence of a monarch who was free to follow his own will had the effect of breaking the social contract and depriving the citizens of their individuality and independence, and that sovereignty rested with the people while the state only existed to carry out the people's will, had clear implications in the dying hours of the Ch'ing Dynasty.

Many Chinese of the older generation have admitted their debt to the writings of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, and men who have since held many varied opinions came at one time under his influence. Mao Tse-tung was himself in his extreme youth influenced by Liang, and Liang's contribution to the youth of his day has been expressed in this way:

The writings of Mr. Liang were clear and lucid and full of warmth and enthusiasm, so that the reader could not help being carried along with him and thinking with him. There were times when we would reach a certain point with him and wish to go forward, but he would call a halt, or go off in a different direction. At these times we could not help feeling a little disappointed. But this disappointment was his great gift to us. In order to carry us thus far he had used all his strength, and it was his own wish that we should feel dissatisfied and wish to go on. We must be grateful to him for taking us with him. We must be doubly grateful to him for arousing our curiosity, pointing to an unknown world and telling us to go out and explore it for ourselves.

An aspect of the introduction of Western theory in the period prior to the New Culture Movement was the

1. Cf. Chang Hsing-hên, Ou-hua tung-chien shih 張星煥, 歐化東漸史 pp. 111-113.
2. Emi Siao, The Childhood of Mao Tsê-tung, p. 20.
3. Hu Shih, Ssü shih tzü-shu, 四十自述 pp. 100-101.

translation of Western books. Western books began to be translated in quantity in the last quarter of the nineteenth century,<sup>1</sup> and provided much of the inspiration for the Hundred Days Reform in 1898.

Some translations of scientific books were undertaken in connection with the establishment of the arsenals and other forms of bureaucratic enterprise in the period, the most important of this work being that done in Shanghai by Dr. John Fryer, who was head of a translation bureau there from 1867 to 1896.<sup>2</sup> As far as historical and sociological books are concerned, the most active organization doing translation work was the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese, known later as the Christian Literature Society, which also operated from Shanghai. The Society made ~~it~~ its task not only the propagation of Christianity by the dissemination of the Scriptures, but the introduction to China of those advances of learning which it believed to be among the benefits of what it termed "Christian civilization". In his last annual report to the C.L.S., Dr. Timothy Richard said this of its early work:

A good many years ago they felt that China needed help from abroad, for when they looked at the text books used in the schools throughout China they found that they lacked four things. One was the lack of true science; the next was the lack of true history; the next was the lack of true economics; and last, the lack of true religion..... the C.L.S. stepped in to help China to understand her problems and to bring her abreast of other nations.<sup>3</sup>

The Society arranged for Western books to be peddled among the candidates at the triennial examination at Peking in

1. We have omitted the translation of a considerable number of Western books by the Jesuits in the two centuries beginning from the end of the Sixteenth. During that period "at least 80 Jesuits of various nationalities participated in translating into Chinese more than 400 works covering fields of knowledge new to the Chinese". (Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, in Far Eastern Quarterly, XIII, 3, May, 1954, p.314) Here we are concerned with those aspects of translation with a direct bearing on the rise of the new literature.
2. See John Fryer, An Account of the Department for the Translation of Foreign Books at the Kiang-nan Arsenal, in the North China Herald, 24, June 29th, 1880, and Hummel, Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, Vol. II, pp. 721-722.
3. W. Soothill, Timothy Richard of China, p. 321, see also E. R. Hughes, The Invasion of China by the Western World, p. 69.

1892 and at other provincial examinations. But it was not until after the Chinese defeat in the war with Japan in 1894 that Western books on historical subjects began to have a mass influence among the official class. In 1895 Chinese bookshops began to sell translations of Western works for the first time, and it was just at this time that two very influential works were completed and published. The first of these was Richard's translation of Mackenzie's History of the Nineteenth Century (~~a work with a strong British bias~~); the second, Dr. J. Allen Young's own History of the Sino-Japanese War. The sale of the former book was immense. It is estimated that of pirated copies alone well over a million were sold throughout China.

The early Chinese returned students and diplomats also played a big part in the dissemination of knowledge about the West. The most important early Chinese translator was undoubtedly Yen Fu,<sup>1</sup> who was also, at least in the early period of his return from Britain, an ardent advocate of the "British Way of Life". He was also at heart a constitutional monarchist, and could not bear the success of the 1911 Revolution. His final political act was support for Yüan Shin-k'ai in his attempt to become Emperor in 1915. But, like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, the effect of his writings was considerable when they were first produced.

Yen Fu's translations included J.S. Mill's On Liberty and System of Logic; H. Spencer's Study of Sociology;



1. W. Soothill, op. cit., p. 183.

2. See Chou Chên-ju Yen Fu Ssu-hsiang yen-chiu, 周振甫, 嚴復思  
想研究

Adam Smith's Enquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations; Montesquieu's L'Esprit des Loix; and T. H. Huxley's Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays.<sup>1</sup> If anything the most popular of all these translations was the last mentioned. It certainly is the one most acknowledged in the reminiscences of Chinese who were young at that time.<sup>2.</sup>

The particular contribution of Huxley to the thought of the time, and to evolutionary theory in particular, was hardly appreciated in China. It was mainly two things that attracted the readers of the translation. One was the simple idea that the process of history consists in a constant improvement in the the state of things, and the second was the theory of natural selection. The latter idea, as we have seen above, was interpreted by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao in a mechanistic way to apply to international life and the struggle between nations for supremacy. This aspect of evolutionism provided some stimulus to youth, spurring them into seeking means of making China strong, so that she could compete with other nations. The idea became so fashionable that many adopted personal names from the terminology of evolutionism. The "shih"<sup>3.</sup> of Hu Shih, for example, means "fit" in the sense of "survival of the fittest".

The idea of progress as the rule of history was also extremely influential as it was diametrically opposed to the traditional Chinese idea of constantly looking backward and

1. For a more complete list see Ch'ea Ping-k'un, Tsui-chin san shih nien Chung-kuo wen-hsueh shih 陳炳堃, 最近三十  
pp. ~~86-87~~. 年中國文學史 rh 86-87
2. Kuo Mo-jo, Hu Shih and Lu Hsün all make special mention of it in their memoirs of the period.
3. 通 See Hu Shih, op. cit., p. 99, where he gives other examples of Darwinian terminology used in personal names.

modelling behaviour on a supposed golden age in antiquity. The idea of progress was not peculiar to Huxley's writing. It was implied in the early-Victorian optimism of most of the political and sociological writing introduced from the West at that time. But Darwin had produced evidence for progress in the field of natural science, and Huxley had begun to project the biological evolutionary theory into the field of human society. Huxley believed firmly that it was possible for man to "modify the conditions of his existence", and suggested that it was possible to "change the nature of man himself" by means of "combating the cosmic process".<sup>1.</sup>

Many of the important writers of modern China were influenced by this translation of Huxley. Some, like Hu Shih, abandoned primitive evolutionism in favour of more sophisticated philosophies, such as pragmatism, while others, such as Lu Hsün, were able to find in it a suitable philosophic basis during a large part of their lives. Lu Hsün's conscious philosophical belief was in essence that of primitive evolutionism during the period in which he wrote most of his stories, though it was shot through with all kinds of extraneous influences. He, like many other writers, abandoned it in favour of Marxism in the late twenties.<sup>2.</sup>

The work begun by the early translators in the treaty ports and continued by Yen Fu, was carried on in the early Republic period by Ma Chün-wu.<sup>3.</sup> He was responsible for the

1. See T. Huxley and Julian Huxley, Evolution and Ethics, p. 84.
2. See below, Chapter V, p. 229
3. See Ch'en Ping-k'un, op. cit., pp. 61-63      Another body responsible for translating Western works on philosophy, political science, etc., was the Shang chih hsueh hui 尚志學會 which was founded in 1910. After the start of the New Culture Movement this body was responsible for inviting a number of eminent Western scholars to China, including John Dewey and Bertrand Russell. (See Timothy Tingfang Lew, China's Renaissance and the Christian Opportunity, in The Chinese Recorder, LII, No. 5, May, 1921, p. 304.)

first complete translations of Darwin's Origin of Species and Rousseau's Le Contrat Sociale. After Ma, came the New Culture Movement and the host of translators who contributed to the journals which sprang up, particularly after May 4th Movement of 1919.

The earliest translations of Western literature were made by Lin Shu. Without knowing any foreign languages he translated over 150 Western books, most of them novels but also some plays. The first of his translations was La Dame aux Camelias, and it was followed by a continuous stream of translations which were published in various journals and also as separate volumes throughout the first two decades of this century. As he used an oral translator who sat by his side while he worked, the danger of mistranslation was greatly increased. But although mistakes certainly occurred in his work which his enemies delighted in pointing out, they remain nevertheless an impressive monument to a whole period of literary relations between China and the West.

Lin Shu was a follower of the fashionable T'ung-ch'eng<sup>1.</sup> school of prose writing which arose during the middle of the Ch'ing period as a reaction to the earlier tendency towards ornate antithetical prose. It was a movement which, in some ways, was parallel to the Ku-wen<sup>2.</sup> movement of the T'ang and Sung dynasties, but did not have the same social origins. Although the movement had produced some good prose in its day, it had by the end of the Ch'ing period passed its zenith, and its adherents produced nothing of great value and prided themselves on imitation. Lin Shu, however, differed from the other followers of this school of writing in that he had been considerably influenced by the Reform Movement of K'ang Yu-wei, and

1. 桐城 See Ch'en Ping-k'ung, Tsui-chin san shih nien  
Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih pp. 77-100.
2. See below Chapter ~~IV~~<sup>II</sup>, p. 96 and note.



had begun to interest himself in Western literature. He valued the Western novels for their highly moral content, but also had some appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of Western novel-writing, and was enthusiastic about their strong emotional <sup>favour</sup>~~content~~. He even ventured to suggest that Western novels, particularly those of Dickens and Scott whom he admired more than any other novelists, compared favourably with the writings of the great classical Chinese historians and prose writers as well as with the Dream of the Red Chamber (Hung lou meng)<sup>1</sup> or the Water Margin (Shui hu chuan)<sup>2</sup>. This was a telling blow against those who denied that Western thought or literature had anything to offer China. The books he translated included 93 English, 25 French, 19 American and 6 Russian works, as well as a number from other countries. The authors he translated most of were, surprisingly, Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle, for whom he had a high regard. He translated 20 of the former and 7 of the latter. Of Dumas (fils) he translated 5 books and also 5 of Dickens (Oliver Twist, Dombey and Son, Nicholas Nickleby, Old Curiosity Shop and David Copperfield). He also translated two of Scott (Ivanhoe and The Talisman) and 4 Shakespeare plays. All of his translations were made into the classical language (wen-yen)<sup>3</sup> in an impeccable style, and were very widely read until superseded by vernacular translations in the 'twenties and 'thirties. Later Lin Shu became one of the most active opponents of the Literary Revolution, and a strong upholder of the "national essence"<sup>4</sup> but, ironically ~~enough~~, he did as much as anyone in the Reform period.

1. 紅樓夢

2. 水滸傳

3. 文言

4. See below, Chapter IV, pp. 216-217

to prepare the ground for the success of the new literature. Many of the new writers received their first impressions of Western literature from his translations; several have admitted their indebtedness to him for translating Scott or Dickens.<sup>1.</sup>

The Reform Movement not only produced a distinctive body of political doctrines, but also made its own contribution to the development of literary thought. The ideas of modernization and the patriotic feeling which lay behind them provided the theme of much literary work in the fields of poetry and the novel, as well as inspiring the creation by the new journalism of a simpler and more grammatically logical style of prose writing.<sup>2.</sup>

An important trend in literature prior to the Literary Revolution was the promotion of the novel to a place of honour in the eyes of an important section of the intellectual class. The novel had, in fact, been the leading literary form since the Ming Dynasty, but apart from the partisanship of a number of individuals such as Fêng Mêng-lung<sup>3.</sup> of the late Ming period and Chin Sheng-t'an<sup>4.</sup> who died early in the Ch'ing period, the novel was regarded by the official class as outside the pale of true literature, suitable only for amusement at times of idleness, and certainly not as a subject for serious study. It is probable that the rise of the novel in China is connected with the development of urban society and the increase in importance of merchant capital in the economy; though there is much need for research on the question of the reading public of the novel,

1. Notably Kuo Mo-jo and Lu Hsün.

2. The style alluded to is the so-called New Style (hsin wên-t'i 新文体) developed by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao early in this century for journalistic use and used by him and other writers for discourse in general. Although grammatically still a variety of wên-yen and using the basic wên-yen vocabulary, it nevertheless included many new terms translated from the West and adopted from Japanese.

It also used longer sentences than was usual in wên-yen, being influenced in this respect by Western languages. The style had the advantage of simplicity and lucidity, and helped Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the other political writers of the period before the Literary Revolution to reach a wide audience. Chang Shih-chao increased the popularity of the style in the early years of the Republic in the journal Chia-yin tsa-chih 甲寅雜誌 and the early articles in New Youth (Hsin ch'ing nien 新青年) by Ch'ên Tu-hsiu, etc., also used it.

See Ch'ên Ping-k'un, op.cit., pp. 101-124.

3. See Hummel, Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, Vol. I, p. 24

4. See ibid., Vol. 1, p. 164

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and until it is done it is difficult to speak in precise terms of the social basis of literary trends during Ming and Ch'ing times. But it is certainly the case that the novels of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, and especially of the great realistic novels such as Water Margin (Shui hu chuan)<sup>1.</sup>, Chin P'ing Mei,<sup>2.</sup> Dream of the Red Chamber (Hung lou meng)<sup>3.</sup> and Unofficial History of Officials (Ju lin wai shih)<sup>4.</sup>, contain far more penetrating social criticism than the more conventional forms of literature. This resulted from a more critical attitude to society than had existed previously or was officially sanctioned. There is much less of the "taking society for granted" than is usual in feudal literature, and social institutions which are a fundamental part of the established order are subjected to analysis and satire as, for instance, the bureaucracy and the examination system in Ju lin wai shih. The existence of the novel as a form depended on the ability of writers to extend their range of vision to encompass a relatively large section of life, and to view it with sufficient understanding of the complicated relationships between events and personalities to be able to sustain a detailed narrative of epic proportions. This could never be done by adhering to those of the conventional literary theories which demand the forcing of life into certain fixed patterns laid down by the laws of morality. True, the writers of the novels may have professed beliefs which were fundamentally not so far removed from the conventional, either Confucian or

1. 水滸傳
2. 金瓶梅
3. 紅樓夢
4. 儒林外史

Buddhist, Taoist or else a compound of these. For example, it is possible from the text of the Hung lou meng to make a shrewd guess at the kind of contribution the author, Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in, would make to a philosophical discussion. But by virtue of the content of their literary output these writers were, in fact, doing something more than was sanctioned by their beliefs.

The inferior position of the novel was reinforced by the conventional prejudice against the vernacular language, which resulted from the political aim of the rulers to confine learning and scholarship to their own ranks. In the Ch'ing dynasty, because the ruling house was alien, there was an even greater urgency to stifle criticism, and the literary censorship became particularly severe. The examination system perpetuated the literary language as it forced all aspiring officials to spend their formative years on classical studies, and on perfecting the quite artificial but highly exacting styles of writing (particularly the Eight-legged essay) demanded by the examiners.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced a spate of new novels, several of them being of high quality. Hu Shih has divided the novel writing of the period into two schools, the Northern and the Southern. The Northern School continues the tradition of the Shui hu chuan, which stems directly from the tales of heroism loved by the audiences of story-tellers, and which though popular and lively in form, are

1. 曹雪芹

2. See, for instance, L. Carrington Goodrich, The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-lung.

3. See below, Chapter IV p. 188

4. See Hu Shih, Wu-shih nien lai Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh. 五十年來  
中國文學



conventional in social content, and do not mark any particularly interesting advance on earlier literature. The Southern School, on the contrary, stems from the Ju lin wai shih tradition of satirical writing, and is more directly influenced by Western literature and the ideas of the Reform Movement. Several developments in form can be found in them in addition to their obvious debt to new thought, and in both respects they form a transitional phase between the old Chinese novel and the new novel inspired by modern ideas.

It was Liang Ch'i-ch'ao who made the greatest contribution to the promotion of the novel to a position of greater honour (though this was mainly in the eyes of the Reformers; there still remained the ultra-conservatives who retained their traditional scorn). During his exile in Japan he founded the magazine New Stories (Hsin hsiao-shuo),<sup>1.</sup> which was one of the earliest and most influential of a spate of Chinese magazines featuring new and translated novels produced before the Literary Revolution. In the first issue of the magazine, published in 1902, he wrote:

The rejuvenation of the people of a nation depends on the rejuvenation of its novels. The reform of morals, beliefs, politics, habits, arts and sciences, even of the human mind and personality all depend on the reform of the novel. Why? Because the novel has incalculable power to influence human affairs.

Let me put one question:- Why is it that mankind in general prefers the novel to any other kind of book? The answer must be that it is simple to read and understand, and at the same time full of entertainment and interest.<sup>2.</sup>

The outlook on the novel which Liang was expressing was completely utilitarian. He regarded it not as a literary form in its own right, but simply as a tool for reforming society. This utilitarianism was in conformity with the Confucian doctrine of Literature as a vehicle of the Tao (Wên i tsai tao)<sup>1.</sup>, but Liang differed from the old theorists in the nature of the Tao which he wanted the novel to convey. (His emphasis on "rejuvenation" is explained best by reference to his essays on Rejuvenation of the People)<sup>2.</sup> Another new element in Liang's theory was the emphasis on popularisation. In making the novel the most important literary form, and at the same time emphasising its popular nature, he was putting forward what was in essence a new departure in Chinese literary theory. The main weakness in the literary ideas was that he was interested only in the use of the novel as a means of preaching to the people, and not as an art form which could be developed by the people themselves as part of a new popular literature. His outlook was still essentially aristocratic and authoritarian, as was the Reform Movement itself, and so he never thought of advocating a general literary reform, which had to wait for the rise of the new intellectuals nearly two decades later.

The novels of this period are deserving of a special study, and in some ways represent a transition from the old novel to the new novel influenced by the West. Generally they have a strong satirical element, though this is often

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1. 文以載道

2. See above, p 28.

exaggerated to the extent of defeating its own purposes. Lu Hsün, in his History of Chinese Fiction, called them Novels of Rebuke (ch'ien-tse<sup>1</sup> hsiao-shuo). Their satire was usually directed against the corruption of officialdom, and one of them, Li Po-yüan's The Present Condition of the Bureaucracy (Kuan-ch'ang hsien-hsing chi)<sup>2</sup>, is concerned with little else. In fact, in all sixty chapters there is not a good official to be found. It is, however, incomplete, and its author intended to write a sequel which was to provide a lesson in how officials should behave. Li Po-yüan was a pioneer in journalism in Shanghai and a friend of another novelist who wrote in a similar vein, Wu Wo-yao. Wu wrote The Strange Things I Have Witnessed During the Past Twenty Years (Erh shih nien mu-tu<sup>3</sup> ~~kuai~~ kuai hsien-chuang), the Strange Case Involving Nine Lives (Chiu ming ch'i yüan)<sup>4</sup> and the Sea of ~~Love~~ (~~Nien hai hua~~ Hien hai hua)<sup>5</sup>. While the Strange Things, etc., is the most widely read and seriously intended of these, the latter two are unusual in the fiction of the period for the compactness of their form and the various Western formal influences which they display. While the former is clearly influenced by English detective fiction, the latter has a tragic ending, sharply contrasting with the traditional "rounding-off" (t'uan-yüan)<sup>6</sup>.

The most technically accomplished novel of the period was The Travels of Lao Ts'an (Lao Ts'an yu chi)<sup>7</sup> by Liu O.<sup>8</sup> It includes several passages of ~~description of~~ <sup>descriptions of</sup> scenery and of performances of music which are remarkably beautiful, and which

1. 讀賣小說  
中國小說史略 See Lu Hsün, Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shin-lüeh,  
p'ien 28.

2. 李伯元, 官場現形記

3. 吳沃堯, 二十年目睹之怪現狀

4. 九命奇冤

5. 恨海

6. 團圓

7. 老殘遊記

8. 劉鶚

avoid the use of the usual cliches traditionally used in such description. Liu O was an official who was in and out of several offices during the last years of the Manchu dynasty, and was accused of treachery when he purchased grain from the Russian troops occupying the government grain stores during the Boxer Rebellion. He was for a time concerned with water conservancy on a stretch of the Yellow River as well as with a number of industrial enterprises, all of which failed. He also took an interest in music, astronomy and translations of Western books and was a pioneer collector of oracle bones. All of these activities enriched his novel.

The Travels of Lao Ts'an, while possessing many good qualities, was less intellectually modern than some of the other novels of the period. In particular the author still retained the official's disdain for the "stupid" common people, and was violently opposed to the revolutionaries. He had a hatred for cruel and tyrannical officials, however, and some of his views, such as those on the social reasons for prostitution for example, were well in advance of the conventional outlook of the time. Some of his ideas can clearly be seen to have derived from Darwinian biology, which, as we have seen, was influential at the time. Yet when we read the ideas propounded in Chapters 7 to 11 of the novel (Shen Tzu-p'ing's visit to Peach Blossom Mountain) we can see how unscientific his outlook was.

If Lao Ts'an yu chi was mainly traditional in content, the same could certainly be said of its form. Professor Shadick, in the introduction to his translation of the novel, wrote that

precedents could be found for almost every incident and every theme.<sup>1</sup> The traditional formal features of the novel include the directness of the narrative, the lack of abridgement in respect of seemingly trivial detail, the episodic arrangement of the chapters and the looseness of construction, all of which are common to the old Chinese novels. The introduction of fantasy to an otherwise realistic story, and particularly the use of a dream to open the novel (even if it does include a steamboat!) are also typical of the old novel.

After the downfall of the Manchus the novel declined in quality. Those novels which we have discussed above benefited from being in the old tradition, even if they were the last of the line. They had arisen from the degree of introspection which the Reform Movement had brought into Chinese society following China's defeats at the hands of the Western powers and Japan. It was an introspection carried out by writers who were still integrated in the old society and who still had a more or less steady vantage point from which to view that society, and a sound enough literary training and background to be able to present their views of people and events in a polished form. After the fall of the Manchus society became so shaken that such a steadiness of view became impossible. The destructive effect of the revolutionary changes from 1910 to 1927 made it extremely difficult for good novels to be written. This was partly because the intellectuals themselves were caught up in the stream of political movements, and had little time to

Li Ba

1. H. Shadick, The Travels of Lao Ts'an, Introduction.



sit down to write long works of literature. Most of the writing in the early years of the new literature were published in magazines to which the shorter narrative was more suited. Partly too, it was because life itself was in turmoil, and the unifying effect of the revolutionary movements of the mid-twenties had not had time to make themselves felt in the literary field.

After the fall of the Manchus there ~~were~~<sup>were</sup> produced a flood of inferior imitations of the late Ch'ing novels, which, while containing invective against corruption and the politics of the war-lord governments, were lacking both in ideological depth and literary skill. The novels of this period came to be called Novels of Darkness (Hei mu hsiao-shuo)<sup>1</sup>. This term originated in the titles of many of the novels themselves:-  
A Panorama of China's Darkness (Chung-kuo hei mu ta-kuan)<sup>2</sup>,  
A Panorama of the Darkness of Peking (Pei-ching hei mu ta kuan)<sup>3</sup>,  
A New Account of the Darkness of Shanghai (Shang-hai hei mu hsin-pien)<sup>4</sup>, etc. This type of novel became so much the fashion that in 1915 a well-known newspaper published an advertisement for contributors of stories about "China's Darkness" for its feature page.<sup>5</sup>

This decay of the novel must be attributed to the decay of the old society itself. The novels of the period came from the pens of intellectuals who, while remaining part of the old society in outlook, had become uprooted from their class and traditional way of life, many of them to live uncertain lives in the cities selling their literary talent for

1. 黑幕小說
2. 中國黑幕大觀
3. 北京黑幕大觀
4. 上海黑幕新編
5. See Chung-kuo hsin wên-hsueh ta hsi, wên-hsueh lun-chêng chi,  
文學論集 pp. 349ff.

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money (money had not been the main incentive for the traditional novel-writer). It was the common practice of Chinese journalism to pay by the number of words, which hardly made for high quality. Owing to the growth of the urban population, especially in Shanghai, there was an expansion of popular journals catering for a low literary taste, which was partly brought about also by the influence of Western commercialised "popular" literature.

In poetry, too, there was some movement away from the imitative schools, though these remained influential right up to the time of the Literary Revolution. T'an Ssu-t'ung<sup>1</sup>, one of the six martyrs of the Reform Movement and author of the remarkable document of the Reform Period On Benevolence (Jên-hsueh)<sup>2</sup> and another prominent reformer, Hsia Tseng-yu<sup>3</sup>, both talked of a "Revolution in poetry" (Shih-chieh ko-ming)<sup>4</sup>, and attempted to write a clear poetry of ideas and to include modern terms. Apart from the use of simple language they did not, however, make any revolutionary changes of technique, and their introduction of transliterated English words, such as pa-li-men<sup>5</sup> (parliament), into a five-character line did not make for elegance. Their's was not a very successful attempt to pour new wine into old bottles.

A poet who had a few more ideas on poetic reform was Huang Tsun-hsien<sup>6</sup>, an official in the diplomatic service who spent some time in America, Malaya and Japan, and wrote extensively about the latter country. He was a patriot who, like so many of his generation, was distressed to see the foreigners

1. 譚嗣同

2. 仁學

3. 夏曾佐

See Ch'en Ping-k'un, op.cit., p. 39 ff.

4. \*詩界革命

5. 巴里門

6. 黃遵憲

riding rough-shod over his country, but did not do anything very drastic to stop them. His poetry is full of patriotic sentiment, however, and he was inspired to verse by all the main events of his time, so that Liang Ch'i-ch'ao called him the "Historian Poet" (Shih shih). He started writing his reformist poetry in 1865 at the age of 17, and thus was earlier than many of the other reformers. He advocated a relaxation of the restrictions of poetry, and used the phrase "the pen following the mouth" (Wo shou hsieh wo k'ou). His poetry, which was on a variety of patriotic and other modern themes had fewer restrictions of form than those of the conventional schools, but it was of a higher order than Hsia Tseng-yu's or T'an Ssu-t'ung's. Although advocating this more plain-speaking style, he did not advocate or write pai-hua poetry. Nevertheless he frequently used modern rhymes and <sup>he</sup> rhymed words of different tones. 3.

1. 詩史

2. 我手寫我口

3. See Wang Yao, Wan-Ch'ing Shih-jên Huang Tsun-hsien 王瑤, 晚  
清詩人黃尊憲 in Jên-min wên-hsueh 人民文學  
chüan 4, No. 3, July, 1951.

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## Education Reform.

One of the fundamental methods of modernising China adopted by the Reform Movement was the modernisation of the Chinese education system. First adopted during the Hundred Days Reform, then revoked by the Empress Dowager, it was finally reintroduced in 1904, when a commission was appointed imperially to study the Chinese education system. As a result a complete plan for a national school system was outlined and accepted by the imperial government. In the following year the old examination system was abolished by edict, and a Ministry of Education was established. The system was modelled on that of Japan, and, in addition to kindergarten and lower and higher primary schools, it allowed for one middle school to be established in each prefecture (fu). The aims of the new system were said to be to instil:-

- (i) Loyalty to the Emperor.
- (ii) Faith in Confucianism.
- (iii) Public-mindedness.
- (iv) Courage.
- (v) Practicability.

These aims were close to the policy of the more conservative reformers and "self-strengtheners".

Although considerable vigour was put into the establishment of the system, especially by individuals in various localities, its success depended ultimately on the supply of adequate funds and of teachers. The latter were particularly difficult to obtain, especially in modern subjects, and the old classical studies went on uninterrupted in many

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1. See the article on education by King Chu in Sophia H. Chen Zen (ed.) A Symposium on Chinese Culture, pp. 240-260.



localities with the support of the local gentry. The knowledge of many of the teachers was pitifully inadequate. Kuo Mo-jo writes of one Geography teacher in his middle school who thought that Japan was South of China and Korea East of Japan.<sup>1.</sup> In some places teachers of scientific and other subjects were introduced from Japan, and Chinese teachers had to stand by their sides as they taught, and translate their words into Chinese. Both Lu Hsün and Shên Chün-ju did this at a school in Hangchow in 1909.<sup>2.</sup>

Besides the official school system there were also private schools, missionary schools and specialist technical schools. The early Westernisers, such as Li Hung-chang and Chang Chih-tung, set up various academies in conjunction with their arsenals, mines and other projects. Lu Hsün attended one such school established by Liu K'un-i<sup>3</sup> in Nanking to provide technicians for the Ch'ing-lung shan<sup>4</sup> mine. But the education provided was very mixed in quality, and rarely fulfilled its intended function. Lu Hsün's education there consisted of a mixture of Chinese classical essay-writing, elementary German and a little elementary science and mathematics - a practical example of the eclectic methods of the reformers. When Lu Hsün visited the mine connected with the school, it was producing just enough coal to keep the pump working which prevented the water-level in the mine from rising - though at the time of his visit the water was gaining on the pump.<sup>5.</sup>

1. Kuo Mo-jo, op. cit., p. 106.

2. 魯凡, 漢釣儒  
魯凡地書 pp. 84-85. See 歐陽凡海, Lu Hsün ti shu,

3. 劉坤一

4. 青龍川

5. See 魯凡全集, II, pp. 401-408, where Lu Hsün gives his own account of the education at the Mining Academy at Nanking. See also Chou Hsia-shou, Lu Hsün hsiao-shuo li ti jen-wu, 周遐壽, 魯凡書裡地人物 for a full account of the students' life in the Nanking Naval Academy. Also see below, Chapter V, p. 229

Besides these early technical schools, many other types of private or semi-official schools were established, either attached to factories or providing training for some profession, particularly law. Mao Tse-tung has described how he was tempted to enrol in a school of soap-making, whose prospectus claimed that it would provide a fine opportunity to contribute to the strengthening of the country!<sup>1.</sup> Not all private schools were bad. One attended by Hu Shih in Shanghai appears to have been run by an able principal, and to have provided a limited but sound education.<sup>2.</sup> But elsewhere graft and corruption were common, and, even in the state schools, places could be bought by the wealthy for their sons regardless of their ability. This dragged down standards, and was frustrating for those with ability but no wealth.<sup>3.</sup>

It would not be accurate to give an entirely negative account of the beginnings of the modern school system in China. Improvements were introduced in 1912 at the First National Conference of Education held in Peking, when the aims of the education system were changed to "To pay special attention to the development of morals, technical and military training, and the cultivation of aesthetic power."<sup>4.</sup>

Not only were these improvements important, but the overthrow in 1905 of the traditional examination system was a certain liberating influence in itself. The effect of the old examinations had been to canalize scholarship along

1. Emi Siao, op. cit., p. 34.
2. See Hu Shih, op. cit., pp. 86-87 and 95-96.
3. See Kuo Mo-jo, op.cit., p. 197, also Paul S. Reinsch,  
Political and Intellectual Currents in the Far East,  
pp. 202-204.
4. See King Chu, loc.cit.

strictly conventional lines. This had its effect on literature, and especially ensured the preservation of the classical language as the written medium.

The weaknesses of the new system meant that, for a considerable period, it remained necessary for students requiring a thorough knowledge of their subject to go abroad to finish their education, as there were no adequate facilities in China. The highest aim among young students was to travel to America or Europe, next came Japan, while the National University, Peking, came third. After the turn of the century students wishing to study abroad received increasing official encouragement.<sup>1</sup> For various reasons they were encouraged most to go to Japan. In 1900 there were 591 students in that country; in January, 1905, the year of the abolition of the old examinations, there were 2,406, while by the end of the same year there were 8,620. By 1919 the figure had risen to an estimated 15,000 to 25,000. Next in popularity was America with 1,700 students by 1924, and third Great Britain with 300 in 1916.<sup>2</sup>

The subjects studied were mostly of a practical nature - law, medicine, applied science, such as mining and engineering. Literature held a very low position, partly as it offered little prospect of adequate financial returns in China, but mainly because the emphasis was on the physical strengthening of China, and the value of Western literature and

1. See Tober, op.cit., (Chang's book contains the most authoritative statement of the official case for sending students abroad.) See also Shu Hsin-ch'eng, Chin-tai Chung-kuo liu-hsueh shih 舒新城, 近代中國留學史 p.21.
2. See H. F. MacNair, The Chinese Abroad, p. 239 et seq. The statistics are only rough estimates.

philosophy was not appreciated. Many of those who received strong literary influences during their period as students abroad had originally intended to study a more practical subject. Kuo Mo-jo and Lu Hsün are such cases. If later those studying literature increased in numbers somewhat, they remained nevertheless a <sup>if important</sup> small minority. 1.

1. In a survey of the occupations of returned students, one observer noted: "In the fine arts, there is little participation or great interest taken, as the object of emigrant students has generally been education, not in the arts, but rather in the sciences.

In literature the returned students have not, as yet, shown an independent interest, but only as an incident in the pursuit of other professions..... Few, if any, have adopted the muse of literature as a sole and life-long occupation. (Mei Hua-chuen, op.cit., pp. 163-164.)



### The New Culture Movement.

Although the events of May, 1919, gave a vital impulse to the New Culture Movement, it had already been in progress for several years. In September, 1915, the first issue of The Youth Magazine (Ch'ing-nien tsa-chih)<sup>1.</sup> was produced by Ch'en Tu-hsiu,<sup>2.</sup> with the aim of promoting new thought. In the following year its name was changed to New Youth (Hsin ch'ing-nien)<sup>3.</sup> In 1916 also Tsai Yüan-p'ei<sup>4.</sup> was appointed to the rectorship of a rejuvenated Peking National University, and boldly put into operation a policy of academic freedom, introducing a number of young progressive teachers who had been studying abroad.<sup>5.</sup> This group was to become the nucleus of the leadership of the New Culture Movement. It included Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Hu Shih, the initiators of the Literary Revolution.

In his reminiscences of his student days at Peking University, the novelist Yang Chen-sheng<sup>6.</sup> has described how, under the enlightened chancellorship of Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei, Peking University became a centre for the fundamental activities of the New Culture Movement; the introduction of new ideas and the critical examination of the old. In the old days it had been a stronghold of the old learning and the old morality, but under Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei the whole atmosphere changed. The young students of the university, who mostly came from conventional families from all parts of China, had all suffered to

1. 青年雜誌  
Shih-liao so-yin, See Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsueh ta hsi,  
史料索引 p.391.
2. 陳獨秀
3. 新青年 Ibid.
4. 蔡元培
5. See Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei's Policy for Peking University in Teng and Fairbank, op.cit., pp. 238-239.
6. 楊振聲  
hsueh Hui-i wu-ssu 回憶五四 in Jen-min wen-  
1954, No. 5, pp. 105-106.

some extent under the old family system, especially on the question of marriage. In the university they came for the first time into contact with modern thought on such questions, and naturally began to have doubts about the old customs. They were extremely receptive to the ideas propounded by the writers of the New Culture Movement, especially in New Youth, the effects of which paper on the students of the university was described by Yang as like the first clap of thunder in Spring. For the first time a considerable body of young students was being made aware of the nature of the age in which they were living, and made conscious of their special responsibilities as the "youth" of the nation. As Yang Chen-sheng put it, gradually, and in some cases suddenly, some of them "cast the fetters from their bodies, and rejoicing, burst free from the fortress of feudalism,"<sup>1.</sup> really feeling themselves to be the new youth of the age.

But in addition to being a centre for the introduction of ideas from the West, Peita was also a focal point of the struggle between the new and the old. At the time of the May 4th Movement, while one group of students produced two of the most important organs of the new movement, The Renaissance (Hsih-ch'ao)<sup>2.</sup> and The Citizen (Kuo-min)<sup>3.</sup>, another group published The National Heritage (Kuo-ku)<sup>4.</sup> in opposition. Nearly all the editorial work on all these periodicals was undertaken by the students who graduated from the Department of Chinese in 1919.<sup>5.</sup> Yang Chen-sheng wrote:

1. Loc. cit.

2. 新潮 See Chung-kuo hsin wên-hsueh ta hsi. shin-liao  
so yin, p. 405.

3. 國民

4. 國故

On the eve of May 4th Peita (Peking University) was on the one hand a nursery of new thought and on the other hand a wilderness of the old thought and literature. There were not only struggles between the University and people outside, but also among the students and between the students and the staff.

The struggle among the students was the most open, and it was also very immature. For while some students were sitting close to the lamplight, glueing their noses to the tiny characters of Li Shen's commentary to the Wên-hsüan, others were reciting Byron's poetry outside .... While in one corner of the room some were chanting the prose of the T'ung-ch'eng school, in another corner a group was discussing what would happen to Nora after she left the "Doll's House". Those chanting the ku-wên would cast malicious glances at those in the discussion, and the latter would return them looks of contempt.<sup>1</sup>

Yang Chen-sheng described how the personal animosity which this schism generated even made it difficult for certain students to attend the same class.

The majority of the teachers at that time (1919) still supported the old morality, etc., especially in the Chinese Department. Whereas before the New Literature Movement one would support classical prose (san-wên)<sup>2</sup> and another the anti-thetical style (p'ien-wên)<sup>3</sup>, after the movement had begun they combined to attack pai-hua, and they did this openly in their lectures. Yang Chen-sheng remembers how Ku Hung-ming (a notorious supporter of the worst aspects of Chinese tradition)<sup>4</sup>, whose subject was the History of European Literature, used to stand in front of the class complete with queue, and expatiate on the virtues of the monarchy.

Yet the attraction of the new ideas was extremely strong, and the presence in Peking University of such of their

1. Yang Chen-sheng, op. cit.

2. 散文

3. 馬并文

4. 章鴻銘 See below, note to p.62.

advocates as Ch'ên Tu-hsiu, Hu Shih, Li Ta-chao,<sup>1.</sup> Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung,<sup>2.</sup> etc., was more than enough to ensure their ultimate victory in the minds of the young students.

The publication of New Youth has been said to mark the beginning of a split in the intellectual life of China, and the first vital challenge of the most fundamental aspects of Chinese thought by new ideas of the West.<sup>3.</sup> Hitherto Western philosophy had been regarded as possibly containing some elements of practical value to the modernisation of China, but it had not been felt that it should oust traditional beliefs which seemed firmly rooted in Chinese social institutions. Before this time, although there had been ardent Westernisers such as Yen Fu in the early years of his return from England, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao in some of his articles in the Hsin-min ts'ung-pao,<sup>4.</sup> and others, hardly anyone had questioned the value of Confucianism as a system of ethics, and it was on the question of Confucianism that the battle was soon joined.<sup>5</sup>

The first issue of The Youth Magazine published, among others, two articles by Ch'ên Tu-hsiu entitled A Respectful Warning to Youth (Ching kao ch'ing-nien)<sup>6</sup> and The French People and Modern Civilization (Fa-lan-hsi jen yü chin-tai wên-ming)<sup>7</sup>, and an article by Kao I-han entitled The Republic and the Awakening of Youth (Kung-ho kuo-chia yü ch'ing-nien chih tzü-chüeh).<sup>8.</sup> All of these articles were concerned with democracy, the rights of man and the opposition to autocracy. The first article directly concerned with Confucius was

1. 李大釗
2. 錢玄同
3. See above, p. 28
4. See above, p. 28
5. Hitherto ~~the~~ main emphasis among scholars had been on revision rather than rejection. See Introduction, p. 11
6. 敬告青年
7. 法蘭西人与近代文明 高一涵
8. 共和國家与青年之自覺



I Pai-sha's Critique of Confucius (K'ung-tzu p'ing-i)<sup>1.</sup> in the sixth issue of the first volume. In this article he attacked Confucianism as the ally of political despotism, and exposed what he called the "big secret" of how Confucianism had maintained its position of dominance for two thousand years. He declared that "Confucianism was utilised as the imperial puppet to monopolize the thought of the world and to restrict freedom."

In two articles in later issues, The Constitution and Confucianism (Hsien-fa yü k'ung-chiao)<sup>2.</sup> and Confucius and Modern Life (K'ung-tzu chih tao yü hsien-tai shêng-huo)<sup>3.</sup> Ch'ên Tu-hsiu sought to show that Confucianism was incompatible with modern political and social life:

If we still lived in an age of isolation and had no means of drawing comparisons with the Western theories of the rights of individual independence and equality, nobody would be in a position to argue against Confucianism. If it were said that we Chinese are an inferior race quite unlike Westerners and incapable of acquiring Western characteristics, I would disagree, but would be in no position to argue. But for a people, who have openly assumed the status of a republic and gained their inspiration from Western civilization, not to reject Confucianism which, with its clear differentiation of the lofty and the humble, is completely alien to Western civilization, is the height of stupidity. The position of a member of parliament who adheres to Confucianism is worth considering. It would be axiomatic to him that the common people do not discuss affairs of state, yet he would be deliberating as their representative. How can Confucianism permit of an elected parliament? If the Constitution were to include Confucianism as one of its clauses, all the remaining clauses could be done away with; for our

1. 易白沙 孔子評議
2. 憲法與孔教
3. 孔子之道與現代生活

present Constitution is in fact modelled on European polity, and European polity has its roots in the equality of human rights .....

The so-called rule of law in the West has as its ruling spirit the concept of all being equal before the law, and there being no difference of high or low status. Even monarchies have this as the underlying principle of their constitutions; democratic republics, it is needless to say, have it too.<sup>1.</sup>

He attacked the Three Cardinal Duties (Sang kang)<sup>2.</sup> and the Five Constant Relationships (Wu ch'ang)<sup>3.</sup> as being incompatible with the rule of law and criticised those writers who maintained that the emphasis on these duties was a later accretion alien to pristine Confucian dogma.

In ~~his second~~<sup>both</sup> articles Ch'ên was partly inspired by the attempt of K'ang Yu-wei and others to have Confucianism written into the Constitution as a kind of state religion.<sup>4.</sup> In it he took his analysis of the social position of Confucianism one stage further:

The pulse of modern life is its economy. The independence of the individual is a cardinal principle of economic theory and its influence must be felt in ethics. Thus the modern ethical principle of the sanctity of the individual personality and the economic principle of the sanctity of private property are interdependent and both inviolable. For this reason social order and material civilization have been enabled to make great strides. The Confucians base their teachings on the Cardinal Duties and Virtues. Sons and wives, being without personal independence, have no individual private property either.<sup>5</sup>

Ch'ên Tu-hsiu also discussed the position of women in Confucian doctrine, and contrasted it with the position of

1. Tu-hsiu wên-ts'un 獨秀文存 chüan 1, pp. 110-113.

2. 三綱

The Three Cardinal Duties were:-

- (i) Absolute loyalty to the emperor;
- (ii) Filial piety; and
- (iii) Submission of the wife to the husband.

3. 五常

The Five Relationships were:-

- (i) Between prince and minister;
- (ii) Between father and son;
- (iii) Between husband and wife;
- (iv) Between elder and younger brothers; and
- (v) Between friends.

They involved both duties and responsibilities which were fixed according to the requirements of the patriarchal and patrilineal family. See Feng Yu-lan, A History of Chinese Philosophy, Vol II, pp. 42-46.

4. See Liu Wu-chi, A Short History of Confucian Philosophy, pp. 183-184.

5. Tu-hsiu wên ts'un, chüan 1, p.117.

獨秀文存

women in Western countries. He advocated complete freedom for women to follow their own careers, to have economic as well as personal independence, to be free to choose their own husbands and to remarry after their husband's death, all of which he held to be contrary to the tenets of Confucianism on the question of women's rights.

He summed up the position of Confucianism in China in the following words:

Confucius lived in a feudal period; the virtues he advocated were feudal virtues. The observances and ways of life he taught were feudal. The political order he advocated was feudal. All these things did not extend beyond maintaining the interests and the prestige of a minority of royalty and aristocracy, and had no concern for the happiness of the majority of citizens. Can this be proved? According to the Confucians there is nothing more important in life than ritual observance, and in ancient politics nothing is more important than punishments. The Ch'ü Li says "the observance of ritual does not extend to the common people, and punishments do not extend to the superior people". Is this not cast-iron proof of the nature of Confucianism and the spirit of the feudal age?<sup>1</sup>.

Another writer who led the attack on Confucianism was Wu Yü.<sup>2</sup> He was so ardent in his views that he was given the title of the "single-handed demolisher of K'ung and Sons" (Chih-shou ta-tao K'ung-chia tien ti ying-hsiung)<sup>3</sup>. In an article entitled The Family System as the Basis of Autocracy (Chia-tsu chih-tu wei chuan-chih chu-i chih kên-chü lun)<sup>4</sup> he wrote:

If you examine the theory of Confucius you will see that it regards filial piety as the root of all actions. All the doctrines of Confucius take filial piety as their starting point. Those who hold no office and remain at home practise filial piety towards their parents, and those in office practise it towards their prince. Serving one's parents and superiors is a prerequisite for establishing oneself in life and making one's name. By progressing from serving

1. Ibid., p. 121.

2. 吳虞

3. 隻手打倒孔家店的英雄

4. 家族制度為專制主義之根劇論

one's father to serving one's prince and superiors, not only is one's name made, but also salary and rank is guaranteed. But filial piety, respect, loyalty and obedience, while being in the interests of the high and exalted, are of no benefit to the lowly.

The Confucians have made filial piety and brotherly submission the trunk and root of the family system for two thousand years, so solid and permanent that nothing could shake it. Patriarchal society hampered the military state and prevented it from maturing. Its damage is no less than that of floods and wild beasts.<sup>1</sup>

In this way Wu Yü took Ch'ên Tu-hsiu's arguments a stage further and demonstrated the organic connection between the Chinese patriarchal family and Confucian ethics. He sought to demonstrate that loyalty and filial piety were in essence one and the same thing. The chief aim of an autocracy was to produce an obedient and docile people, and this too was the effect of the traditional family system. As has been observed elsewhere, what exactly Wu Yü meant by the military state (the Chinese term he used was chün-kuo shê-hui<sup>2</sup>) is not clear, and it is still less clear in what way a militaristic China would have been superior to a patriarchal China. In fact Wu Yü was more effective as an iconoclast than as an architect, but he contributed much to the New Culture Movement nevertheless.

The standpoint of the leaders of the New Culture Movement resembles closely that of the theoreticians of the bourgeois revolutions in Europe. In the first issue of The Youth Magazine Ch'ên Tu-hsiu wrote an article entitled My Appeal to Youth<sup>3</sup> in which he advanced six principles for

1. New Youth, Vol. II, No. 6.

2. 軍國社會 <sup>華 滄</sup> See Hua Kang, Wu-ssü yün-tung shih, 五四運動史  
p. 129, where this article is quoted and discussed.

That the family and the state were linked in this way in the minds of the traditionalists was shown by the words of that extreme conservative, Ku Hung-ming, who wrote in the Chinese Students' Monthly in 1922: "Most of my Chinese friends are amused because of my fanatic loyalty towards the Tsing Dynasty. But my loyalty is not only a loyalty towards the Imperial House, under whose rule my ancestors had received benefits; my loyalty in this case is also a loyalty towards the religion of China, towards the cause of Chinese civilization and race.

..... What, then, is the religion of China? The religion of China is the religion of the Law of the Gentlemen, and the Grand Code of that religion is the grand code of Honour and Duty, the religion of loyalty.....

In fact, although filial piety is the root of social affection with the Chinese, the religion of loyalty is the basis - the source of honour, as Ruskin said, the social order in China.

Briefly, the religion and the moral basis of China rest on two words - Filial Piety and Loyalty." (See Ku Hung-ming, The Religion of a Gentleman in China in The Chinese Students' Monthly, Vol. XVII, No. 8, June, 1922, p. 677.)

3. See above, p. 58.



the youth of China to follow. They were:-

Be independent, not servile.  
 Progressive and not conservative.  
 Enterprising and not retiring.  
 World-minded and not isolationist.  
 Practical and not ceremonious.  
 Scientific and not speculative.<sup>1</sup>

These principles, which he expounded at some length, were later to become the basis of the two famous watchwords of the "Chinese Renaissance", "Science and Democracy", which he was the first to advance.<sup>2.</sup>

In the same issue of The Youth Magazine he wrote another article entitled The French and Modern Civilization in which he discussed the contribution which the French people have made to the progress of society. He particularly admired the Declaration of the Rights of Man and believed in democracy as the expression of the opposition of the peoples of Europe to feudal despotism. He also discussed Darwinism and Socialism, and the French contribution to them, as continuations of the currents of progress which the French Revolution had initiated. The opposite of despotism he took to be the rule of law. The remedy he advocated for China was for the rule of bureaucratic autocracy to be replaced by democracy, the pre-condition for this being for the "majority of citizens" to become aware of their capabilities as masters of the nation. Once they had seized the initiative they could then proceed to establish the rule of law.

It can be seen that the attitude of the New Culture Movement to the West, which was at this time expressed most

1. See Tu-hsiu wên-ts'un, chüan 1, pp. 1-10.
2. See below, pp. 66-67

clearly by Ch'ên Tu-hsiu, differed fundamentally from that of the early reformers, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao included. Ch'ên attacked the theory of the reformers that Chinese and Western cultures can be synthesized eclectically in the manner suggested, for example, by Chang Chih-tung in his Exhortation to Learning<sup>1</sup>. He wrote:

Whether in politics, scholarship, morality or literature, the Western method and the Chinese method are two absolutely different things, and can in no way be reconciled.<sup>2</sup>

It is for this reason that the leaders of the New Culture Movement are often called the Westernizing Party (ou-hua p'ai)<sup>3</sup> as against their opponents who were called the National Tradition Party (Kuo-ku p'ai)<sup>4</sup>.

The weakness of the New Culture Movement, especially at the beginning, arose from its being a purely intellectual movement. It failed to link its theories with the political struggle for democracy, and failed also to take full cognizance of the limitations of a purely intellectual movement in adverse political conditions. For modern ways of life to be successful in China it would be necessary to provide an economic base which would support them. If, for example, the son were to be independent of the father, he must have the opportunity of earning his own living at an early age. If women were to have equal rights, they must be able to find employment on an equal footing with men. This was only possible in a small minority of cases in China at that time, and to advocate these rights without giving any indication of

1. See above, p. 24
2. See New Youth, Vol. I, No. 4, December, 1915, and Benjamin Schwartz, Ch'en Tu-hsiu and the Acceptance of the Modern West, in the Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. XII, 1951. Schwartz makes the point that at this time Ch'en had a very imperfect appreciation of the West, and included in this conception all kinds of contradictory phenomena, some of which he later rejected. He believed that (i) The traditional Chinese patterns had sapped the physical and spiritual vitality of the Chinese people that it had paralysed their initiative and reduced them to a state of helpless inertia. (ii) That the Chinese pattern (the Confucian pattern in particular) had crushed the individual under an intolerable burden of family and social obligations. It had imprisoned the individual in a suffocating network of social relationships from which there was no escape. On the one hand it had crowded his life with unending social duties, and on the other it had deprived him of all independence and self-reliance and even self-respect. (iii) That the Confucian anti-utilitarian bias had produced a ruling class of indolent gentlemen lacking both the inclination and the ability to carry on creative enterprises. (Schwartz, op.cit., p. 64.) In short, his first acceptance of the West was based on the idea of individual emancipation from feudal relationships. He admired the West because it was "dynamic, warlike and enterprising" (loc.cit.), while the East was passive, inert and pacifistic. Later he was to discriminate more between the different social systems of the West.

3. 歐化派

4. 國故派

how they were to be won, and before anyone else had indicated it, was undoubtedly a weakness in contemporary theory. Although Wu Yü indicated the connection between autocracy and patriarchy, he failed to take the argument a step further and discuss the economic foundations of these social forms, particularly the rural agrarian system, while Ch'ên Tu-hsiu's political proposals were, to say the least, quite ineffectual.

Later, after the May 4th Movement, more clarity existed on these questions, but as the leadership of the May 4th Movement was still largely in the hands of the intellectuals, and the workers and peasants were only just beginning to be organized, the movement still retained some of its impractical character. It was not until the political movement developed that the ideals of the New Culture Movement had a possibility of being put into effect on a wide scale.

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1. Hua Kang, op. cit., pp. 139-147.

In January, 1919, Ch'ên Tu-hsiu published The Reply of the Defence in the Trial of the New Youth (Hsin ch'ing-nien <sup>1.</sup> tsui-an chih ta-pien shu) in answer to the attacks of the conservative opponents of the journal:

This magazine has been published for three years and has had thirty issues. What we have said has all been very commonplace, yet the world has reacted to us with alarm and astonishment, and we have been condemned on all sides. Not only the old school, but even the young students regard the New Youth as consisting of noxious, eccentric and immoral extremism which is sacreligious, illegal and rebellious. We who are responsible for the New Youth feel genuinely mortified and extremely pessimistic about the hopes of our country's reform.

Those who criticise our journal are of two kinds; one kind consists of some of our supporters, the other of our opponents. The first type of person has a measure of agreement with the policies we advocate, but when we by some chance remonstrate against something which is recognized by the world as rubbish, and fail to give detailed proof, and when in our style we fail to affect the tone of the gentry, they are afraid that our credit will be thereby reduced... With regard to this kind of opposition, my colleagues and I should express our thanks for their concern.

The second kind of critic, in their attitude to the policies of our journal, stand fundamentally in opposition to us. They condemn our journal because of our crimes of demolishing Confucianism, ritualism, the "National Essence" *Kuo-ssai (Kuo-tai)*, the traditional chastity, the old ethics (loyalty, ritual-piety and fidelity), the old art (the Chinese theatre), the old religion (belief in spirits), the old literature and the old political order (absolutism).

These crimes we acknowledge publicly. But if you go into the matter thoroughly you will see that we were originally quite guiltless and all these charges were brought against us as a result of our support for two gentlemen - Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science. To support Mr. Democracy we had to oppose Confucianism, ritualism, the traditional chastity, the old ethics, the old political order. To support Mr. Science we had to oppose the old art and religion. To support Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science we had to oppose the "National Essence" and the old literature. Will everyone please consider the matter very carefully, and ask themselves whether we have committed any

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1. 新青年罪案文選輯考 New Youth, chuan 6, No. 1.

2. 國粹

3. See above in 60



crimes other than our support for Messrs. Democracy and Science. If not, then please do not merely condemn our magazine, but oppose Messrs. Democracy and Science, and do so with boldness and vigour. This is the only fundamental and honest approach.<sup>1</sup>

Hu Shih regarded this definition of the New Culture Movement as inadequate and vague. In an article entitled The Meaning of the New Stream of Thought (Hsin ssü-ch'ao ti i-i)<sup>2</sup> he put forward another characterization of the movement which differed from that of Ch'ên Tu-hsiu. As the sub-heading of the article he used the following four phrases:-

Study problems.  
Introduce theories.  
Regulate the National Heritage.  
Build a new civilization.

According to my own observation, the fundamental meaning of the New Stream of Thought is to be found in a new attitude. This new attitude may be called the "critical attitude".

The critical attitude, in brief, demands that all things should be reassessed to determine what is good and what is bad. In more detail, the critical attitude demands the fulfilment of a number of requirements:-

(i) Of institutions and customs handed down by tradition we must demand - "Has this institution any value making it worth retaining today?"

(ii) With regard to sacred teachings handed down from antiquity we must ask - "Is this saying still correct today?"

(iii) Of behaviour and beliefs adhered to blindly by society we should ask - "Must it be right just because everyone believes it? Must I do this because others do it? Is there no other way that is better or more reasonable or beneficial?"<sup>2</sup>.

Hu Shih then discussed Nietzsche's phrase Trans-valuation of Values, which he believed, expressed very cogently

1. loc. cit.

2. 新思潮的意義 Hu Shih wen-ts'un, 胡適文存 chüan 4,  
pp. 151-164.

3. Ibid., pp. 151-153.

the spirit of enquiry in the New Culture Movement:-

Twenty years ago K'ang Yu-wei's Reform Party was like a flood or a wild beast. Now K'ang Yu-wei has become an antique. K'ang has not changed, but the people assessing him have, and so his value has changed. This is what is meant by Transvaluation of Values.<sup>1</sup>

As for the process of enquiry which the critical attitude entailed, Hu Shih isolated two main aspects of it for discussion. They were the study of problems and the introduction of theory:

If we turn the pages of the new magazines and papers of the past two or three years, we can see these two tendencies. On the side of the study of problems we can point to (i) The problem of Confucianism; (ii) the problem of literary reform; (iii) the problem of the unification of the National Language; (iv) the problem of the emancipation of women; (v) the problem of chastity and fidelity; (vi) the problem of ritualism (li-chiao); (vii) the problem of educational reform; (viii) the marriage problem; (ix) the problem of father and son; (x) the problem of drama reform ..... etc.; with regard to the introduction of theory we can point to the Ibsen number and the Marx number of the New Youth, the New Thought number of People's Clarion (Min To),<sup>2</sup> the Dewey number of New Education (Hsin Chiao-yü),<sup>3</sup> the Total Democracy number of Construction (Chien-she),<sup>4</sup>

and all the various kinds of Western doctrine introduced by such papers as the Peking Ch'en pao,<sup>5</sup> Kuo-min kung-pao,<sup>6</sup> Mei-chou p'ing-lun,<sup>7</sup> the Shanghai Hsing-ch'i p'ing-lun,<sup>8</sup> Shih-shih hsin pao,<sup>9</sup> Chieh-fang yü kai-tsao,<sup>10</sup> the Canton Min-feng chou-k'an,<sup>11</sup> etc.

This article by Hu Shih is concerned with the methodology of the New Culture Movement, while that of Ch'en was concerned with its content; and while Ch'en certainly erred on the side of vagueness, Hu Shih failed to appreciate that the New Culture Movement was not merely discussing the solution of a number of isolated social problems, but the whole

1. Ibid., pp. 153-154.

2. 民鐸

3. 新教育

4. 建設

5. 晨報

6. 國民公報

7. 每週評論

8. 星期評論

9. 時事新報

10. 解放與改造

11. 民鋒月刊

See *ibid.*, p. 155.

remoulding of society. It involved not so much the study of "problems" as the study of "the problem" - that is, the problem of China's future, of the character of the total political and social structure, on which the solution of individual problems depended. The value of imported theories in this period was essentially to be in proportion to the degree to which they contributed to the solution of the major practical problem - the political problem.

As far as the content of the New Culture Movement is concerned, Ch'ên Tu-hsiu's two slogans of "science" and "democracy" indicate a realization of the importance of political and economic modernization. "Science" can provide the technological basis for economic prosperity, while "democracy" was the only word which could possibly embrace the many political ideas which were introduced, all of which were opposed to feudal autocracy. As has already been indicated, the particular concepts of "democracy" which were most popular were those current at the time of the bourgeois revolutions of Western Europe and America - individual liberty, economic freedom, etc. Yet already before the New Culture Movement had reached its climax, the October Revolution had taken place in Russia, and a whole new conception of "democracy", which had existed only in theory hitherto, was being put to the test of social practice. This had a profound effect on the New Culture Movement. The theories of Marx, both in their

political aspects and the philosophy of Dialectical Materialism received an increasing degree of attention from Chinese youth.

The cleavage in the world of ideas in China which was reflected so clearly in the later political cleavage between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, and which is paralleled by the literary controversies of the middle and late 'twenties, has its origin in this period. The first Chinese to write about the theories of Marxism in any detail was Li Ta-chao. His articles in New Youth, which were published soon after the success of the revolution in Russia, soon provoked opposition from other writers in New Youth, notably Hu Shih. Hu Shih was himself a student and disciple of the American philosopher John Dewey, and the combined efforts of Hu Shih and of Dewey himself, who visited China for two years at the invitation of some of the leaders of the New Culture Movement, made Dewey's Pragmatism the second of the two most influential philosophical currents in China following May 4th.

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In October, 1918, New Youth published the text of three speeches commemorating the conclusion of the Great War.<sup>1</sup> The speeches commemorating the Armistice included one by Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei called The Dignity of Labour (Lao-kung shên-shêng)<sup>2</sup> and one by Li Ta-chao on The Victory of the Common People (Shu-min ti shêng-li)<sup>3</sup>. In the latter speech Li said:

For the last few days we have been celebrating the victory with a great deal of noise. But who are the real victors? Whose victory are we really celebrating? The fact of the matter is that it is not Allied armed strength which is victorious, but the new spirit of mankind. It is not a victory of the generals or capitalists of any particular country; it is a victory of the common people of the world..... We are not celebrating the defeat of the Germans, but the defeat of world militarism.<sup>4</sup>

In the same issue of New Youth Li Ta-chao contributed an article entitled The Victory of Bolshevism (Bolshevism ti shêng-li)<sup>5</sup>, in which he viewed the situation in a markedly Marxist manner:

The real reason for the end of this war was not that the armed strength of the Allies defeated the armed strength of Germany, but that German socialism defeated German militarism.....

This is not the achievement of Wilson, etc., but of Lenin, Trotzky, Kollontai, the achievement of Liebknecht and Scheidemann, the achievement of Marx.<sup>6</sup>

These were the first articles to be written from this point of view in a Chinese periodical, indicating that he was engaged in a serious study of Marxism, and they immediately aroused opposition, or at least dissatisfaction on the part of some people. Yet the editors of New Youth regarded Marxism as of sufficient importance to devote a special issue of the journal to it. This was in May, 1919, within a few days of

1. Public speaking was one of the basic ways for popularising the New Culture Movement. It was very widely used in the subsequent May 4th Movement.

2. 勞工神聖

3. 庶民的勝利

4. Shou-ch'ang ch'üan chi. 守常全集 pp. 214-217.

5. Bolshoivism 的 勝利

6. Ibid., p. 217.



the start of the May 4th Movement. To this issue Li Ta-chao contributed My Marxist Views (Wo-ti Ma-k'o-szú chu-i huan)<sup>1</sup>, a fairly lengthy outline of the theories of Marx, and particularly his economic theories. The article began in the May issue and concluded in the November, 1919, issue of New Youth.

Hu Shih's opposition to Marxism was first expressed in his article entitled More Study of Problems, Less Discussion of "isms" (To yen-chiu hsieh wén-t'i shao t'an hsieh chu-i)<sup>2</sup>, published first in the Weekly Review (Mei-chou p'ing-lun)<sup>3</sup> in July, 1919. This article was not on the surface directed specifically against Marxism, but, as the title suggests, Marxism was certainly within the scope of its content, and it is one of the most significant expositions of the development of Hu Shih's pragmatism. As for the situation which prompted him to write it, some years later he had this to say:

That was the time that the Anfu Party was at its most powerful, and the Armistice Conference in Shanghai which had met to divide the spoils of war, had not yet closed. But the "new" elements within the country kept their mouths tightly closed on the subject of concrete political questions, while they argued about such things as Anarchism and Marxism. I could not bear the prospect of this - being a disciple of Pragmatism - and I became insensed into discussing politics. In the thirty-first issue of Mei-chou p'ing-lun I wrote the introduction to my political writings and called it More Study of Problems, Less Discussion of "isms".<sup>4</sup>

The main point of the article was that, while it was easy enough to talk about theories, the study of actual problems was extremely arduous, and it was the latter which was

1. 我的馬克思主義觀
2. 多研究些問題少談些主義
3. 每週評論
4. See Hsu Shih lun-hsiieh chin ch'u 胡適論學近著, Vol 1.

particularly needed in China at that time:

We do not study the problem of the livelihood of rickshaw-pullers, but discourse on Socialism. We do not study the problem of how women are to be emancipated, and how the family system is to be regulated, but discourse on the public ownership of women and free love. We do not study the problem of how to abolish the Anfu Party, nor do we study the solution of the north-south problem, but talk about Anarchism, and boast smugly about "finding fundamental solutions". This is nothing but a fantasy. It is a proof of the bankruptcy of present-day Chinese thought. It is a sentence of death on social reform in China.<sup>1</sup>

The content of the article is summed up briefly in Hu Shih's last few lines:

The great danger of "isms" is that they can make people self-satisfied in the belief that they have found "fundamental solutions" or universal remedies. They then imagine that they have no more need to waste their energy<sup>2</sup> on studying the solution of this or that concrete problem.

In The Meaning of the New Tide of Thought (Hsin szu-ch'ao ti i-i)<sup>3</sup> Hu Shih made his position much clearer in his discussion of the fourth of his sub-headings, Build a New Civilization:

Civilizations are not built in a hurry; they are built gradually, step by step. Evolution does not happen suddenly in a night, but gradually, step by step. People nowadays who are fond of talking of "liberation and reconstruction" should know that liberation cannot come all at once; reconstruction does not happen suddenly. Liberation means the liberation of this or that system, belief or person. It means gradual liberation. Reconstruction means the reconstruction of this or that system, belief or person, and is also gradual.

Building a new civilization involves the study of individual problems, and the actual process of building is the solution of these problems.<sup>4</sup>

Later, Hu Shih became still more explicit in his opposition to Marxism and Communism, and even opposed the use

1. Hu Shih wen-ts'un, chüan 2, p. 151.
2. Ibid., p. 153.
3. See Ibid., chüan 4, pp. 151-164.
4. Ibid., p. 164.

of the word feudalism and capitalism in reference to China.

In Which Road Shall We Travel? (Wo mên tsou na t'iao lu?)<sup>1.</sup> he

wrote:

We have to defeat five big enemies:-

- The first big enemy is poverty.
- The second big enemy is sickness.
- The third big enemy is ignorance.
- The fourth big enemy is corruption.
- The fifth big enemy is disorder.

These five big enemies do not include capitalism because we have no right to talk of capitalism. The bourgeoisie is not among them either, because at the most we have a few moderately rich people, certainly not a bourgeoisie. Feudalism is not there either because the feudal system collapsed two thousand years ago. Imperialism is not among them because imperialism could not encroach on a country not already penetrated by these five devils. Why is it that imperialism does not invade America and Japan? Why does it concentrate its attention on China? Surely it is because we have been attacked by these five demons and have no power of resistance. In order to resist imperialism we must first expel these five big enemies.<sup>2.</sup>

Besides these political articles Hu Shih wrote a series of essays on various aspects of the theory of Pragmatism, including articles on James and Dewey, whose student he had been in America. Dewey was himself responsible, during his stay of over two years in China, for further proselytizing on behalf of Pragmatism. But although in 1921, when Dewey returned to America after his successful stay in China, Hu Shih prophesied that his influence would be greater than that of any other Western scholar in China for several decades to come, this influence had probably reached its peak in the early 'twenties, and was thereafter to decline. In the field of education,

1. 我們走那條路

2. Quoted in Kuo Mo-jo, Pi-ming ch'un-ch'iu, pp. 151-152.

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however, it remained strong, and has only recently been completely eclipsed.<sup>1.</sup>

The decline of the influence of Pragmatism as a philosophy is due to the fact that it could provide little to help in the solution of the political dilemma of modern China. This is partly because its main protagonists did not do any fundamental political thinking. But the reason is mainly to be found within the doctrine of Pragmatism itself, which has weaknesses which make it an especially poor tool for a people engaged in a vast and deep social revolution. It is not within the scope of our study to indulge in philosophical discussion, but one observation must be made about Pragmatism. In its opposition to Kantian idealism, Dewey's pragmatism denies that thought is something "in itself",<sup>2.</sup> and affirms its practical nature. But in denying the self-containment of thought it goes to the other extreme and denies also the function of thought as a social means of representing and systematizing reality. To Dewey, thought is primarily a response to "specific stimuli" in "tensional situations".<sup>3.</sup> This limitation of the function of thought produces a prejudice against the ideas of conceptual consciousness and conceptual thinking. Translated into political theory this prejudice was directed by Hu Shih against "isms", or socially conceived bodies of theory intended to represent political reality, and to suggest courses of action. It favours treating each problem as a fresh "tensional" situation", for which a separate solution can be reached by the various processes of thought which Dewey enumerates.<sup>4.</sup>

1. See, for instance, Jên-in chiao-yü, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1949.  
人民教育
2. John Dewey, Essays in Experimental Logic, p. 93.
3. Ibid., p. 11.
4. See Hu Shih wên-ts'un, chüan 2, pp. 75-146, particularly 116-128.



Hu Shih distrusted political theories borrowed from abroad because he regarded them as the responses of the people of other countries to their own specific situations, which had little to do with China. He conceded that, provided you were aware of the whole history of a theory and the effect it had already produced, it might be possible to avoid some of the more gross errors entailed in "swallowing theories alive";<sup>1.</sup> yet his disbelief in the efficacy of any one body of theory to provide a solution of China's problem remained, and with it a predilection for solving problems piecemeal.

In 1922 Hu Shih drafted a statement which was signed by sixteen members of the staff of the Peking National University, and published in the magazine Strive (Nu-li).<sup>1</sup> The statement was called Our Political Proposals (Wo men ti-cheng-chih-chu-chang)<sup>2</sup> and presented certain remedies for the confused political situation of the time. One of the proposals was for a government of "good people" to be formed on constitutional lines, together with the restoration of the National Assembly which Li Hung-yuan<sup>3</sup> dissolved in 1917. In a later article<sup>3</sup> in the same year he advocated solving the military problem by convening a conference of representatives of each province and appointing the three most important war-lords Ts'ao K'un,<sup>4</sup> Chang Tso-lin<sup>5.</sup> and Wu P'ei-fu<sup>6.</sup> as the three joint northern military commanders. At this time Wu P'ei-fu was planning military campaigns to consolidate his position at the

1. Hu Shih wên-ts'un, chüan 4, pp. 190-198.
2. 我們的政治主張 in Ibid., chi II, chüan 3, pp. 27-34.
3. Ibid., pp. 129-140.
4. 曹錕
5. 張作霖
6. 吳佩孚

expense of his rivals, and any such co-operation between war-lords was, in practice, impossible to achieve. The impracticability of these proposals is one illustration of the inability of Pragmatism to solve China's fundamental problems.

The controversy in New Youth between the Left and the Right, which resolved itself into a controversy between Marxism and Pragmatism, reached a temporary compromise in December, 1919, when the Manifesto of the New Youth was published. But although this document was patently an attempt to provide a common ground of agreement between the various schools of thought, it was in fact an extremely eclectic document which indulged in a great many empty generalities - in spite of its declared intention to expound the "concrete policy" of New Youth.<sup>1</sup> Finally, especially after the special May Day Number of New Youth in 1920, and the establishment of the Marxist Study Society in the same year, the Marxists became more and more political in content. It ceased publication in November, 1921.

The period in which New Youth flourished was the key period in the development of thought in modern China. The magazine had led the first assault on the central edifice of the thought of old China - Confucianism - had guided the attack to victory, and finally had been instrumental in introducing the main currents which replaced Confucianism.

1. Hsin ch'ing-nien hsüan-yen  
chuan 6, No. 7.

新青年宣言

in New Youth,

It would be untrue to say that the conflict between Marxism and Pragmatism was the only conflict within the ranks of the original supporters of the New Culture Movement in the later years of its development. But it was the most important one, and extremely significant for later developments in all aspects of Chinese cultural life, literature included.

CHAPTER IITHE LITERARY REVOLUTION.Introduction.

The Literary Revolution was that part of the New Culture Movement which related to the reform of Chinese literature. It developed in the same period as the broader movement, in the same social group (in many cases, <sup>with</sup> the same individuals), and was propounded in the columns of the same journal (New Youth). Its identity with the New Culture Movement also emerges from the similarity of its aims, which were the elimination of the feudal elements in the content of the old literature, and of the old literary language (wen-yen)<sup>1</sup>, and the creation of a new literature based on the ideals of the New Culture Movement, particularly democracy, and written in the vernacular (pai-hua)<sup>2</sup>. Just as the activity of the New Culture Movement centred round the introduction of new ideas from the West, so the Literary Revolution, in addition to attacking the old literature, also stimulated the translation of Western literary works into Chinese, and the introduction of Western ideas about literature.

The term "revolution" implies a conscious struggle of the new against the old. This was certainly a feature of the discussions about literature of the period. Such a struggle

## 白話

1. Literally white (i.e., plain) speech. Hu Shin once defined pai-hua as
- (i) the spoken dialogue of the Chinese opera, which is in the vulgate (shuo-pai 說白);
  - (ii) clear simple speech; (the "pai" of ming-pai 明白)
  - (iii) plain, unadorned speech (the "white" of "black and white").

(See Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsueh ta hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi 中國新文學大會建設論集 p.86.)

Essentially, however, pai-hua is the vernacular language, whereas wen-yen is the literary language. As in many of the earlier forms of class society, learning in China was the province of a minority, and the literary language was divorced from the language of the people. The origin of this state of affairs is obscure, but already by about 120 B.C. there is a record indicating that the language had become incomprehensible to the people at large. The Literary Revolution was in this respect parallel to the movements in Europe to discard Latin in favour of ~~their~~ national languages (or dialects) during the Renaissance. It is also parallel to the movements in such countries as Turkey or India (the Urdu speakers, for instance) to discard written languages based on Arabic or Persian. In the case of China, the literary language was not alien, but in essence the movements had the same aims; that is, to make the written language more comprehensible outside the small, highly-educated élite, and they formed part of the general anti-feudal national movements. (See various passages in Hans Kohn, A History of Nationalism in the East.)

Pai-hua is also sometimes taken as roughly equivalent to the National Language (kuo-yü 國語) in its written form. Other dialects written down are not normally called pai-hua. The term kuo-yü, however, refers to the National Language dialect in both its written and spoken forms.

## 2. 文言

is most effective when it is concerned with clear-cut issues which can unite the maximum support for the revolutionary cause, and the question of the replacement of the literary language by the vernacular provided just such an issue. Whereas a variety of opinion existed among the new leaders as to what constituted a new literature, they were all united in support of pai-hua. The proposal to abolish the ancient literary language also stimulated the strongest opposition from the enemies of the new literature, for they realised that its abolition would bring about, not only the end of the old literary forms, but owing to the growing influence of new ideas from the West, would also mean the end of the old content of literature. If wên-yen went, the old ideas (and the conservative social forces behind them) would lose a useful prop.

Although the struggle between wên-yen and pai-hua was of vital importance, it did not in itself constitute the whole of the Literary Revolution. Indeed it was not even the most fundamental part of it. Of even more importance was the democratic content of the new literature. One reason why this received less attention than the question of the literary medium was that the battle on this issue was already being fought in the polemics on the question of Confucianism. As the ideals of the Literary Revolution were inseparable from those of the New Culture Movement, the blows which Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Wu Yü and others dealt to the old political system and the old ethics



were also in their effect an integral part of the Literary Revolution. One of the first, and most bitter opponents of the Literary Revolution, Lin Shu, saw this clearly, for in his counter-offensive he used equal venom against the opponents of Confucianism and the advocates of pai-hua, sometimes attacking both in the same article or satirical story.<sup>1.</sup> On the other side, the leaders of the Literary Revolution also included the content of literature in the scope of the proposals for literary reform, and what they said on the subject has a direct relationship to the democratic ideals of the New Culture Movement and May 4th. For instance, while attacking the old literature Ch'en Tu-hsiu wrote:

Its form is decadent and imitative, all flesh and no bones, an object of decoration rather than of use; for its content it looks no further than princes and aristocrats, spirits and devils and individual self-interest. As for the world, the life of man, or society, they are quite outside the range of its comprehension.<sup>2.</sup>

"Life" and "society" were put forward as the subject of literature in opposition to "princes" and "aristocrats", and it is clear that by these things Ch'en Tu-hsiu meant the everyday life and problems of the ordinary people of today rather than historical or escapist themes. He also talked of the literature "of the people", "realist literature" and "literature of a living society".<sup>3.</sup> Literature with a humanist tendency, with a strong element of sympathy for the poor and oppressed was in fact prominent in the pages of the first numbers of the new journals following the Literary Revolution. There was also some writing with a strong romantic tendency

1. See below, p. 110
2. Chung-kuo hsin wen-hst'ieh ta-hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi  
建設理論集 p. 46.
3. Ibid., p. 44.

corresponding to the demands expressed in the New Culture Movement for the emancipation of the individual from various feudal restrictions.<sup>1.</sup>

In this chapter we are concerned with the Literary Revolution during its stage of intense struggle against the old literature. No revolution can be said to have succeeded until it has built anew, but the problems of this reconstruction have been left to later chapters for more detailed consideration.<sup>2.</sup> We have drawn attention to the twofold nature of the Literary Revolution (content and form) in order to put the detailed arguments used by its protagonists into perspective, for it will be seen that exclusive attention to only one of these, or an immature or dogmatic approach to both weakened the contribution of some writers to the movement. In particular, Hu Shih, one of the first to give the question of literary reform detailed attention, greatly exaggerated the importance of pai-hua and approached the whole problem of building a new literature from the side of form and technique.<sup>3.</sup> This emphasis of technique and neglect of the new content of literature is not unconnected with the fact that his participation in the literary movement, which began so actively, was comparatively short-lived.<sup>4.</sup> After 1921 (when the first period of the New Culture Movement ended), he limited his activities more and more to academic and political life, no longer taking a prominent part either in the literary movement, or in the broader cultural struggle against the still powerful forces of the conservative

1. See below, Chapter III, pp. 153-154 .
2. See below, Chapters III and IV.
3. See below, p. 98 and Chapter 4, pp. 182 ed seq .
4. See below p. 171 [redacted] .

1. tradition. The economic and social background of this cooling of the ardour of the "right wing" of the New Culture Movement has already been touched upon.  
 2. Some of the theoretical ramifications of their attitude may emerge from this study of arguments they used when still in the movement.

Yet though these weaknesses in the leadership of the Literary Revolution are important, on the whole the period of the Literary Revolution - that is roughly from 1917 to 1920 - is a period of a united and successful campaign on the limited but vital issues outlined in the preceding paragraphs. Although Hu Shih's arguments were timid both in content and presentation, yet his contribution to the movement was a positive one. Opposition to a dead literature and a dead literary language found a very wide support among the new intellectuals, and he was the first to raise these issues in public debate.

Before discussing the Literary Revolution in more detail, it might be helpful if we first glance briefly at its precursors in the field of education. For although the Literary Revolution was primarily a product of the new developments in China during the period of the Great War, and particularly following the Soviet Revolution, the old Reform Movement as we have seen had already raised the question of literary reform, while pai-hua was already being used for purposes other than novel-writing. Although properly belonging to the Reform period, this new extension in the field of

1. Even in the conservative Eastern Miscellany one writer complained that Hu Shih's pragmatism had deprived him of the power to make any constructive proposals on the political front. See Ch'ang Nai-chih 常乃惠 The Chinese Nation and the creation of a new Chinese culture (Chung-kuo min-tsu yü chung-kuo hsin wên-hua chih chuang-tsao) (中國民族與中國新文化之創造) [東方雜誌] in the Eastern Miscellany (tung-fang tsa-chih) Vol. 24, No. 24, December 25th, 1927.
2. See above, Chapter I, p.

popular education and the interest taken in matters of script reform and the unification of the National Language form more than a temporal link with the Literary Revolution.

The question of the use of the vernacular (pai-hua) as the written medium was raised in connection with education by the reformists before the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty. They did not envisage its replacing the literary language. They wanted to use it first as a means of enlisting popular support for the reforms, and second, as a means of mass education. In the introduction to the first prose collection of the Thesaurus of New Literature (Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsüeh ta hsi. san-wên i)

<sup>1.</sup>  
Chou Tso-jên wrote:

At that time a kind of pai-hua writing appeared - such as pai-hua journals and pai-hua ts'ung-shu, etc. But it was very different from the pai-hua of today; it was not pai-hua literature. It was merely written because, in order to carry out the reforms it was necessary that all citizens should be able to read newspapers, etc., and understand something about politics. It was felt that pai-hua would bring the best results. It seems to me that the pai-hua of these days differed from the pai-hua of today in two respects:- (1) The pai-hua of today is based on speech, while then it was translated from the writings in the literary language. There was a book called Annotated Injunctions for Women (Nü-chieh chu-shih)<sup>3.</sup> which was one of the Pai-hua ts'ung-shu series published in 1901, the preface of which reads:

"Mei-lü composed the annotations to the Injunctions for Women and asked Wu Ying to write a preface for it. Wu Ying took up his pen and wrote: 'From the earliest times there have been countless famous women, but of all of them none is more famous than Ts'ao Ta-chia. She was the Confucius among women. The Injunctions for Women is the most important book for women to read ....'"

In the postscript are the following words:

"When Ts'ao Liu-ying had finished reading Ch'iu Mei-lü's Ts'ao Ta-chia's Injunctions for Women, annotated, she

1. 散文一， 目作人

2. 白話叢書

3. 女誠注釋



sighed and said: 'Alas! When I think of the women of China, I cannot think of one more to be pitied than she ...'<sup>1</sup>.

This, said Chou Tso-jên, was nothing but the old content translated into pai-hua.

The second difference noted by Chou Tso-jên was the difference of attitude to pai-hua then and now. It was regarded then as something only worthy of people of little education who could not be reached by true literature, and not as a proper medium of literary expression.

It would not be true to say that all the pai-hua of the period was translated. Particularly in the pai-hua journals there was a considerable amount of original writing in pai-hua, the stylistic inspiration for which came from the novel, which, as we have seen, was the one form of literature which was alive and flourishing at the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty. Among the most important pai-hua periodicals of those times, one of the earliest and longest-lived was Life Struggle (Ching-yeh h<sup>2</sup>ün-pao), published by a group of reformers in Shanghai who had revolutionary sympathies. It contained articles on various aspects of science and Western culture. One writer can recollect also a magazine called the Educational Illustrated (Ch'i-meng hua-pao)<sup>3</sup>, published in Shanghai in 1904 or 1905, which contained articles on science, Chinese and foreign history, and a great deal of practical information. Papers were also published in Hangchow, Ningpo and other centres, but most were short-lived.

1. Chung-kuo ksin wen-hsüeh ta hsi, san-wen i chi  
1-2.

2. 競業旬報 See Hu Shih, Ssu-shih tzu-shu  
四十自述 pp. 118-135.

3. 啓蒙書報 See Liu Fu, Les Movements de la Langue Nationale en Chine, pp. 4-5, and Roswell S. Britton, The Chinese Periodical Press, 1800-1912, p. 115. One of the first periodicals to be published in pai-hua was a women's paper the Nü pao 女報, edited by Ch'en Chieh-fen 陳撝芬 in Shanghai in 1902, which Britton describes as "in a way even more revolutionary than the anti-Manchu and republican organs". (Ibid., p. 115), while the movement for pai-hua journals, he writes, "represented an intermediate stage between its introduction by missionaries and its adoption by scholars in the literary revolution of 1919 (loc. cit.)."

In addition to these journals, a few revolutionary writers took to writing political articles in pai-hua.<sup>1.</sup> Chang Ping-lin, who was then in exile in Japan, wrote a number of revolutionary articles in pai-hua which were later collected together and published, though apart from this few of these vernacular writings have been preserved.<sup>2.</sup>

Another aspect of the educational movement before the Literary Revolution, which has some bearing on its history, was the movement for the unification of the National Language. According to Hu Shih it was the pai-hua magazine Life Struggle which first discussed the problem,<sup>3.</sup> but the chief pioneers of the movement were a number of Chinese philologists, such as Wang Chao and Lao Nai-hsuan,<sup>4.</sup> each of whom in the early years of the century produced an alphabetic system for writing Chinese. They intended these alphabets to replace Chinese characters for writing pai-hua.

Wang Chao and Lao Nai-hsuan were also the first to make a systematic study of living dialects, and they soon came to take the view that the alphabetic writing of Chinese, which dispensed with the unifying influence of the Chinese characters, depended on the solution of the problem presented by the divergence of Chinese dialects. It was this problem which directed their attention towards the question of the unification of the National Language.<sup>5.</sup>

After the 1911 Revolution one of the first actions of the new Minister of Education, Tsai Yuan-p'ei, was to convene a

1. Liu Fu, op. cit., p. 4.
2. Chang T'ai-yen's writings in pai-hua are collected in Chang T'ai-yen pai-hua wên 章太炎白話文 Shanghai, 1921. Liu Fu compares these writings with the Buddhist and neo-Confucian pai-hua discourses of the early Sung period in the manner in which they use the vernacular for purposes of preaching (loc. cit.).
3. Hu Shih, op.cit., pp. 120-121.
4. 勞乃宜 See John de Francis, Nationalism and Language Reform in China, pp. 40-55, where he gives an account of the early activities of both men, and shows how the idea of script reform was linked with the demand for popular education which appealed even to the "self-strengthening" bureaucrats.
5. "On the eve of the revolution the views of highly placed Chinese on the adoption of a phonetic system of writing were beginning to crystallize around the following points ..... Third, the symbols should be applied not to the various Chinese dialects but only to the standard national language in order to bring about a uniform language for all the peoples in the country, including those who were not Chinese." (Ibid., p.54.)

conference on the question of the unification of pronunciation (Tu-yin t'ung-i hui)<sup>1</sup>. This took place in 1913. The results of the conference were the composition of an alphabet of thirty-nine symbols and the fixing of an official pronunciation for 6,500 of the characters in most common use. It was not until 1918, however, that the alphabet (Chu-yin tzü-mu)<sup>2</sup> was authorized, and the official pronunciations had to wait still longer before they were incorporated in the National Dictionary of Pronunciation (Kuo-yin tzü-tien)<sup>3</sup>. Also, the alphabet was not regarded as replacing the Chinese characters, but was rather to be used in conjunction with the characters to indicate their pronunciation.

The initiators of this movement were mostly reformers, Lao Nai-hsüan himself being a monarchist and Wang Chao a protégé of Yüan Shih-k'ai. Their aims were therefore far removed from those of the New Culture Movement of the Literary Revolution. The participation of Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei in the movement indicated that, after the fall of the Manchus, it had a broader appeal, but it was still largely a movement of reformers and educators, and could not have a real mass appeal as the New Culture Movement as a whole had not started. Nevertheless, in 1916 a National Language Study Society (Kuo-yü yan-chiu hui)<sup>4</sup> was established for the purpose of promoting the movement for a national language. It was this society which prevailed on the Ministry of Education to promul-

1. 國音統一會 For details of the terms of reference and the decisions of the Congress, see Liu Fu, op. cit., pp. 17-21. For some of its inner history see John de Francis, op. cit., pp. 55-59.
2. 注音字母 For details of this system as then devised, see Liu Fu, op. cit., pp. 23-27.
3. 國音字典
4. 國語研究會 de Francis, op.cit., p. 60.

gate the new alphabet. It was still active at the time of the Literary Revolution and some of its members played a part in the literary movement.<sup>1.</sup> It should be stressed, however, that although a connection did exist between the National Language Movement and the Literary Revolution, the latter did not arise directly out of the former, but was part of the much more fundamental and important New Culture Movement, which arose directly from the new economic and social conditions.

### The Revolution

The first article advocating literary reform was published in January, 1917, by Hu Shih. It was a much expanded and developed version of a letter he wrote to Ch'en Tu-hsiu which was published in New Youth in October, 1916.<sup>2.</sup>

Hu Shih was then still a student in America and the letter was written to China after a period of discussion among the Chinese students there. In the original letter Hu Shih compiled a list of eight points which he thought should be the first to receive the attention of a literary reform movement:-

1. Do not use allusions.
2. Do not use cliches.
3. Do not be bound by antithesis (Prose should avoid p'ien wen and poetry should avoid the strict metric rules).
4. Do not avoid the language and expressions of everyday use. (Pai-hua should not be rejected as the medium for writing poetry.)
5. Pay attention to grammatical construction.

The above are all concerned with a revolution in form.

6. Do not indulge in empty melancholy.

1. Liu Fu is himself one such example.
2. See also Chung-kuo hsin wên-hsueh ta hsi (hereafter abbreviated to Ta-hsi), Chien-shê li-lun chi, pp. 31-33.
3. P'ien-wen or parallel prose, "is characterised by a tendency to use four- and six-word parallel phrases, a somewhat florid and artificial style, an emphasis on verbal parallelism, attention to tonal euphony, occasional rhyme, and frequency of allusion. It became fashionable in the sixth century, and though eclipsed by the literary reform movement initiated by Han Yü in the T'ang dynasty, was revived in the Ch'ing dynasty. See J. R. Hightower, Topics in Chinese Literature, pp. 38-41.



- 7. Do not imitate the old writers; self-expression is indispensable. 4.
- 8. Have something to say. i.

The article which followed this letter appeared on 1st January, 1917, also in New Youth. Its title was My Ideas on Literary Reform (Wên-hsüeh kai-liang ch'u-i)<sup>2.</sup> In it Hu Shih advanced his argument in some detail, basing it still on the same eight points, which came to be called the Eight Don'ts (Pa pu chu-i)<sup>3.</sup> though taking them in a different order and putting the crucial point about the use of the vernacular (pai-hua) last.

Some years later Hu Shih wrote an account of the preliminary discussion which took place in America between him and his fellow students, and before examining his ideas in more detail, it will be helpful if we first outline the main points of that discussion so that the formulation of the eight points is put in its historical setting.

Hu Shih's attention was first drawn to the question of literary reform by the activities of the secretary of the office responsible for students from Tsinghua University in America.<sup>4.</sup> This person, a zealous Christian convert, was in the habit of enclosing propaganda slogans in the envelope containing the students' pay cheques. One of the slogans enclosed (which were not apparently all religious in content) called for the abolition of Chinese characters and their replacement by an alphabet. Hu Shih wrote back to the sender suggesting rather

1. Ta-hsi, chien-shê li-lun chi, pp. 32-33.
2. New Youth, chüan 2, vol. 5, January, 1917. 文學改良芻議
3. 八不主義
4. Op. cit., pp. 3-4.

haughtily that it was inappropriate for someone without a thorough knowledge of Chinese literature to discuss the reform of the Chinese script, and that he must first spend a few years perfecting his knowledge before he was qualified to discuss it. This rejoinder failed to provoke a response from the propagandist, but Hu Shih started thinking about the problem of script reform, and from this he went on to turn his attention to the reform of literature.

Hu Shih's first contribution was a paper prepared for the Institute of Arts and Sciences of the East American Chinese Students' Association. The Institute had taken as its topic for discussion that year the problem of the Chinese script, and both Chao Yüan-jen<sup>1</sup> and Hu Shih, who were among its prominent members, prepared contributions to the discussion. In his paper Hu Shih for the first time described the Chinese written language as a dead language, or rather as a half-dead language, comparable with the totally dead Latin or Greek, but unlike them, containing some elements in current use.

Although he described it in this way, Hu Shih did not at that time propose its abolition; on the contrary, the purport of his essay was to suggest ways of improving the teaching of the written language, such as by the use of reliable grammars, the introduction of a consistent system of punctuation, etc., which would have the effect of preserving it. But his description of the written language as half-dead led him to the next

1. 趙元任 Chao Yüan-jen was later to become a prominent philologist.

stage of the argument, which was carried forward through the stimulus of opposition provided by some of Hu Shih's fellow students, notably Mei Kuang-ti and Jen Shu-yung with whom he spent the summer of 1915.<sup>1.</sup>

As a result of the arguments of that summer Hu Shih's ideas advanced a step further and he wrote a poem to Mei Kuang-ti in which he used the phrase "Literary Revolution".<sup>2.</sup> The poem itself was not of any literary value, but it provoked more comment from Mei Kuang-ti and Jen Shu-yung because in it Hu Shih used a number of Western terms and names in transliteration. In this way the centre of the controversy shifted to the question of the reform of Chinese poetry.

On this question Hu Shih at first merely proposed "writing poetry as one would write prose", by which he meant avoiding the over-stylised language and dead imagery of contemporary poetry. This proposal was taken by Hu Shih's opponents to mean abolishing the distinction between poetry and prose, and while explaining his position Hu Shih put forward one of the main points he made later in his articles in New Youth, that is, that one of the main defects of contemporary literature was that it was all form (wên) and no substance (chih).<sup>3</sup> Yet he still did not think of advocating pai-hua as a way of liberating new substance; still less did he touch on the more fundamental problem of a reform in the "substance" itself. He only suggested "not avoiding the language of prose".

1. 梅光迪 任叔永 For some details of Mei Kuang-ti's later activities, see below, p. 115.
2. Op. cit., p.7.
3. 文, 質

Once again the arguments of Mei and Jên stimulated Hu Shih to take the next step. Jên in one of his letters said that Hu Shih was mistaken in paying attention exclusively to literary form. This started Hu Shih on the train of thought which eventually led him to advocate pai-hua literature as the main point in his policy of literary reform. During February and March, 1916, he gave some thought to the history of Chinese literature and came to the conclusion that its whole course had been marked by a series of revolutions in the literary medium:

The life of a literature depends on its being able to use the living medium of an age to express the emotions and thought of that age. If the medium has become dead, a new living one must replace it. This is a "Literary Revolution".....

The Literary Revolutions of the countries of Europe were revolutions of the literary medium. The several revolutions in Chinese literary history were all revolutions of the literary medium.,.....

For the first time I understood the history of Chinese literature, and realised that the Chinese vernacular literature (from the pai-hua discourses of the Sung Dynasty neo-Confucians to the pai-hua plays and novels of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties) is really the orthodox Chinese literature, representing the natural development of the Chinese Literary Revolution. Now for the first time I dared to acknowledge that China's present-day literary revolution was a revolution to replace the literary language by pai-hua, to replace a dead medium by a living medium.<sup>1</sup>.

In April of the same year he wrote some observations about Chinese literary history in his diary which were to form the basis of his theory of the development of Chinese literature,

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1. Op. cit., pp. 9-10.



which he expounded at much greater length in his articles in New Youth:-

Literary revolutions are nothing new in our literary history. In poetry the style of the Book of Songs changed into that of the sao<sup>1</sup>. This was the first big revolution. This again developed into the five-word line and seven-word line poetry. This was the second big revolution. The development of the fu<sup>2</sup> into rhymeless antithetical prose was a third revolution. The development of the ku-shih<sup>3</sup> (ancient style) into lü-shih<sup>4</sup> (poetry with fixed rules) was the fourth. The fifth was the development of the tz'u<sup>5</sup> and the sixth was the evolution of the tz'u into the ch'ü<sup>6</sup> and the plays.....

Prose has also had a number of revolutions. From Confucius to the Ch'in and Han dynasties, Chinese prose style first developed to perfection ..... The prose of the Six Dynasties also includes some very good works. But at that time the antithetical style was flourishing and prose was esteemed for its intricate craftsmanship, and so it declined grammatically. Han Yu's<sup>7</sup> prose "stopped the decline of eight generations". His merit is that he restored prose and perfected grammar. This was another revolution. Han Yu was not the only literary revolutionist of the T'ang period. The story writers of early T'ang should also be honoured with that name.

The ku-wên<sup>8</sup> school has remained the orthodoxy ever since, but the philosophical writers of the Sung dynasty seemed to be aware that ku-wên was not suitable for use, and so the yu-lu<sup>9</sup> style arose. This style used the vernacular for narrative and discourse..... this was also a revolution.....

With the stories of the Yüan dynasty this style flourished..... In short, in the Yüan period the literary revolution reached its highest peak. During this period tz'ü and ch'ü poetry, the drama, the novel, were all literature of the highest quality, and they were all written in the vernacular. In fact one could say that a living literature had arisen in our country. If this revolutionary stream (a revolutionary stream is a phenomenon of natural evolution; looked at from the point of view of what changes in it, it can be called revolution; looked at from the point of view of the continuity of its development, it can equally be called evolution), had not been set upon by the eight-legged essay of the Ming period,

1. 騷 <sup>s.r.</sup> see Hightower, Topics in Chinese Literature, ~~op. cit.~~, pp. 22-28.
2. 賦 op. cit., p. 26.
3. 古詩
4. 律詩 For the developments in poetry referred to by Hu Shih, see Hightower, op. cit., pp. 49-63.
5. 詞 see ibid., pp. 80-82.
6. 曲 ibid., pp. 84-87.
7. 辭翰愈 ibid., pp. 68-70.
8. 古文 loc. cit.
9. See above, p. 86 note 2. 誌錄

and the reactionary revivalism of the literati, our literature would already be a vernacular literature, and our written and spoken language would have been unified.....<sup>1</sup>.

By now Hu Shih had already raised five of the eight points of his letter to Ch'en Tu-hsiu, and his subsequent article in New Youth. During his exchanges with Mei Kuang-ti on the subject of the reform of poetry, while attributing the poverty of contemporary poetry to lack of content and over-emphasis of form, he had suggested three ways of correcting this tendency. The first was "to have something to say", the second "to pay attention to grammar" and the third "to use frequently the language of prose - not to avoid it". Now (in April, 1916) he added two more. They were "do not indulge in empty melancholy" and "do not imitate the writers of the past". Later, of course, he modified the maxim concerning the language of prose to "do not avoid the language and expressions of every-day use", but in essence the eight points were already determined. The other three were concerned with less fundamental aspects of style.

The most important of all these points was the one concerning the use of every-day speech in literature - that is, pai-hua, and Hu Shih found that this point soon became the centre of discussion among his student friends as, later, it was to become a central question of the Literary Revolution. But although they accepted pai-hua as a medium for novels and plays, they still would not accept that poetry could be

1. Ta hsi. chien-shê li-lu chi, pp. 10-11. Hu Shih also discussed the parallel between the Chinese literary revolution and those of Europe initiated by Dante, Chaucer and Martin Luther, etc. See above, p. 1a

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1. written in it. So the discussion of pai-hua developed into a discussion on the use of pai-hua in poetry. Yet although the field of discussion was narrowed to poetry, the acceptance of pai-hua as a poetic medium was of crucial importance for its acceptance for general use, owing to the pre-eminence of poetry in the traditional hierarchy of literary forms. Doubt as to the ability of pai-hua to express poetic feeling, though apparently only a reservation on the part of some to their general acceptance of pai-hua in literature, amounted in practice to a rejection of pai-hua, and therefore opposition to the Literary Revolution.

In view of this, Hu Shih decided to experiment in the composition of poetry in pai-hua. He was also attracted to the idea of experimentation by his pragmatist philosophy, or by that part of it which emphasized the importance of putting hypotheses to the test of practice. So, in addition to continuing his polemics with Mei Kuang-ti (part of it in pai-hua doggerel) he started writing the simple pai-hua (or near-pai-hua) poems which appear in his collection Experiments (Ch'ang-shih chi)<sup>2.</sup> That same autumn he finalised the list of eight points which had evolved during this protracted discussion with his fellow students. He first included them in a letter written to Chu Ching-nung<sup>3.</sup> in August, 1916, and afterwards they were incorporated in the letter to Ch'en Tu-hsiu which was published in New Youth in October.

1. Ta hsi, chien-she<sup>^</sup> li-lun chi, p. 18.

2. 嘗試集 see below, Chapter IV, pp. 190-18

3. 朱經農

As formulated, only one of Hu Shih's eight points deals positively with the content of a new literature. This is the last one of his original letter:- "Have something to say." Hu Shih explained that by this he did not mean what the old writers meant by "literature as a vehicle of morality" (wen i tsai tao),<sup>1.</sup> but that the "something" should comprise two things: "thought" and "emotion". Though he made a further analysis of these two elements, his discussion of them amounted to little more than an attack on the trite and formalistic literature fashionable at the time. He did nothing to indicate what kind of "thought" and "emotion" he meant to replace the content of the old literature. By simply opposing "literature as a vehicle of morality" without careful qualification, Hu Shih appeared to be opposing the whole of literature "with a moral", or literature which takes an idea as its starting point. Such a line of policy would lead to a literature as divorced from modern problems and as formalistic as the old literature had been. As all literature, new or old, is in any case composed entirely of thought and emotion, Hu Shih's "have something to say" amounted to no more than an attack on insincerity or empty word-spinning.

Of the other seven points, two deal negatively with the content of literature, namely "do not indulge in empty melancholy" and "do not imitate the old writers", while the remainder are concerned with various aspects of literary

1. This was a phrase frequently used by the schools which regarded the main function of literature as to give expression to orthodox Confucian ideas. Although this formulation was first made in the Sung dynasty, it was the Han Yü who first established the principle. He was concerned with making literature a weapon to defeat the Buddhist opponents of Confucianism, and his literary reform had the aims of writing literature intelligibly in ku-wên (Ancient style) and of asserting its didactic nature.

Since that time these ideas have remained the orthodox Confucian view of literature, and therefore Hu Shih attacked it. For a brief account of Han Yü's ku-wên movement, with bibliographical notes for further study, see Hightower, op. cit., pp. 68-71. For an attempt at an analysis of the social basis of the idea of wen i tsai tao and a brief survey of its history, see Pa Jên Wên-hsüeh ch'u-pu, 巴人. 文學初步, pp. 57-74. See also J. R. Hightower. The Function of the Yüan Tao and the Yüan Hsing in The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies Vol. XII part 2, 1946.



1. technique. Of these, the point about pai-hua was the one which received the most attention at the time and became the centre of discussion between the advocates of the new literature and the old. Although negative in its formulation, it came to be recognized as the central, indeed the only really effective point in Hu Shih's article. While there was some discussion in the pages of New Youth and elsewhere about some of the other eight points, only the advocacy of pai-hua constituted a telling blow against the old literature and its conservative supporters. The discussion in New Youth on the other points consisted largely of criticism of them "from the left", that is, by those who felt that Hu Shih was not sufficiently outspoken. There was, for instance, some criticism by Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung of Hu Shih's qualifications to his point about not using allusions<sup>2.</sup> (Hu Shih really only advocated avoiding clumsy allusions and did not relate the question to whether or not allusions were widely intelligible). But the importance of the article was largely confined to the advocacy of pai-hua.

The reason for the importance of the question of pai-hua will emerge more clearly when we discuss the opposition to the Literary Revolution. Hu Shih had found during his polemics with his conservative friends in America that it was this point which produced the strongest opposition. This was because there was nothing else in the substance of his policy

1. See above, pp 88-89.

2. See Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung, 錢玄同 Chi Ch'ên Tu-hsiu,  
寄陳獨先 in Ta-hsi. chien-she li-lun chi, pp. 48-52.

which could touch so closely on the interests of the educated élite. Wên-yen was important to them because it ensured the restriction of the intellectual life of China to a small minority who had mastered its intricacies. This minority was unwilling to surrender its privileges. Of course, the advocates of wên-yen could not use this reason openly in their discussions, confining themselves, in the main, to more technical questions. Nevertheless, in an attempt to ridicule pai-hua they often equated it with the speech of the lower classes.<sup>1.</sup> Even the eclecticists who advocated using "the best elements in both wên-yen and pai-hua" sometimes talked of the "coarseness" of pai-hua, as though it was unworthy because of its connections with the lower classes of being used for literature.<sup>2.</sup>

Hu Shih avoided taking a strong ideological stand in his first article, and was thus driven to using arguments connected with form and technique to support his ideas. It was left to other writers to link the proposal for a pai-hua literature to the New Culture Movement and the May 4th Movement, and to put forward the other aims of the Literary Revolution. Hu Shih's formation led him, for example, to suggest that the essence of a literary revolution was change in the literary medium. As he underestimated or misunderstood the significance of the New Culture Movement, he believed that the starting point of the Chinese literary revolution was a revolution of

1. For example, Li Shu called the proposal to write literature in pai-hua "using the language of saucepeddlars" in his letter to ~~Gh'en Tu hsiu~~ (see above p. *Ts'ai Yuan-pei*.)
2. See Ta-hsi. Chien-shê li-lu chi, p. 18.

pai-hua against wen-yen, whereas the real starting point was the new ideas without which a new literature would not have been created, and the question of pai-hua or wen-yen would have been immaterial. This is not to underestimate the importance of the reform of the literary medium. It certainly had a great liberating influence on literary expression and its political significance as an issue around which the struggle against the conservatives was carried on was also considerable. Under conditions of a "united front" against the old literature, it was also an issue around which all the modern writers, whatever their social or theoretical position, could write. None of this, however, alters the determining influence of content on form. Hu Shih's failure to appreciate this influence limited his contribution to the Literary Revolution. It also led him to a false conception of the nature of Chinese literary history. For, in attaching primary importance to the changes in the literary language, the history of literature became for him, as we have seen, a mere succession of stylistic adjustments with little reference to the social history of China. In over-emphasizing the importance of pai-hua he underestimated the value of much old literature that was written in wen-yen. Hu Shih's position in relation to traditional Chinese literature will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.<sup>1.</sup>

The fact that Hu Shih was at least partially out of touch with China and that he and his friends in America did not,

1. See below, Chapter 4, pp. 12 et seq.

as a group, belong to the most radical section of the Chinese intelligentsia (Mei Kuang-ti remained an opponent of the new literature for many years) partly accounts for his timidity. He admitted later that he had been somewhat cowed by the opposition of his friends in America, and that he had purposely assumed an attitude of humility towards the scholars in China. This accounts for the title of his article in New Youth (the word for "my" he used in My Ideas on Literary Reform means literally "rustic"<sup>1.</sup> and is a depreciatory term used of one's own opinions). He also had a feeling of isolation, and that he was fighting against great odds. This is revealed in his later disagreement with Ch'ên Tu-hsiu over the relation of the Literary Revolution to the general situation.

In his preface to Science and Outlook on Life (K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-kuan) Ch'ên Tu-hsiu wrote:

People often say the situation with regard to pai-hua was brought about by Hu Shih, Ch'ên Tu-hsiu and so on. In fact, we are unworthy of this fame. Recently China's industries have developed, her population has become more concentrated, and pai-hua made its appearance and has remained entirely because of these needs. If Hu Shih and the others had advocated pai-hua thirty years previously it would only have needed one article by Chang Hsing-yen completely to demolish them. But now, who cares to pay any attention to the lofty words of Chang Hsing-yen?<sup>2.</sup>

In opposing this idea, which he said arose from an "economic interpretation of history", Hu Shih went to the other extreme, and said:

The situation with regard to pai-hua, had it not been for "Hu Shih, Ch'ên Tu-hsiu and the others", would not have come about for at least another twenty or thirty years.<sup>3.</sup>

1. 窮

2. See Ta-hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi, tao-yen, 導言 p.15.

3. Loc.cit.



Although Ch'en Tu-hsiu's remarks were self-depreciatory, it is clear that the whole historical context was ripe for such a change, and it is inconceivable that Chinese history could have advanced another decade without it. The May 4th Movement of 1919 ensured the success of the Literary Revolution, and May 4th was the product of the same economic and social development as the literary movement. Hu Shih's statement as it stands is not at all clear, a lot depending for its interpretation on what he meant by "Hu Shih, Ch'en Tu-hsiu and the others", but if he meant, as the context of his controversy with Ch'en Tu-hsiu would indicate, that the movement depended entirely on the activity of particular individuals, then he must have been mistaken. Even if the May 4th Movement had not produced the necessary individuals, with its widespread mass propaganda activity, then the mass political movements of the mid-twenties would certainly have produced them, and pai-hua would have spread to literature from the political field.

If, on the other hand, Hu Shih was referring to the whole of the movement, then it is no longer a question of certain individuals, but of the relationship between the New Culture Movement as a whole and the economic and social development in China during this period. The Literary Movement cannot be isolated from the general cultural movement (what Hu Shih called the Chinese Renaissance) for it was a feature of the period that all aspects of traditional culture were being

reassessed, and this reassessment was taking place precisely because the traditional culture (literature included, and the literary medium) was no longer entirely suited to modern needs. These modern needs arose from economic and social changes in China, which ~~has~~, as we have seen, <sup>had</sup> been accelerated by the downfall of the Manchus, and especially during the period of the First World War.

This is not to belittle the contributions of the pioneers of the Literary Revolution. When the ground had been prepared by the economic and social changes, it still remained necessary for individuals to cultivate it, which was not necessarily a simple matter, particularly as it involved changing deep-seated habits of thought. Such changes could not have been accomplished without a conscious struggle on the part of the new forces, and the vigour with which they conducted that struggle greatly accelerated its success.

Hu Shih wrote later that he expected a protracted struggle of at least a decade before the Literary Revolution triumphed finally. That the struggle had, in the main, triumphed within two years, was due first to the vigour with which his initiative was responded to by the leaders of the New Culture Movement, and second, to the May 4th Movement which gave it a firm social basis among the new intellectuals and removed the possibility of decisive political intervention.

1. See also Teng Ssu-yü and John K. Fairbank, China's Response to the West, pp. 256-257, where the same point is made about the length of time which the revolution would have taken if it had been carried forward at Hu Shih's tempo. The point which we have made here about Hu Shih's approach being too tentative is supported by Teng and Fairbank who quote the exchange of letters between Hu Shih and Ch'ên Tu-hsiu of 1917 (after the publication of the two "manifestos"). Hu wrote: "The rights and the wrongs of the matter cannot be determined in a day, nor by one or two persons. I hope very much that people in China will co-operate with us to study this problem calmly. When discussions reach a mature stage the rights and wrongs naturally will become clear. It is true that we have already raised the banner of revolution and cannot retreat, yet we should not maintain that what we advocate is absolutely right, and not tolerate correction by others." Ch'ên replied: "My opinion is that, while tolerance of different opinions and free discussion are the basic principles of the development of learning, nevertheless the rights and wrongs of the theory - that in the reform of Chinese literature the vernacular should be regarded as the main object - are already very clear, and we definitely will not allow discussion by opponents; we must consider our theory as absolutely right and not allow others to correct us." (loc.cit.)

2. See above, Chapter I, pp. 23-24

Ch'en Tu-hsiu's response to Hu Shih did much to correct the weakness and deference of Hu's article. Although the two articles which were published in successive issues of New Youth are often taken together as a kind of joint manifesto of the Literary Revolution, only Ch'en's was really revolutionary in feeling. While Hu Shih dealt almost exclusively with form, Ch'ên Tu-hsiu made a forthright attack on the content of the old literature, and particularly on the sections of society which it had served. His article was called On a Revolution in Chinese Literature (Chung-kuo wên-hsüeh ko-ming lun)<sup>1.</sup> Its most frequently quoted passage, which gives the gist of his ideas, reads as follows:

I am willing to brave the enmity of all the pedantic scholars of the country and hoist the banner of the "Army of the Revolution in Literature" in support of my friend Hu Shih. On this banner shall be written in big characters the three great principles of the Army of Revolution:-

- (i) To destroy the painted, powdered and obsequious literature of the aristocratic few, and to create the plain, simple and expressive literature of the people.
- (ii) To destroy the stereotyped and monotonous literature of classicism and to create the fresh and sincere literature of realism.
- (iii) To destroy the unintelligible and obscurantist literature of the hermit and the recluse, and to create the plain-speaking and popular literature of a living society.<sup>2.</sup>

As we have already observed, this call for a literature "of the people" set a fashion for the new writing which came into being in the following years. Ch'ên Tu-hsiu's contribution to the regeneration of literature arose from his

1. 中國文學革命論      See Ta-hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi,  
pp. 44-47.
2. Ibid., p. 44. (The translation is taken from Hu Shih, The Chinese Renaissance, p. 54)

clear perception of the connection between the Literary Revolution and the New Culture Movement, which was in essence a change in the social basis of literature away from the old feudal intellectuals (the scholar-officials), towards the new middle-class and lower middle-class intellectuals who were growing rapidly more numerous and more important. His demand for a literature "of the people" was, it is true, limited by a lack of clarity as to who "the people" really were. Although he might have meant to include the working class and the peasants, in the social conditions of the time literature did not in fact extend beyond the middle-class and lower middle-class. But the important thing was that he removed the discussion of the reform of literature away from narrow consideration of technical matters, and made it a social and political issue. In this way he also made it a popular issue with the students and young intellectuals of the time who were impatient with the slowness of China's progress towards prosperity and democracy. It was their enthusiasm which did more than any of the theoretical discussions (important though they were) to establish the new literature on its new social basis after the May 4th Movement.

After his return to China in 1918 Hu Shih wrote a second long article on literary reform which he called A Constructive Revolution in Chinese Literature (Chien-shé ti wén-hsüeh ko-ming lun)<sup>1</sup>, in which he gave further attention to its methodology. He reformulated his eight points into four, which he claimed were more positive:

1. Only speak when you have something to say.
2. Say what you have to say, and say it in a straightforward way.
3. Say it in your own way and not in the words of others.
4. Speak the language of your own period.

As a result of discussions he had with members of the National Language Study Society he also formulated the phrase "A National Language Literature and a Literary National Language" as the "sole principle of my 'Discussion of the construction of a new literature'<sup>2</sup>". By this he meant that literature should be written in the National Language (i.e., pai-hua)<sup>3</sup>, and that only if this was done could the National Language really become established. For he believed literature was more responsible than anything else for transforming the predominant dialects of the various nations of Europe into their national languages. The same would be true of Chinese. The Chinese National Language could not be established by conferences of philologists, nor by government decrees, but only by the practice of writers, and only when the predominant northern Chinese dialect became the language of Chinese literature could it be said to have established itself as the national language of China. In this way Hu Shih linked the movement for the

1. 建設的文學革命論 Ta-hsi. Chien-shê li-lun chi, pp. 217-140.
2. Ibid, p. 128.
3. Loc. cit.
4. For Hu Shih's ideas on kuo-yü and its connection with literature, see Hu Shih, Kuo-yü yü kuo-yü wên-fa, in op. cit., pp. 228-232.  
國語與國語文法



1. 建設的文學革命論 Ta-hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi, pp. 217-140.

2. Ibid, p. 128.

3. Loc. cit.

4. For Hu Shih's ideas on kuo-yü and its connection with literature, see Hu Shih, Kuo-yü yü kuo-yü wen-fa, in op. cit., pp. 228-232.

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promotion of the National Language with his literary proposals.

In the same article Hu Shih had much to say about the technique of the new literature. He divided his discussion into three parts. The first was the question of the literary medium (pai-hua); the second was the technique to be learned in preparation for writing; and the third was the actual writing. On the first point he recommended would-be writers to read as many pai-hua works as possible, and to write as much pai-hua as possible, trying not to fall into the temptation of using wen-yen at any time. By pai-hua works he meant the famous novels and stories, etc., of the past rather than contemporary literature (in fact there was, when he wrote the article, still practically no modern pai-hua literature). He rather surprisingly did not advise here the study of contemporary speech as the main source for pai-hua writing, for no matter how excellent the style of the famous pai-hua novels, they contained many archaisms, and could not be accepted as models of modern style.

In his second section dealing with the methods of the new writing, by which he meant technique of style, form, etc., Hu Shih's first suggestion was to read and translate Western literary works into Chinese. For, he wrote, "Chinese literary methods were really not satisfactory." He also discussed the fundamental processes of writing such as collecting material, the use of first-hand experience and

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1. See below, Chapter 4, p. 182

observation, and the technique of description, etc. He also suggested that writers should take as their subject matter the life of the common people - farmers, workers, shop-keepers, etc. - a typical expression of the vague humanism prevalent among the writings of the theorists of the period, which will be discussed in our next chapter.<sup>1.</sup>

The final section of the article, on the subject of the actual creative writing, is surprisingly brief. Hu Shih merely says that what he had discussed hitherto, namely the literary medium and the technique of writing, were the preparation for writing. Only when they had been understood would it be possible to start writing:

I believe that present-day China has not completed the stage of preparation for creating a new literature, and so we are quite unable to talk of the methods and stages of creative writing. Let us first strive to complete the two stages of our preparation.<sup>2.</sup>

The idea that there should be a period when all the serious writers are studying Western literature and literary method endeavouring to perfect their knowledge of theory before they embark on creative writing is rather ludicrous when read today. That the writers of a nation with such a fine literary tradition as China could not find any assistance within that tradition except language, and be forced to turn exclusively to foreign literature is equally far-fetched. Hu Shih was right in drawing attention to the value of the contribution that Western literature could make to China, but he ignored tremendous riches which could be tapped in China. In fact, in spite of Hu Shih's division of the process of

1. See below, p. 134 et seq.

2. Ta-hsi, Chien-she li-lun chi, p. 140.

creating a new literature into these three stages, two of preparation and one of actual creation, one month after his A Constructive Revolution in Chinese Literature was written,<sup>1.</sup> Lu Hsün published his Diary of a Madman in New Youth and, by his example, laid the foundations of the new literature more surely than could have possibly been done by a period of literary re-education along the lines Hu Shih suggested. For Lu Hsün wrote not with abstract "thought" and "emotion", but with concrete ideas which reflected the spirit of the time and provided the inspiration which abstractions could not give. Hu Shih, by avoiding the subject of the content, provided some of the flesh but none of the bone for the new literature, without which it could not live.

The opposition to the Literary Revolution was slow to come forward. Apart from a few items of correspondence in New Youth which made a few half-hearted criticisms of pai-hua from an eclectic point of view, suggesting various kinds of compromise,<sup>2.</sup> nothing was at first written against the movement. This was because the conservatives did not realise the seriousness of the challenge. The majority, even supposing that they had heard of New Youth, had not read it, regarding it as the organ of an unimportant unorthodox sect. Others, while being strongly opposed to the idea of pai-hua replacing wen-yen,<sup>^</sup> chose to adopt the tactics well known in politics of ignoring New Youth in the hope that it would die a natural death<sup>3.</sup> But gradually the matter became too serious to ignore

1. See below, Chapter 5, p. 221
2. See the articles in Ta hsi, Wen-hsueh lun-cheng chi, pp. 3-19.
3. See Selected Stories of Lu Hsun, p. 13 (Preface to Call to Arms), where Lu Hsun describes how he came to start writing stories. Ch'ien Hsuan-t'ung came to visit him and asked him why he was spending all his time copying inscriptions. Lu Hsun wrote: "I understood. They were editing the magazine New Youth, but hitherto there seemed to have been no reaction, favourable or otherwise, and I guessed they must be feeling lonely."

completely, and the counter-offensive was opened up. Yet even then the opposition had to be goaded into action by the editors of New Youth. One of the editors, Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung, using the pseudonym Wang Ching-hsüan,<sup>1.</sup> wrote a "letter to the editor" which consisted of an exposition of many of the arguments which the opponents of pai-hua might use. This letter was published together with a "reply" by another member of the editorial board<sup>2.</sup> Liu Fu, who found no great difficulty in refuting them.

Wang Ching-hsüan's letter opened with a tirade against the young people who indulge in blasphemy against the sages and the sacred books, and rebel against the Confucian code of ethics. It attacked the young women who chant the slogans of the "New Learning", believe in the freedom of choice of a husband, bob their hair and stride freely along the streets to attend the new schools. It blamed the New Youth for encouraging such behaviour in its attacks on Confucius. Wang Ching-hsüan's disguise seems somewhat thin when we read the letter today, especially his discussion on the use of Western punctuation, where he pretended to complete ignorance of its features, yet his identity did not appear to have been detected. Still more blatant was his defence of Lin Shu, who had been criticised by Hu Shih for using unintelligible language. The letter made a preposterous charge of unintelligibility against Chou Tso-jen for using the two characters "t'o-szu"<sup>3.</sup> in the title of a translation of a story. These two characters were in fact the first two characters in the Chinese



1. 王敬軒  
pp. 23-26.

see Ta-hsi, Wen-hsüeh lung-cheng chi,

2. 劉復

Ibid., pp. 27-39.

3. 它思

transliteration of Dostoevsky!

Liu Fu had no difficulty in disposing of this "Aunt Sally", and his reply was a most spirited defence of New Youth. Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung had correctly anticipated where the first real attack on pai-hua would originate, for soon after this, towards the end of 1918, Lin Shu entered the discussion with an article on the relationship of pai-hua and wên-yen, in which he took up a fundamentally anti-pai-hua position.<sup>1</sup>

Lin Shu's main criticism of and opposition to pai-hua was based on his awareness of its inalienable association with the ideas of the New Culture Movement. His correspondence with Ts'ai Yüan-pei a few months later reveals this quite clearly, for he bases his attack on Peking University on two points: opposition to Confucianism and the advocacy of pai-hua, and his letter pays more attention to the former question than to the latter. He accused the teaching staff of Peking University of "overthrowing Confucius and Mencius"<sup>1</sup> and "extirpating the cardinal virtues and relationships."<sup>2</sup> It was a simple matter for Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei to demonstrate that the teachers of Peking University were not doing this, at least not in the way that Lin Shu inferred, and in his reply he strongly upheld the principles of academic freedom.

Lin Shu's main argument on literary grounds was that pai-hua was dependent for its existence on wên-yen and that without wên-yen literature the great novels could not have been

1. Lun ku-wên pai-hua chih hsiang hsiao chang in Ibid., pp. 78-80.  
論古文白話之相消長
2. Ta hsi. Chien-she li-lun chi, pp. 171-173.

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written, for the authors of the great novels were all widely read in the literary works of the past and the style of the novels owes a great deal to their example." In his article he cites examples from the Shui-hu chuan which in his estimation could not have been written without a knowledge of the Shih chi, while the success of the Hung Lou meng arose not from its being written in pai-hua, but from its author's keen observation of his characters, and could not be rivalled by any present-day writers of pai-hua. In fact, he wrote "unless you have read through ten thousand volumes you cannot write wên-yen, neither can you write pai-hua."<sup>1.</sup>

Although a supporter of pai-hua, Tsai Yüan-p'ei's argument in refutation of this point was somewhat conciliatory, for apart from demonstrating the inaccuracy of Lin Shu's assertion that the teachers of Peking University had "abolished the literary language in favour of pai-hua,"<sup>2.</sup> his main point was that the advocates of pai-hua, such as Hu Shih, Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung and Chou Tso-jên were just as much masters of wên-yen as of pai-hua and he was able to prove his point by reference to their writings.

But Tsai Yüan-p'ei, as head of Peking University, was to some extent forced on the defensive by this attack. The political control of Peking was at that time in the hands of the Anfu clique of politicians, and there were repeated rumours

1. Ta-hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi, p. 172.

2. Ibid., loc. cit.

of the impending arrest of the leaders of the New Culture Movement, or of their being forced to flee Peking.<sup>1.</sup> That this did not happen was due to the strength of the May 4th Movement which started soon after this, and the subsequent debacle of the Anfu clique, but it was undoubtedly necessary for Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei to tread carefully. Yet his refusal to surrender his principle of academic freedom was of the utmost value to the intellectual development of China at that period. He himself held the view that truth has no national boundaries, and believed in the utmost freedom of cultural interchange between East and West, and in the free competition between ideas, both Chinese and Western in origin, within China.<sup>2.</sup> Hence it was of the utmost importance to him to ensure that there was no persecution of the teaching staff of his university by the war-lord government.

Yet Lin Shu, though feeling dissatisfied with his own defence of ku-wen ("I am getting old," he wrote, "and cannot right this wrong. But after a hundred years have gone by someone will emerge who can refute it.")<sup>3.</sup>, was much less scrupulous. He wrote two short stories in which the chief characters were the leaders of the New Culture Movement with their names only thinly disguised. Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei, Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Hu Shih all appeared in them, and were all abused by Lin Shu in the most unrestrained manner. The second story,<sup>4.</sup> Ching Sheng, particularly, shows the depth and the futility of

1. See Wang <sup>Che</sup> Shih-fu, Chung-kuo hsin wên-shüeh yün-tung shih, p. 44.
2. See Teng and Fairbank, op.cit., pp. 235-239.
3. Ta-hsi, wên-hsüeh lun-chêng chi, p. 81.
4. Ta-hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi, pp. 174-175.

Lin Shu's hostility to the New Culture Movement. Ching Shêng<sup>^</sup> was the name of the hero of the story, a great giant of a man, who espied a group of young men picnicing near his residence, prattling away about the necessity to abolish the literary language and blaspheming against Confucius. First he strode from his house and gave them a serious talking-to, and then he proceeded to chastise them. After meting out various kinds of corporal punishment to them, he roared, "..... I must wash my hands in scented water so as not to be contaminated by your unnatural animal bodies ...." Then, after delivering dire<sup>1.</sup> threats, he watched them running off down the hill in terror.

The use of this kind of abusive attack demonstrates the bankruptcy of Lin Shu's arguments, and indicates the kind of treatment he would have liked the authorities to give to the leaders of the New Culture Movement. But the war-lord government did not dare to act as Ching Shêng<sup>^</sup>, and in his despair Lin Shu wrote a short epilogue to the story in which he made a heartfelt appeal for a real Ching Shêng<sup>^</sup> to come and deal with these heretical young upstarts.

Lin Shu's opposition did not prove to be either as prolonged or as serious as might have been expected. This shows two things. First, that the New Culture Movement had firm support among the young intellectuals, and could not be overcome by the attacks of a few individuals, even if they did represent the opinions of the conservative ruling class with



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1. Ibid, p. 175.

the political power of the war-lord government behind them. Second, that the representatives of the traditional ruling class were not a match for the leaders of the New Culture Movement in open debate. The May 4th Movement had laid firm foundations for the whole cultural regeneration of China, which awaited only favourable political conditions to be carried into full operation.

The second major attack against the Literary Revolution did not occur until 1921, when a group of professors of the South-eastern University (Tung-nan ta-hsüeh)<sup>1.</sup> in Nanking started publishing a magazine called L'Impartial (Hsüeh-hêng)<sup>2.</sup> One of the leading members of this group was Mei Kuang-ti who had been one of Hu Shih's companions and principal opponent during his preliminary discussions on literary reform in the United States. He and all the other members of the group had studied abroad and endeavoured to use their knowledge of Western literature to oppose the New Literature Movement. One of their number, Hu Hsien-hsiu,<sup>3.</sup> published an article called A discussion of the reform of Chinese literature (Chung-kuo wên-hsüeh kai-liang lun)<sup>4.</sup> in which he argued that English literature was not written in the vernacular and the best writers of English in the past did not confine themselves to simple language, therefore the pai-hua movement, which partly based itself on the premise that simplicity of language was good, was refuted by the very thing which it took as a model - namely, the literature of the West.

1. 東南大學

2. 學衡

3. 胡先驌

4. 中國文學改良論 The first part is reproduced in Ta-hsi, Wen-hsueh lun-cheng chi, pp. 104-106.

Hu Hsien-hsiu brought forward a number of instances from the vocabulary of masters of English prose to prove his point, but did nothing to connect the question of simplicity directly with the question of the Chinese literary language, which differs from the vernacular not only in the matter of simplicity, but also in its vocabulary, grammar, etc., to such an extent as to make it unintelligible when read aloud to all but the highly educated. Hu merely showed that in the Western languages there exists a difference between the vernacular and the literary. He did not show that the difference was a qualitative one as in China.

From his argument that it was right for a difference to exist between the literary and the vernacular languages, Hu went on to say that pai-hua (which he took to equal language as spoken), was unsuitable for writing poetry, repeating the argument used by his colleague Mei Kuang-ti while still in America. He even went one stage further than Mei in saying that pai-hua was also unsuitable for discourse, but for neither assertion was he able to provide direct evidence. Lo Chia-lun,<sup>1.</sup> who answered his charges in detail, was able to quote Tsêng Kuo-fan,<sup>2.</sup> who was regarded as a master of the ku-wên<sup>3.</sup> style of prose of the fashionable T'ung-ch'eng school, as saying that discourse was the one thing for which ku-wên<sup>4.</sup> was unsuitable.

Hu Hsien-hsiu's other main argument was that, in rejecting the literary language, the protagonists of pai-hua were causing a break in the continuity of the Chinese literary

1. Ibid., pp. 107-126.

2. 曾國藩

3. 桐城                      See above, p. 37

4. Ta-hsi, op.cit., p. 117.

tradition. This was because while the colloquial language changed from age to age, the literary language remained the same. This was another reason for perpetuating the distinction between the spoken and written languages. Lo Chia-lun refuted this by saying that literature was not intended primarily for the enjoyment of future generations, but "to give expression to and criticise life, and to propagate the best ideas"<sup>1.</sup> and pai-hua was a far better instrument for achieving these aims than the dead literary language. These, then, were the main arguments in the field of literature used by the members of the Hsueh-heng group. They also put forward some ideas on the question of the evolution literature, claiming<sup>2.</sup> that the element of imitation was of the utmost importance, and that no literature is "created"; it is all "reincarnated" from existing material. This latter point, which was put forward by Hu Hsien-hsiu,<sup>3.</sup> has some truth in it, for it was a criticism that could be levelled against the Literary Revolution that it under-rated the literary tradition. Lo Chia-lun in fact agreed with Hu's formulation that "creative work can only be written if existing material is used,"<sup>4.</sup> but Hu's implication that the use of pai-hua constituted a complete break with tradition was quite wrong. Not only had pai-hua been used in Chinese novel-writing previously, but a reform in the medium does not constitute a complete break in the whole literary tradition. And although the tendency to over-emphasize

1. Ibid., pp. 123.
2. Mei Kuang-ti, P'ing t'i-ch'ang hsin wen-hua/chê, in Ta hsi,  
op.cit., p. 129. 評提倡新文化者
3. Hu, op.cit., p.123.
4. Loc. cit.

Westernization did exist among the new writers, it did not mean that the Chinese tradition was rejected by the whole movement.

Hu Hsien-hsiu's long article had been published in 1919 before the May 4th Movement, but had passed relatively unnoticed. The reassembly of the forces of the old literature round the Hsüeh-heng Group in 1921 led to its republication and reproduction in the Eastern Miscellany and elsewhere. All the opponents of the new literature felt that they had found a new champion. But in reality the group in Nanking formed only a small island in the sea of the New Literature, and this soon became submerged. Although they continued their attacks on the new literature for some months, they were unable to have a lasting effect on the movement, though they did have some temporary effect on the students of literature in Nanking. Their later efforts were directed largely against the new poetry.

The opposition of the Hsüeh-heng Group differed from that of Lin Shu in that, whereas Lin Shu based his opposition largely on the defence of orthodox Confucianism, Mei Kuang-ti, Hu Hsien-hsiu and Wu Mil, while consciously attempting to establish classicism as a literary trend in China, made use of the arguments of pro-classical Western critics. Some years later ~~one of their number~~, Liang Shih-ch'iu, claimed that the greatest fault of the new Chinese literature was that it copied Western romanticism and impressionism quite injudiciously, and that the pai-hua movement could be regarded as a kind of



1. See Lo, op. cit., p. 107.

2. 梁實秋

Chinese romanticism. The whole tendency of the arguments of the group was towards a preservation of the old literary forms. They did not concern themselves much with the content of literature, but were most vociferous on the question of language, though by their attacks on "twentieth-century literature" they implied that they did not approve of the content of modern European literature. They were against the New Culture Movement, however, and used arguments not so very far removed from those of Lin Shu to oppose it. They had to admit the necessity for a reform of Chinese culture, and their Western education had led them to believe that the West had something to offer to China. But they were against a revolution in culture, and Mei Kuang-ti said that a cultural reform could only take place after a long period of intensive study of the Western heritage. After about forty or fifty years the effect of this process might be seen. Mei was particularly alarmed at the increasing hold that the New Culture Movement had over the minds of the "innocent and romantic" young people, and accused the leaders of the New Culture Movement of being politicians rather than scholars who played on the susceptibilities of the young.<sup>1.</sup>

The main difference between the Hsüeh-hêng Group and Lin Shu lay in the Western education of the former. Fundamentally there was practically no difference, for both wished to preserve the old literature and the old outlook. Their use of Western

1. Mei, op.cit., p. 131.

phrases and arguments to support a reactionary Chinese position made them the counterpart in the intellectual world of comprador business and politics which have throughout the modern period<sup>1.</sup> exerted a reactionary influence on Chinese society as a whole, for both made use of <sup>2</sup>their connections with the West to hinder progress. Although they paid lip-service to the need for cultural reform, their arguments were all directed against the reforms that had already taken place. Their haughty attitude towards the new leaders shows them to <sup>have</sup>been jealous for the vanishing supremacy of the old intellectuals.

The third attack on the New Literature Movement did not occur until 1925, when the "Tiger" magazine (Chia-yin chou-k'an)<sup>2.</sup>, edited by Chang Shih-chao, started<sup>3.</sup> publication. Chang Chih-chao was the Minister of Education and Minister of Justice in the government controlled by Tuan Ch'i-jui and so, as in the case of the attacks of the Anfu group (including Lin Shu) six years earlier, Chang Shih-chao's activities had the authority of the war-lord government behind them. The substance of Chang's attacks included nothing new. There was the same defence of wen-yen against pai-hua, the same accusations about the New Culture Movement being a bad influence on the young, and the same illogicalities and inconsistencies. In fact, Chang Shih-chao's activities as Minister of Education had more serious consequences than his editorship of the Tiger. With their war-lord backing they constituted a political threat which made

1. See above, Chapter I, p.

2. 甲寅月刊 It was the lineal descendant of the Chia-yin tsa-chih of the early Republic period.

3. 章士釗

a number of leading intellectuals, including Lu Hsün, leave Peking, which became a stronghold of tradition and a citadel of war-lordism. Chang's attacks on the new literature were, as Lu Hsün said, the end of the struggle between pai-hua and wên-yen, and after this other issues became of far greater importance.

This is not to say that pai-hua had completely ousted wên-yen. Although the Ministry of Education had officially substituted the National Language (Kuo-yü) for the National Literature (Kuo-wên) in the curriculum of primary schools in 1920,<sup>1.</sup> and pai-hua had thus won a big victory in the field of education (pai-hua being roughly the same as written kuo-yü),<sup>2.</sup> yet in national life as a whole some form of wên-yen<sup>3.</sup> continued to be the most commonly used medium for writing. Serious literature was the only field in which the victory of pai-hua was virtually complete. Newspapers continued to be written in an easy wên-yen - something like the kind made popular by the journalistic activities of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, letters of all kinds were usually in wên-yen, especially business and official correspondence, while official and legal documents were all written in wên-yen. This continued largely to be the case right up to 1949, and required a conscious effort to break habits of expression which had remained largely unaltered since before the Literary Revolution. The basis for the continued use of wên-yen lay in the continued social strength of the old gentry, who were still in control in the countryside, while the

1. See de Francis, op. cit., p. 60.
2. See above, not to p. 79.
3. See the discussion of the relative functions of pai-hua and wen-yen in Kuo Shao-yü, Hsin wên-i yün-tung ying tsou ti t'u-ching 新文藝運動走的徑徑. in Wen-hsueh nien-pao 文學年報 No. 5. 1937 Kuo wrote: "Now pai-hua is artistic and wen-yen is functional." (p. 55.)

workers and peasants and the new intellectuals had not been drawn into the governing of the country sufficiently to make simplicity an important criterion in the composition of official documents.

So when we say that the efforts of Chang Shih-chao constituted the swan-song of the efforts of the opponents of pai-hua, we are only referring to their efforts in the field of the national debate on literature. It still found much support locally, and continued to be used widely in other fields, <sup>本</sup> but they are outside the scope of this study.

Although the struggle between the old literature and the new had lasted intermittently for six years, this protraction of the conflict after the movement had proved itself by producing creative works, was really a reflection of the political situation in the years following the May 4th Movement. The 1921 attack of the Hsüeh-heng group came just at the time when the May 4th Movement was cooling down and when some of its participants were compromising with the opposition. After 1921, although the new literature continued to achieve successes, the political <sup>temperature</sup> ~~climate~~ remained, on the whole, low. During this period more of the original participants of the May 4th Movement left the struggle, and only a few centred round Lu Hsun were left. Meanwhile the political situation seemed, on the surface, to be as bad as ever. So the opponents of the new literature felt encouraged to make another attempt to defeat it. But their attempt was doomed to failure, for apart from the staleness of their arguments which



made them ineffectual, the political revival which was to shake the old society was already under way in the South and among the organised workers in Shanghai and elsewhere, and soon after this quite new issues took the place of the old question of pai-hua.

Before leaving the subject of the Literary Revolution, there is one more question which is pertinent to our study. That is the question of the genealogy of the ideas of Hu Shih, Ch'en Tu-hsiu, etc. One of the detractors of the new movement, Liang Shih-ch'iu, whose opposition has already been mentioned in connection with the Hsüeh-hêng Group, in his eagerness to belittle its achievements sought to prove that it was a direct imitation of the ideas of the Imagists, who, under the wing of Amy Lowell, were active in America at the time of Hu Shih's studentship there. In their 1915 Annual <sup>The Imagists</sup> they defined their programme in a list of six points:-

(i) To employ precisely and without needless ornament the language of common speech.

(ii) To create new rhythms, in free verse if necessary, as the expression of moods.

(iii) To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subjects.

(iv) To present an Image (image, as defined by Ezra Pound, is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time).

(v) To present poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred or indefinite.

(vi) To secure concentration, the "very essence of poetry".<sup>1</sup>

Having pointed out the obvious similarities of these six points to Hu Shih's eight, Liang Shih-ch'iu said:

The Eight Don'ts of Hu Shih have the appearance of being a copy, even though he wants to cling to his reputation as an inventor. On the pretext of not wishing to imitate the ancients, Hu Shih and Ch'en Tu-hsiu imitated the foreigners.<sup>2</sup>

1. Quoted in van Boven, Histoire de la Littérature Chinoise Moderne, p. 32.
2. Ibid., loc. cit.

Liang Shih-ch'iu also found similarities in the style of Hu Shih to that of Amy Lowell, and concluded that Hu Shih had come deeply under the influence of the Imagists while in America. Moreover he did not approve of the ideas on literature which the six (or eight) points represented, and particularly disapproved of the elevation of what he called "common rustic language" (su-yü li-yü<sup>1</sup>) to the realm of literature.

Although there is some superficial similarity between the ideas of Hu Shih and the imagists, and it is highly likely that Hu Shih was influenced by them, the basic character of the two movements was quite different. If Hu Shih was guilty of a kind of plagiarism (and there is no documentary evidence to prove this guilt conclusively), it was a legitimate kind of plagiarism and did not extend far beyond the use of the outward form of the Imagists' proposals. The inner content of Hu Shih's ideas ~~were~~<sup>was</sup> quite different, and ~~were~~<sup>was</sup> determined by the quite dissimilar needs of China. In Hu Shih's proposals the only one which more or less exactly corresponds to those of the Imagists was the one about using the language of speech. American literature, although no doubt having a language problem, did not suffer from the kind of crisis which afflicted Chinese literature. There was no difference in kind between the spoken and written languages of America as there was in China. Therefore, though using nearly the same words as the Imagists, the proposal of Hu Shih had very different implications. The rest of the Imagists' proposals were concerned

1. 俗語, 里語

2.

3.



with poetry, and although their ideas find some echo in Hu Shih's proposals for the reform of poetry, such as his emphasis on concrete rather than abstract writing, this is another question. It was quite illegitimate to use this similarity between the two sets of proposals to discredit the whole Literary Revolution.

The second question of genealogy concerns the literary ideas of the late Ming school of writers known as the Kung-an p'ai<sup>1</sup>, so called because they came from Kung-an Hsien<sup>2</sup> in Hupeh. The most important members of this school were the three brothers Yüan Tsung-tao<sup>3</sup>, Yüan Hung-tao<sup>4</sup> and Yüan Chung-tao<sup>5</sup> who lived at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. As a school they were strongly opposed to the strict moralising of the Seven Masters of Ming prose, who were their precursors. They opposed the idea of wen-i-tsai-tao (literature as a vehicle of morality), and because of this also strongly opposed the tendency to imitate the old writers. Yüan Hung-tao wrote:

Poetry has recently sunk very low. While prose must take the Ch'in and Han dynasties as its standard, poetry bases itself on the flourishing period of the T'ang dynasty. Imitation and plagiarism extend to every detail. If someone includes a word in his writing which has no precedent, then he is called a heretic. They do not realise that, though they imitate the writing of the Ch'in and Han, the writers of these dynasties did not imitate every character of the Six Classics. Nor did the poets of the T'ang dynasty, whom they imitate, copy those of the Han and Wei dynasties. If the Ch'in and Han writers had copied the Six Classics, how could there have been a separate Ch'ing and Han literature? If the poets of the T'ang dynasty had simply copied those of the Han and Wei dynasties, how could there have been any T'ang poetry?

1. 公案派

2. 公案駢

3. 袁守道 4. 袁宏道 . 5. 袁中道

6. Yüan Chung-lang ch'üan chi 袁中郎全集

wên-chi 文集 p.

These words read very much like those of Hu Shih when he said that each age has its own literature. Yüan Hung-tao also said that to copy the language of the old writers and to pride oneself on one's own air of antiquity was "like wearing<sup>1.</sup> summer clothes in the depth of winter". He was thus in favour of using a contemporary style to write contemporary literature. He and his brothers also attacked the "empty melancholy" which Hu Shih disapproved of, though also including "empty joy" in their attack on insincerity. They also disapproved of the tendency towards formalism and that type of writing which "disregards things in front of the eyes" and only pays attention to outmoded imagery.<sup>2.</sup> This was rather like Hu Shih's "Have something to say".

Chou Tso-jên said that the ideas of the Literary Revolution were like those of the Kung-an p'ai with the addition of a knowledge of Western science.<sup>3.</sup> There is some truth in this, at least where the ideas of Hu Shih are concerned. But this one difference in their theory mentioned by Chou Tso-jên was a fundamental one. As we have seen, the Literary Revolution was part of the New Culture Movement and sprang from it. It was based on the need to express completely new, modern ideas in literature and to introduce a new purpose. There was nothing of this kind in the theory of the Yüan brothers. They represented the smaller gentry of their time, and their outlook was limited accordingly. They opposed the



1. Ibid., p. 8.

2. Yüan Tsung-tao, 袁宗道, Pai su chai chi 白蘇齋集  
 quoted by Chou Tso-jên in Chung-kuo hsün wên-hsüeh ti  
yüan-liu 中國新文學的源流 p. 49.

3. Chou Tso-jên, op. cit., p. 43.

conventions of the more powerful Seven Masters, but all they could substitute for these conventions was the extremely abstract concept of "Wit" (Hsing-ling)<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, their writings tended to become clever but inconsequential, and their influence was limited.<sup>2</sup>

It is true that the Kung-an writers were fond of the novels (there is a record of Yüan Hung-tao praising the Chin P'ing Mei), and that they were in favour of a simple written style. Yet they did not consciously advocate pai-hua, and, as Hu Shih said, the consciousness of the pai-hua movement was one of its basic characteristics which distinguished it from the earlier unconscious movement towards the use of pai-hua represented by the novel-writers.<sup>3</sup>

1. 性靈

2. Even so the Ch'ing literary inquisitors saw fit to ban their writings because of their opposition to orthodoxy.

CHAPTER IIITHE NEW SPIRIT IN LITERATURE.Literature and Society.

While during the May 4th period the main engagements with the enemies of the new literature were fought in the field of language on the question of the vernacular (pai-hua) versus literary language (wên-yen), the main aim of the Literary Revolution was to create a literature with a content in accord with the spirit of the time. The historical function of the battles over wên-yen and pai-hua was to undermine the authority of the old schools and to clear the way for the development of the new, and for this reason these battles marked a turning-point in the history of Chinese literature. Yet pai-hua was, as we have seen, nothing new in itself, and the use of pai-hua as the medium for fiction was already well established. Being the literary language of the common people, it needed only comparatively slight adjustment to bring it up to date; the difference between the language of the old literature and that of the new was at least where fiction is concerned, quite small.

Language can, therefore, not be used as a basic criterion to differentiate the new literature from the old. Similarly no other purely formal criterion is satisfactory. In recent years novels have been written about the war of

1. See above, Chapter II, p. 93 .
2. See below, Chapter IV, p. 208 .

1.  
resistance to Japan which use the old episodic chang-hui form in much of its detail, yet to classify them as belonging to old literature, or traditional literature, would be to ignore their main features, namely that they portray new types of characters and that the outlook and judgments of the authors are representative of the modern revolutionary age. While it is true that the outlook of the New Culture Movement and of "May 4th" demanded the use of new forms as well as the modification of the old pai-hua, yet inasmuch as the new forms were the product of the new content, it is the latter that must be taken as the main distinguishing feature of modern Chinese literature.

Having said this, the next step should be to attempt a generalised description of the main features of the new content. After this, if due account is also taken of the new formal features, it should be possible to arrive at a deeper understanding of the whole of the New Literature Movement and its importance in the history of Chinese literature. Such a generalisation is not easy to arrive at, however, because it depends partly on the possibility of making a complete survey of the literature of the period, which is not possible without access to far more material than is available outside China, although some of this work has been done already by Chinese writers and scholars, both during the period itself, and more recently.

2.

- 章 目
1. For a brief description of the ch'ang-hui form, see the introduction by Arthur Waley to Wang Chi-chen's abridged translation of Dream of the Red Chamber. Modern novels of this form include Ma Feng and Hsi Jung, Lu-liang Ying-hsiung chuan 馬烽, 西戎, 呂梁英雄傳 and K'ung Ch'üeh and Yuan Ching, Hsin erh-nü ying-hsiung chuan 孔厥, 袁靜, 新兒女英雄傳. Both of these are novels of heroism treated very much as the story-teller would treat them. They concern guerrilla warfare in the Liberated Areas behind the Japanese lines during the late war.
2. The most notable attempts to summarise the main modern trends in the literature of the first ten years of the period are made in the introductions to the various volumes of the Thesaurus of Modern Chinese Literature (Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsueh ta-hsi). Particularly relevant to this chapter are those in the three volumes of short stories by Shen Yen-ping (Mao-tun), 沈雁冰 (茅盾) Chou Shu-jên (Lu Hsun) 周樹人 (魯迅) and Cheng Po-ch'i 鄭伯奇 respectively. Much of the material in this chapter is based on these introductions.

One fact that can be stated without the aid of a complete analysis is that, in the literature of the period, a number of new types of character began to appear which had not figured prominently in Chinese literature hitherto. Of these the outstanding ones are the peasants, the workers and the new type of intellectual. The peasants had appeared before in Chinese literature, and often prominently, but rarely as the chief characters. Even in the great novel concerning peasant rebellion, the Water Margin (Shui Hu Chuan)<sup>†</sup> the chief characters, although identifying themselves with the peasants, are not themselves peasant types. And although it is relatively common to find peasants treated sympathetically in Chinese literature, for example, in the poetry of Tu Fu and Po Chü-i, where they often appeared as the victims of cruel oppression, it was not until after the Literary Revolution that writers began to examine the problems of the peasants from a fundamentally anti-Confucian or anti-feudal point of view. Tu Fu was a Confucian anxious to humanise his contemporaries into making the traditional society function. Lu Hsün, on the other hand, was a democrat fundamentally opposed to the traditional system, and desperately seeking an alternative. He wrote with a deep understanding of the peasants and their problems, and one of his deepest ambitions was to find a way of enabling them to cast off their burden



of ignorance and superstition.<sup>1.</sup> Other writers, such as Hsü Ch'in-wen and Wang Lu-yen,<sup>2.</sup> followed Lu Hsün's example in taking the peasants as their subject matter. Both of these writers, no doubt under Lu Hsün's influence, attempted to depict life in the villages, but neither of them had Lu Hsün's powers of observation nor his facility of description; nor did they have Lu Hsün's fire and indignation, coupled with his sympathy for the oppressed, the result being that their stories are inclined to be dull and lifeless when read today. Yet, in spite of his lack of support in the early period, Lu Hsün was an important enough figure to make his own writing alone of more importance than half-a-dozen different "trends" put together.

The most obvious reason why the new intellectuals had not featured in previous literature in China is that they had not existed. As the new literature was their creation it is not unnatural that they should figure largely in it. The modern intellectuals could be distinguished from the old intellectuals by their belief in the ideals of May 4th and their opposition to the old society. They usually appeared as tragic figures in the new literature, because the old social forces were still in control and were able to prevent the young intellectuals from realising their ideals. The young people on their part were often isolated both from one another and from society at large, and this isolation usually

1. See below, Chapter V, pp. 251 ff.

2. 許欽文, 王魯彥

spelt defeat in their lone battles against the old society. The commonest theme in literature was that of love and marriage,<sup>1.</sup> and one of the commonest situations one in which the young lovers are prevented from meeting or marrying by their elders, who insist on arranging marriages in the old way. While, faced with such a situation, the young people of old times might have attributed their plight to fate and resigned themselves to it, the new characters had read Ibsen and believed in the freedom of choice of husband or wife. If strong, they might defy their parents and run away from home; if weak, they would submit, but their submission would be made all the more tragic by their new consciousness. Even if they ran away their problems were not solved, and their life was not likely to be easy.

In addition to the question of marriage there was also the problem of frustration and wasted lives. Men and women who, during their youth, were filled with a desire to use their talents for the betterment of their people and their country were forced, by their isolation and their weakness in the face of the war-lords, bureaucrats and tyrannical heads of families, to waste their lives in futile and petty occupations. The pages of the literary collection of the early period of modern literature are filled with minor tragedies of this sort. Lu Hsün created typical examples in The Hermit and Reunion in a Restaurant, which will be discussed in the chapter devoted to his stories.<sup>2.</sup>

1. An analysis was made of the subject-matter of the stories published in China in the months of April, May and June, 1921. Of the 120 stories examined, 70 were love stories of one sort or another, only 8 were about life in the countryside, 3 about workers in the towns, 9 about various aspects of family life, 5 about school life and 20 concerned with miscellaneous aspects of lower middle-class life. (See Lang Sun, P'ing ssu wu liu yueh ti ch'uang-tso 郎損評四五六月的創作 in Hsiao-shuo yueh-pao 小說月報 chüan 12, No. 8, August, 1921.)

2. See <sup>below</sup> ~~above~~, Chapter V, pp. 285-290.

While the appearance of new themes reflecting the new stage in Chinese history was one of the main features of the "May 4th" period in Chinese literature, of equal importance was the treatment of these themes, and connected with this was the question of the function of literature, and the relation of literature to society.

The leaders of the Literary Revolution had touched upon this question only slightly, but in attacking the old literature they had to have some ideas of what a new literature should be like. When Ch'en Tu-hsiu issued his famous call for a literary revolution and attacked the old literature, he at the same time demanded a "plain, simple and expressive literature . . . . . the fresh and sincere literature of realism . . . . . the plain-speaking and popular literature of a living society."<sup>1</sup> Although these demands were little more than slogans, yet they did provide some hints at the direction in which literature was to travel. First, that it should be popular and democratic, that is, a literature for the people; though he did not specify who he conceived the people to be. Second, that it should be realistic, that is to say that it should presumably take contemporary life as its subject matter, or material having a reference to contemporary life and problems.

Although Hu Shih also had little to say on this particular question, yet in one of his later articles on literary reform he urged writers to take material from the life of the

1. See above, Chapter II, p. 103.

common people:-

".... such as men and women workers in the factories, rickshaw-pullers, the farmers of the interior, traders and small shopkeepers everywhere, whose bitter conditions have never had a place in our literature."<sup>1</sup>

This seems to imply an advocacy of a literature of exposure. However, Hu Shih did not develop this aspect of the theory of literary reform.

The first detailed discussion of the problems of subject matter and ideological content of the new literature came from Chou Tso-jên in his two articles Literature for Man (Jên-ti wên-hsüeh)<sup>2</sup> and Literature of the Common People (P'ing-min wên-hsüeh)<sup>3</sup>, which appeared in New Youth.<sup>4</sup> His conclusion was that literature should be for "man", that is, it should be "humanist". In advocating literature for the common people he indicated that the Literary Revolution was not merely a question of the reform of the literary medium, but also a reform of the spirit and content of literature. True, wên-yen literature had been what he called "aristocratic", while pai-hua literature had been of the common people, but this was by no means exclusively true. It was, he argued, quite possible to create a pai-hua literature for a small elite, and the champions of art-for-art's sake were trying to do this. He defined aristocratic (kuei-tsu-ti)<sup>5</sup> literature as an ornamental literature for the enjoyment of a minority which has as its sole purpose the provision of amusement, while the literature of the common people should be meaningful, true to life and universal. By true to life he

1. See Ta hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi, p. 136.

2. 人的文學

See Ta hsi, op.cit., pp. 193-199.

3. 平民文學

Ibid., pp. 210-213.

4. 貴族的



meant that it should use a realistic style to portray the true conditions of real life, rather than writing of legendary warriors of "talented men and famous beauties"<sup>1</sup>. If it was true in this sense, and concentrated on a simple and popular exposition of the truth, then beauty and literary merit would follow naturally. It was this which, in his view, was the chief characteristic of "humanist" literature, which differentiated it from the literature of the "art-for-art's-sake" school.

In the very early productions of creative writing after the Literary Revolution it was this kind of humanism which was most in vogue, and it was in complete contrast to the empty formalism and word-play of the conventional schools of poetry, and to the vulgar sensationalism of the contemporary magazine novelists.<sup>2</sup> Many of the first literary productions were written by the leaders of the general cultural movement themselves and published in such magazines as New Youth and La Renaissance, including the early work of Lu Hsün, and Hu Shih's none too successful essays in creative writing. The content of these works was an extension into the literary field of the ideas expressed elsewhere in the pages of these journals in theoretical terms; the ideals of liberty, equality and social justice, and the anti-feudal ideas of the cultural renaissance. The poetry of the period, while much of it was crude in form, was more vigorous than that of a few years later.<sup>3</sup>

The poet most infected with the spirit of the age was Kuo Mo-jo, whose poetry we shall discuss in more detail. The poets of the Society for Literary Research were less ebullient

1. 佳人 This was one of the traditional types of subject-matter for novels, equivalent ~~to~~ present-day escapist literature ~~to~~ the medieval romances. They accepted the conventional morals entirely, and were stereotyped in plot and characterisation. Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in the author of the Dream of the Red Chamber, wrote of them as early as the Seventeenth Century as being one of the lower forms of literature, contrasting with the fresh realism of his book (See Hung lou meng, hui 2).
2. Another type of escapist literature was the equivalent of the third-rate novelettes of the West. Some of the more skilful ones won a wide readership among Chinese intellectuals, and were called by the leaders of the New Literature Movement the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly Group (Yhan-yang hu-tieh p'ai) 鴛鴦蝴蝶派

Their books were concerned with city life, particularly of the intellectuals, with the emphasis on love entanglements, treated in an entirely romantic way. Van Boven wrote about them: "Les auteurs de ce groups se caractérisent surtout par leur attitude libertine et railleuse envers la vie individuelle, patriotique et sociale. Tant~~ôt~~ ils ridiculisent, tant~~ôt~~ ils écrivent des romans pessimistes à grand effet. Sous la pression des circonstances ils durent bien modifier un peu leur attitude par tro~~n~~ironique, mais ils restèrent opposés au réalisme sociale de la Société d'Etudes Littéraires (see below, p. 128 ~~128~~). Plus tard on leur applique quelquefois le nom de Hai p'ai 海派, école de Shanghai, par opposition avec L'école de Pékin, Ching p'ai 京派. Beaucoup de romans-feuilletons actuels sont a grouper dans ce genre, entre autres ceux de Chang Hên-shui 張恨水 Liu Yün-jo 劉雲若 Ku Ming-tao 顧明道 Pao T'ien-hsiao 包天笑 (Van Boven, op.cit., p. 29). See also Ta hsi, Wên-hsüeh lun-ch'eng chi, where Ch'eng Chên-to 鄭振鐸 gives some details of the struggle between the Society for Literary Research and the members of this group. Eventually they beat a retreat and their principal journals. The Saturday Magazine (Li-pai liu 禮拜六) and Yu-hsi tsa-chih 遊戲雜誌 ceased publication. Their writings continued, however, right up to 1949, and some of their novels had big editions. They were the direct successors of the writers of Novels of Darkness of the period immediately preceding the Literary Revolution. (See above, Chapter I, p.47 )

3. Form a discussion of the new forms in poetry see below, Chapter IV, p. 140ff.

136.

than he, but nevertheless reflect in their work the new tendency towards social themes. Hu Shih in his discussion of the new poetry called for the use of concrete imagery rather than abstract philosophising, and it is this concreteness which stands out in the poetry of the early poets.<sup>1.</sup> The lot of the poor is compared to that of the ox with "grass before and a whip behind".<sup>2.</sup> The beggar on the street is separated from the comfort of the rich by "one thin layer of window-paper".<sup>3.</sup> The strength of these early poems is their lack of slogan-shouting; their weakness - an air of objective detachment from the life they comment on, and a drabness of language and imagery.

The leaders of the New Culture Movement not only engaged in creative writing, they also translated foreign literary works into Chinese, thus recommencing the work which had been begun by Lu Hsün and his brother some years earlier. Although the works of a number of European writers were translated quite early in the movement, none received more attention than Ibsen, and New Youth devoted a whole issue to translations of some of his plays and discussion of his work, particularly of his ideas.

The Doll's House, which was included among the translations in this issue, had a considerable influence among the youth of the time, particularly the young women. It stimulated their desire to revolt against the restrictions of the old family life, even when this revolt could only result in hardship. Another play, also translated at that time, which had a great influence was An Enemy of the People.<sup>4.</sup> Ibsen was valued because he tore away the mask of respectability from the faces of hypocrits, because he showed up conventional society for what it often was - an outward show in which everyone was concerned only with saving

1. See Ta hsi, Chien shê li-lun chi, pp. 308-310.
2. K'ang Pai-ch'ing, T'sao-êrh tsai ch'ien. 康白情 草兒在前
3. Liu Pan-nung, Hsiang kô i ts'êng chih. 劉半農, 相隔一層紙
4. See New Youth, chüan 4, No. 6, June, 1918.

face, while they committed every kind of crime and sin in secret. His championing of women's rights (women being the worst victims of hypocrisy and falsehood), and his advocacy of strength of character, also contributed to his popularity in China.

In discussing Ibsenism, Hu Shih cited three social forces in Ibsen's society which were responsible for most of the injustice.<sup>1</sup> They were the law, religion and morality, all of which were often shamelessly abused and utilised on behalf of self-interest and injustice. This castigation of traditional institutions corresponded with the attitude of the New Culture Movement towards the old ethical code and the conventional morals of the Confucians.

Hu Shih also drew attention to Ibsen's well-known dictum:- "The majority is always wrong and the minority is always right." Absurd though this dictum may appear on the surface, the truth lying behind it was particularly well appreciated by the minority of new spirits who were fighting against the majority of Confucian conservatism. Although the enemy in the one case was the rigid bourgeois conventionality of Norwegian society, and in the other the pre-bourgeois feudal conventions of China, there was sufficient common ground between them to make Ibsen's message plain. The idea of individual liberation and self-respect, the necessity of saving oneself from the morass of conventional society as a prelude to saving that society itself were also parts of "Ibsenism" to

1. Hu Shih, I-pu-shêng chu-i 男小生主義 in  
Ta hsi, Chien-she li-lun chi, pp. 179-192.

which Hu Shih drew attention. The idea of the liberation of the individual from the bondage of feudal society was one of the cardinal ideas of the New Culture Movement. The fate of Hjalmer Ekdal in The Wild Duck was the fate of very many young Chinese, while the message of Nora in The Doll's House, the call to resistance and revolt, was a call to which all wished to respond, if they dared.

The weakness of Ibsenism, the unresolved problems and the unanswered questions, and the limitations of his remedies, although important, were not so important at the early period as the positive contribution of his spirit of revolt. Later, when the task of changing the whole of society by revolution (which would have appalled Ibsen) began to fill the minds of the Chinese youth, that is from 1925 onwards, he was no longer so relevant and his influence declined. Lu Hsün, in a speech to girl students in Peking posed the question, "What did Nora do after she had left?"<sup>1.</sup> and the answer in the minds of many young people could be found only in creating a type of society in which it was possible for women to live independent lives. Lu Hsün, in asking this question, put his finger on one of the main weaknesses of the New Culture Movement which has already been alluded to, namely its failure immediately to generate the political movements which could make its social aspirations a practical possibility.<sup>2.</sup>

1. Lu Hsün ch'üan chi, 魯迅全集 pp. 143-151. The talk was given to the girls of the Peking Women's Superior Normal College in December, 1923.
2. See above, Chapter I, p. 56.



After Ibsen came the translation and introduction of Russian literature. While New Youth devoted a special issue to Ibsen, The Story Monthly which, in the literary field was its direct successor, had issues devoted to Russian literature and the literature of the oppressed peoples. The latter included Polish, Czech, Greek, Finnish and Jewish works and others, with articles discussing literary developments in some of these countries, thus continuing the trend which Lu Hsün had initiated a decade earlier. It was Russian literature which gradually became the favourite with the Chinese public, and has retained that position ever since. Of course, the move away from English and French literature towards Russian literature was no more than a general tendency, for throughout the twenties and thirties all the great literatures were translated in increasing quantities.

But there were certain affinities between Russia and China, particularly in their social structure which gave Russian literature a special appeal to the Chinese intellectual of the period after May 4th. Chou Tso-jen expressed it in this way:

Nineteenth-century Russia was a period of conflict between light and darkness, with reform and reaction simultaneously active right up to the downfall of the Romanovs. All the new ideas produced by this conflict of necessity assumed a like colouring.

Russian literary critics from Belinsky to Tolstoy mostly advocated humanist literature..... What made

1. The Story Monthly (Hsiao-sho yieh-pao) chüan XII, No. 10, October, 1921. The special issue on Russian literature was also published in 1921 as an extra issue.

their ideas effective was that the special characteristics of Russian society provided them with a suitable background: the characteristic Russian religion, political regime and social system.

Christianity, the monarchy and the class system were, generally speaking, common to all European countries at that time. But in Russia they took more extreme forms - the Greek Orthodox Religion, oriental autocracy and serfdom - and in these respects Russia differed from other countries. Also, in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century the countries of Europe were gradually changing, and had democratic tendencies, while Russia was governed by violent reaction. While this great social problem remained unsolved there was no question of tackling others. This is why literary thought was concentrated on the social problem. Those in China who are studying or creating the new literature can learn an important lesson. China's special national characteristics differ somewhat from those of the Western European countries, but they resemble those of Russia in a number of ways. So we believe that the new literature of China will naturally and as a matter of course be a social and humanist literature.<sup>1</sup>

The writer who most successfully learned the lesson referred to by Chou Tso-jen was his brother Lu Hsün. During the course of his study of Russian literature he came to believe that it was not only that Russian literature was "humanist" and dealt with the great "social problem" which constituted its greatness, but its partisanship in the struggle against the Tsarist autocracy and its strong democratic tendency. Lu Hsün has himself described the kind of impact made by these features of Russian literature on Chinese readers

2.

In Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's Shih-wu pao we read about the vagaries of Sherlock Holmes' detective cases and in his New Stories we read Jules Vernes' so-called scientific novel Twenty-thousand Leagues under the Sea. Later Lin Shu undertook the translation of Rider Haggard in a big

1. Chou Tso-jên, I-shu yü shêng-huo, 藝術与生活 pp. 139.

2. 時務報.

3. 新小說.

way, and we read of the love entanglements of the young ladies of London and the quaintness of African savages. As for Russian literature, we were absolutely ignorant of it - if there were some prophets who knew of it they were exceptional, and did not impart their knowledge to others. However, in another direction some Russian influence had already made itself felt. Who was there among the young people of the time who was not aware that the youth of Russia were experts in revolution and assassination? Sophia was especially remembered - mainly because she was a good-looking girl. In our writings today characters named Su-fei are still to be found, a name which originated at that time.

The Russian literature of that period- the end of the nineteenth century - and especially the works of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy had already had a big influence on German literature, but this had no effect on China because at that time very few people studied German. A more important connection was provided by the British and American imperialists. On the one hand they translated selections from Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Chekov and at the same time they used the (English - O.D.C.) readers composed for Indians to teach our young people the dialogues of Rama and Krishna. In so doing, they made it possible for us to read the Russian selections. Stories of detection or exploration, stories about English girls or African savages, could only serve as a means of scratching the distended stomach after a feast, but some of our young people were not in need of this sort of thing they were suffering oppression and felt only its bitterness. They wanted to struggle against it and sought practical guidance for their struggle.

It was then that they became aware of Russian literature. It was then that they learned that Russian literature was our leader and friend, for in it they could discern the fine souls of the oppressed, their sorrows and their struggles. Their hopes were aroused by the writings of the 'forties and their sorrows reflected in the works of the 'sixties. Everyone was aware that at that time the Russian Empire was engaged in aggression against China, but from Russian literature we learned a great truth, that in the world there were two kinds of people: the oppressors and the oppressed.

From our present standpoint this seems quite obvious and unnecessary to point out, but then it was a great discovery, not less important than the discovery of the use of fire to provide heat for cooking and light.

Russian works gradually became introduced into China. They were received with sympathy by part of our public and won a permanent readership.....

More authors' names became known, and though in the work of L. Andreev we found terror, and in M. Artsybashev we found despair and desperation, yet on the other hand in Korolenko we found breadth of vision, and from Maxim Gorki we learnt resistance. ....

It is worthy of celebration that, though the literary relations between China and Russia started later than Sino-English or Sino-French relations, yet during the past ten years, no matter whether China and Russia broke off diplomatic relations or restored them, the readership of Russian literature did not fluctuate, nor was it affected by the imposition or relaxation of bans by the authorities; in fact, rather than diminishing it increased.<sup>1</sup>

1. Lu Hsun ch'üan chi, chüan V, pp. 53-58. Lu Hsun's statement of the popularity of Russian literature is born out by the survey of the reading taste of 1,600 students of 22 Chinese universities and 8 high schools in 1937, recorded in Olga Lang, The Chinese Family and Society, p. 363. Under Foreign Books she gives the following figures for answers to the question "What is your favourite book?"

	<u>No. of boys naming book</u>	<u>No. of girls naming book</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>A. <u>Fiction.</u></b>			
<b>1. <u>Anglo-Saxon</u> -</b>			
Dickens	37	32	69
Hardy	4	18	22
Alcott	9	14	23
Others	68	35	103
	<u>118</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>217</u>
<b>2. <u>Russian</u> -</b>			
Gorky	32	26	58
Tolstoy	15	6	21
Turgenev	12	7	19
Others	45	19	63
	<u>104</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>162</u>
<b>3. <u>Other nationalities</u> -</b>			
Goethe, <u>Werther</u>	24	7	31
A. Dumas, <u>La Dame aux Camelias</u>	27	17	44
De Amicis, <u>Cuore</u>	15	3	18
Others	39	23	62
	<u>118</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>186</u>

Olga Lang writes: "The popularity of Russian literature is remarkable, especially if one remembers that at the time of our investigation the other great powers had many more means of influencing the cultural life of China than Russia. English has been the foreign language in China. Many of the books mentioned by the students as their favourites were required reading. French and German have been taught in many schools. Not so with Russian. In the years following China's break with the Soviets in 1927 there were no Russian schools in China, and almost no Russian was taught. (Ibid., p. 273.)"

### The Literary Societies.

An important feature of the organization of literary life in modern China has been the formation of literary societies, each with its own journals and distinctive body of literary theory. Few writers did not belong to, or associate with, one of these bodies, and it would have been economically and in other ways extremely difficult to have remained aloof. They were created out of the necessities of the time. For one of their main functions, particularly in the early period, was to provide an organizational base for waging the battle against the opponents of the new literature.<sup>1.</sup> Again, in circumstances where the reading public for the new literature was limited and had to be won,<sup>2.</sup> it was essential for writers to band together, both for their own protection and for the advancement of their profession. Thus the literary societies had some of the functions of writers' unions, and the first of them, The Society for Literary Research (Wen-Hsüeh yen-chiu hui)<sup>3.</sup> was founded with that function as one of its statutory aims.<sup>4.</sup> Another reason for the creation of these societies, and the reason for their diversity, was that there was considerable divergence of opinion among the new writers on quite fundamental matters, and the new societies acted as the mouthpieces for polemics among the various literary schools.



1. See Chêng Chên-to's introduction to Ta hsi, Wên-hsüeh lun-chêng chi, p. 14, for an account of the struggle of the new literature against the Saturday Group (see above p. 135 and note).
2. In 1928 one critic wrote the following about the difficulties of the new literature in winning a reading public: "From the start of the New Culture Movement up to today, the result of more than ten years of effort, works which could be said to be literary in character only include 200 odd volumes of translations and one hundred original works. These figures are arrived at without any attempt to sift the good from the bad..... If we ask the reason for this phenomenon (i.e., the poverty of output), then we have to talk about the poverty of the publishers and writers. Try bending a finger for each publisher who is making an effort to put out new literary works. Before you have used up all your fingers you will have to shake your head and admit that you have thought of them all. And among these few desolate publishing houses only one is comparatively well supplied with capital. The rest are all based on very little capital. As for writers, even if you think of all those who have not yet made a name for themselves you will only be able to think of some two hundred names. The clearest manifestation of this weakness is the size of editions. Very few indeed among the periodicals which include new literature can sell five thousand copies. As for books in this line, only three or four volumes have reached a sale of more than 20,000. As for the rest, they have first prints of 3,000 and possibly a second print bringing it up to 6,000, and this latter figure would be reckoned as very good." (See Tsêng Hsü-pai, I chia yen, kei ch'üan kuo hsin wên-i' tso-chê i fêng kung-k'ai hsin 曾虛白一家言給全國文藝工作者一封信 quoted in Ch'ên Ping-k'un Tsü-chih san shih nfen Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih, p. 258.) For further discussion of the problem of the reading public, see below, Chapter IV, p. 176.
3. 文學研究會
4. See the Manifesto of the Society for Literary Research (Wên-hsüeh yen-chiu hui hshan-yen 文學研究會宣言) in Ta hsi Shih-liao so-yin 史料索引 p. 71.

開信

Mao Tun (Shên Yen-ping)<sup>1</sup>, one of the founders of the Society for Literary Research wrote of the literary societies:-

"The opposition to feudalism in the early period of May 4th is quite clear; but after it had been 'opposed' what sort of new culture should be established in its place? There was no definite answer to this question at the time. It was not that nobody tried to answer the question, but rather that nobody's answer met with general approval. At that time those participating in the anti-feudal movement did not all belong to the same social stratum, so that when it came to the question of 'What next?', there was a great divergence of opinion."<sup>2</sup>

In short, the literary societies were instruments of the struggle both against the enemy without and among rivals within. They are an illustration of the close connection between the literary movement and the general political situation for they reflect the intense struggle taking place in all aspects of life in China at this period.

It was after the establishment of these societies that discussion of the function and purpose of literature developed. The biggest of the early groups, which as we have just mentioned was originally intended to be a kind of writers' union, was the Society for Literary Research (Wên-hsüeh yen-chiu hui), established early in 1920. The second body, The Creation Society (Chuang-tsao shê)<sup>3</sup>, was set up a few months later. The theorists of the former group, especially Mao Tun, wrote extensively on the relation of literature to society, with the result that a certain body of doctrine came to be associated with it.

1. 茅盾 (沈雁冰)

2. See the introduction by Shen Yen-ping to Ta hsi, Hsiao-shuo erh chi, 小說二集 pp. 3-4.

3. 創造社.

Mao Tun, who had been influenced by the "sociological" school of criticism inspired by Taine, regarded the function of literature to be to reflect contemporary life and expose social ills:

I believe, he wrote, that the only true and significant literature is that which describes life in society. In a country which is subject to oppression and maltreatment, social background is of still greater importance.

The purpose of this literature of exposure, in his estimation, was to stimulate the reader to social action:

We believe, he wrote, that literature is not only intended for the diversion of idle people or the amusement of those who desire to escape from reality. Literature has the power of stirring men's hearts. Nowadays it is our especial hope that literature will be able to take upon itself the great responsibility of arousing the masses and giving them strength. We hope that the young writers of our country will stop closing their eyes and dreaming of castles in the air, forgetting that they actually live in a pigsty. We are strongly opposed to the way that some young people close their eyes to the chains that they bear, even scorning those who seek to throw them off.

This was a typical reaction of the Chinese writer to the social conditions of the early twenties. It would not be true to ascribe quite this degree of social conscience to all the writers of the Society for Literary Research, yet in general they did incline towards <sup>critical</sup> realism and naturalism. Usually they were more inclined to attempt a diagnosis of the ills of society than to point the way to, or even hint at, a remedy. Many of them were far from revolutionary, and some even when producing "problem literature", lacked the courage or insight which they might have inherited from Ibsen.

1. See Lang Sun (Shên Yen-ping), Shê-hui pei-ching yü ch'uang-tsaó 社會背景與創造 in Hsiao-shuo yüeh-pao, chüan XII, No. 7, July, 1921,
2. Shên Yen-ping, Ta chuan-pien shih-ch'i ho shih lai 大轉變時期何時來 in Ta hsi, Wên-hsüeh lun-chêng chi, pp.165-166.

Yet, on the whole, this attitude could be called a definite trend.

While the literary works which reflected this trend contained considerable sympathy for the poor and oppressed, it had not yet at this stage crystallised into the class consciousness of the later proletarian writers, for there was as yet no generally accepted call for writers to accept the responsibility of expressing in their works the feelings and the point of view of the common people. One defect of the stories of the period was that workers and peasants, when depicted at all, were generally looked at "from the outside", from the point of view of the emotions and outlook of the intellectual. Writers had little understanding of life outside their immediate circles. Even at that time Mao Tun, at least, was conscious of this shortcoming, for he wrote:

The people in China who write novels are mostly scholars concerned with learning and research who have had no experience of life among the Fourth Class, such as Gorki had as a baker, or Dostoevsky and others in Siberia. If they have had no deep impressions of it, how can they describe it accurately? In these conditions it is impossible to produce novels containing a background of bitter poverty.

Yet although at least one influential critic was aware of this, there was little conscious movement to correct it at that time, for criticism was itself at a very low ebb, or rather had not yet begun to develop to any great extent. Writers were generally left to go their own ways without interference or guidance. Yet this lack of criticism was only a

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1. Shên Yen-ping, Shên-hui pei-ching yü ch'uang-tsao, (op.cit.

subsidiary reason for this particular defect. The basic cause was the schism which had divided the intellectual from society at large, and particularly from the working people, which had its roots in Chinese political development. It was the symptom of a deep-seated social crisis, which could not be overcome by the efforts of writers alone.<sup>1.</sup>

It is not within the scope of this study to examine the work of all the writers of the period, but a glimpse of the work of one or two writers, broadly representative of the main trends, may serve to illustrate some of the points already noted.

One of the most popular writers of the day was the woman writer Hsieh Ping-hsin<sup>2.</sup> who wrote a number of stories dealing with typical problems of youth. As she came from a well-to-do family and had not experienced some of the more extreme difficulties which were the lot of many of her contemporaries, her style is less bitter than that of some writers. She had started writing during the May 4th Movement, when she helped in propaganda work of the Peking students, editing a students' paper. Thus she had considerable contact with the young people of the time, and knew of their problems at first hand. But she never developed a real philosophy of struggle, and although she took the opposition of the new youth to tradition as the theme of some of her stories, her characters tend to be full of self-pity and rather spineless. For example, the young people in the story Solitary Grief (Ssü-jên tu ch'iao-ts'ui),<sup>3.</sup> who, <sup>when</sup> kept away from school because of their participation in student political activity, capitulate in the end meekly to the father.



1. See <sup>above</sup> above, Chapter IV, p. 176 ff.

2. 謝冰心.

3. 斯人獨憔悴

Ta hsi. Hsiao-shuo erh chi, pp. 1-8.

Ping Hsin was constantly seeking an answer to the deepest mysteries of existence, and she believed that the most wonderful and important thing in life was love. <sup>particular's mother's love</sup> She wrote some charming, if sentimental Letters for Children (Chi hsiao tu che)<sup>1.</sup>, in which this theme is constantly uppermost, and the theme of one of her most popular stories of those days was the power of compassion to soften the hardest and most cynical of hearts. She was greatly influenced by Tagore, and her poetry especially bears the marks of this affinity. Yet this soft, comfortable approach fell out of fashion quite soon, and while she was read widely by young people of all ages in the early twenties, by the thirties she appealed only to those in their early 'teens, her place in the affections of the older youth having been usurped by the novelist Pa Chin<sup>2.</sup> and others.<sup>3.</sup>

Other writers, while not possessing the fire and intensity of Lu Hsün, nevertheless adhered faithfully to the ideals of May 4th, and their writings are full of true observation of contemporary life.<sup>4.</sup> Yeh Shao-chün, for example, wrote chiefly of life in the educational world, many of his stories, including his best-known work, Ni Huan-chih,<sup>5.</sup> containing gentle raillery against the decadence of Chinese schools. His strength lay in his powers of observation coupled with his restraint. As he wrote later, he was incapable of writing about anything that he did not know intimately from his own observation. The characters in his stories are nearly all

1. 寄小讀者

2. 巴金

3. See Olga Lang, op. cit., p. 373, where she gives statistics for the relative popularity of modern Chinese writers among Chinese students in 1937:

	<u>No. of boys</u> <u>naming book</u>	<u>No. of girls</u> <u>naming book</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>B. <u>Modern books (fiction).</u></b>			
<b>1. <u>Left-wing authors -</u></b>			
Lu Hsun	105	35	140
Pa Chin	41	37	78
Mao Tun	36	11	47
Others	<u>59</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>77</u>
	241	101	342
<b>2. <u>Non-political and liberal trend -</u></b>			
Ping Hsin	6	16	22
Lao She	7	4	11
Others	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>20</u>
	22	31	53
<b>3. <u>Right-wing authors -</u></b>			
	6	4	10

4. 葉紹鈞

5. 倪煥之

intellectuals and petty-bourgeois of the cities. Because he did not know the workers and peasants, he did not write about them; neither did he describe the rich merchants and officials. There was scarcely a false note in any of his stories, yet he managed within these self-imposed limitations to produce some memorable portraits, such as that of the lonely and unwanted old man in Loneliness<sup>1.</sup> He also wrote some allegories for children, the most famous of which is The Scarecrow,<sup>2.</sup> which tells of a scarecrow set up in a field by a river, which witnesses the misfortunes of numbers of people - the fisherman who fails in his effort to catch fish for his son who is dying of disease, and the maltreated woman who comes and throws herself into the water - but all he can do is wave his rush fan futilely. Finally he falls over in the field.

<sup>3.</sup> Ting Ling wrote that this story had a great effect in giving people a realistic approach to the problems of the time. It was not enough simply to gesticulate wildly like the scarecrow but it was necessary to work actively for social progress. Another story which the same writer remembers as being influential at that time was his A Friend (I-ko p'eng-yu)<sup>4.</sup> which though very short, contained sharp satire of the smug and unimaginative, and also had the effect of arousing people to their responsibilities. The story concerned the way in which a friend chose a wife for his son and ended:

If that friend of mine were to die and I had to compose an epitaph, what should I write? Just one simple sentence: "Unconsciously he begat a son and fashioned him in his own image."<sup>5.</sup>

1. Ku-tu 孤獨 See Ta hsi, op.cit., pp. 104-117.
2. Tao-ts'ao iên 稻草人 Yeh Shêng-t'ao hsüan chi, 葉聖陶  
選集 pp. 358-367.
3. Ting Ling, Wu-ssu tsa t'an 五四雜談 in K'ua tao hsün ti  
shih-tai lai 踏到新的時代來. 78.
4. 一個朋友
5. Ting Ling, loc. cit.

Yeh Shao-chün, unpretentious though he was, helped to lay the foundations of Modern Chinese Literature more surely than the more introspective and earnest young writers who were so anxious to produce a "work of literature" that they forgot how to tell a story. Another virtue he possessed was that he was never guilty of writing long, involved, westernised sentence

Another writer of the Society for Literary Research whose stories feature prominently in the pages of the Story Monthly was Hsü Ti-shan.<sup>1</sup> As we have already remarked, the Society for Literary Research, although accredited with the tendency towards humanist literature, in fact included within its compass writers of many different shades of belief. The term humanist itself is vague and difficult to define, and the writers of this group have an almost equally wide range of view-point. Hsü Ti-shan could be called humanist, but his outlook was coloured by Buddhist and other influences which were not prominent in other writers. Hsü Ti-shan took the pseudonym ~~Hua~~<sup>Lo Hua-</sup> Lo-sheng (peanut)<sup>2</sup> because his ambition was to be useful in a humble way. He was also much concerned in his stories with destiny, and regarded life as a spider's web which is <sup>very</sup> ~~so~~ easily broken, <sup>and</sup> ~~but~~ which the spider must be constantly patching and piecing together. In his story The Tilling Spider Mends the Web (Chui-wang lao-chu)<sup>3</sup>, the heroine watched <sup>a child</sup> ~~her son~~ breaking a spider's web on a rose bush, and compared the spider's fate with her own:

I am like a spider; my life is my net. The spider eats all manner of poisonous and non-poisonous insects and

1. 許地也

2. 落華生

3. 綴網勞蛛 Ta hsi. op.cit., pp. 181-203.

spins his web. When he spins his first thread he does not know how far it will be blown by the wind; when it sticks on some other object his web is fixed.

He does not know when his web will be broken or how it will be broken. When it is in fact destroyed he will hide himself safely away, awaiting the opportunity to build another.

His broken web is left on the branch of the tree, a web still. When the sun shines on it its threads reflect a dozen different colours, and if some drops of water are clinging to it, it will shine brilliantly.

Man and his fate are no different. All webs have to be spun by oneself. They are either perfect or broken. There is nothing one can do but take them as they are.

It was perfectly still in the garden, with nobody to disturb the quietness. The spider crept out from under a leaf and slowly and deliberately, thread by thread, began to repair his broken web. Why did he mend it? Because he was a spider and could not do otherwise!

This fatalism is even more explicit in The Love Birds (Ming-ming-niao), where two young people, unable to marry because of parental opposition, walk hand in hand into a lake to seek happiness in another world. But this extreme reaction is not typical of his outlook. He largely accepted things as they were, striving to improve them as far as his restricted individual abilities would allow, but not searching for any fundamental solutions for the problems of life. It was not that he failed to see that society was imperfect. His desire to be useful and his humility led him to sympathise with the poor and unfortunate. A large proportion of his stories are about the common people, and he is not averse to using satire to attack the privileged. As well as students, teachers, etc., he wrote about servants, peasants and labourers. One of his best stories, Spring Peach,



1. Ibid., pp. 202 - 203.

2. Hsü Ti-shan hsüan chi, pp. 28-48. 選集, 命命島

is about a peasant woman (Ch'un-t'ao)<sup>1</sup>, who is forced by war-lordism to leave her home on the day of her wedding. Her husband having been press-ganged, she flees to Peking and earns a living by collecting waste-paper. Although in this story, as in several of Hsü Ti-shan's, much turns on a coincidence, or an element of strangeness, nevertheless it is filled with the honesty and integrity of the ordinary, poor person struggling to "mend her web".

Although the quietist element is strong in Hsü Ti-shan particularly in his earlier work written when he was at Yenching University, yet the humanist spirit of May 4th is also present. He belonged to the large number of people (including writers) who, while not anxious to engage in the political struggles, were nevertheless unable to side with the old moralists. While commenting from time to time on the injustices of their society in the main they let themselves be carried along by the stream of life. Yet the Buddhist influence in his writing, though strong, was not dominant, and particularly in the later stories the element of resistance to society is stronger. He was never tempted to renounce the world and become a monk, nor are his characters (with a few exceptions) motivated by extrawordly considerations. Towards the end of his life he took an active part in the cultural life in Hongkong up to the Japanese occupation.

2.

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1. 春排

The Creation Society (Chuang-tsa<sup>o</sup> sh<sup>e</sup>) was established only a few months after the Wen-hs<sup>u</sup>eh yen-chiu hui by a group of students who had just returned from Japan, among them Kuo Mo-jo,<sup>1.</sup> Ch'eng Fang-wu<sup>2.</sup> and Yü Ta-fu.<sup>3.</sup> Partly because they had been away from China for some years and had taken part in the political struggles of May 4th, they did not sympathise with those who advocated a literature of blood and tears. More individualist and intuitive, they declared that the sole aim of literature was to seek after perfection and beauty, which, they said, are vital for the sustenance of the human soul, even if they do not bear any direct message to the intellect. Ch'eng Fang-wu wrote:-

I think it would be worth our while to set aside all thoughts of utility and simply seek perfection and beauty in literature, for a beautiful literature, even if it has nothing to teach us, can bring refreshment and sustenance to our daily existence.<sup>4.</sup>

But although for a time the leaders of the Ch'uang-tsa<sup>o</sup> sh<sup>e</sup> seemed to be advocating something like art-for-art's-sake, their actual output of stories and poems was not able to escape for long from the sobering effect of the contemporary scene. The only writer who might be called truly romantic

1. 郭沫若

2. 成仿吾

3. 郁達夫

4. Ch'êng Fang-wu, Hsin wên-hsüeh chih shih-ming 新文學之  
使命 in Ta hsi, Wên-hsüeh lung-chêng chi, p. 80

during the May 4th period was Kuo Mo-jo. But his romanticism, far from being a negative escapism or a formalistic search for pure beauty, was full of the exuberance of emancipation of thought and the exploration of new regions of poetic imagery.

This divergence of approach to literature - on the one hand a sober searching for truth and a realistic style, and on the other hand a suddenly liberated impulse for intuitive self-expression, were both features of the first period of the growth of new literature in China and were complementary to each other. The romantic exuberance of Kuo Mo-jo was revolutionary rather than decadent, and in practice the position of the adherents of both groups were later to converge. Some writers, in an over-zealous desire to apply the principles of Social-Darwinism to literature, suggested that because Western Europe went through the stages of Classicism-Romanticism-Realism, these were therefore the natural stages of the growth of any literature, and explained the brief appearance of Romanticism in both Japan and China in this way. But this is, of course, no real explanation, as it ignores the organically close relationship between the development of literature and the development of the society which produces it. The real reason for the appearance of this Romanticism must be sought in the sudden liberation of thought from bondage, and the reason for the brevity of the period of its appeal in the weakness of

1. See for example Cheng Po-ch'i's Ta hsi, Hsiao-shuo san chi <sup>鄭伯奇</sup> <sub>小說三集</sub> introduction to pp. 1-3.

the middle-class position in society and the failure of May 4th<sup>1.</sup> to produce an outright victory for it.

Though he was by no means typical of the writers of the May 4th Movement, Kuo Mo-jo's early poems convey much more vigorously than the works of any other writer the revolutionary spirit of the movement itself. He was the only true romantic of the movement - not an empty dreamer or escapist, but a revolutionary romantic full of confidence in the destiny of man and of anger and impatience with the forces retarding his people's progress.

Kuo Mo-jo had left his native Szechwan in 1914 to study medicine in Japan, and remained there until 1921 after his graduation. But, like Lu Hsün, he abandoned his medical career in favour of literature. In his case one of the reasons for his decision was that bad hearing, the after-effect of an illness of childhood, made it difficult for him to use a stethoscope. This same trouble was also to affect his literary life, for it interfered with the process of collecting material for writing. This made him turn more readily to the direct expression of his own feelings and experiences. When writing about social problems, he often chose a historical or legendary setting for his plot, rather than go straight to contemporary life.

Linked with this urge for self-expression was an extreme vitality and sensitivity, which at that time was fed by voracious reading. He claimed, like Stendhal, to need constant



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1. See above, Chapter I, pp 25-26.

replenishment with new thought as a steam engine needs coal, and his poems are full of ideas and images taken from the widest variety of sources, both contemporary and ancient. He was a writer who worked on inspiration. If inspired, he said, he would be like a galloping horse, while at other times he would be like a burst porpoise. He did not, like Lu Hsün or Mao Tun believe in careful composition ("poems are written, not composed" was one of his maxims)<sup>1.</sup> and one of his longest and best plays, Ch'ü Yüan,<sup>2.</sup> was written in ten days, at not much more than four hours per day.<sup>3.</sup> His earliest poems (those published in 1921, in the collection Nü-shên)<sup>4.</sup> while far from formless, are written with a freedom of form which entirely suits their exuberance.

Kuo Mo-jo was the poetic herald of the May 4th Movement because he expressed in clear imagery the approaching death of the old world and the birth of a new. The image of death and rebirth, the eclipse of the old by the new is often to be found in his verse, and nowhere more clearly than in The Resurrection of the Phoenix (Fêng-huang nieh-p'an)<sup>5.</sup> one of his very earliest poems written in 1920. In it the male phoenix sings before dying:

Oh, in this foul and dismal world  
 Even a sword of diamonds may rust.  
 Universe, Oh universe,  
 Hearken to my might curse!  
 You purulent, bleeding slaughterhouse,  
 You prison gorged with grief,  
 You sepulchre of shrieking ghosts,  
 You hell of dancing devils!

1. Wang Yao, Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsueh shih kao 王瑤, 中國新文學  
史稿 p. 13.

2. 屈原

3. Kuo Mo-jo, Wo tsên-yang hsieh wu mu chü Ch'ü yüan, 我怎樣寫五  
幕劇屈原 in Ch'ü Yüan, 屈原  
pp. 125-127.

4. 女神

5. 鳳凰涅槃

Ultimately, why should you exist?  
 To the west we fly: the shambles is the same.  
 To the east we fly: the prison is the same.  
 We fly to the south: the tomb's identical.  
 We fly to the north: there is the same sad hell.  
 Living in such a world 1.  
 We can only mimic the wailing of the sea.

After the fire has consumed them both, male and female  
Feng and Huang, they rise again, and the male sings:-

The morning tide is flowing,  
 The morning tide is flowing,  
 The light that died now flickers into life.

The tide of spring is flowing,  
 The tide of spring is flowing,  
 The world that died now wakens into life.

The tide of life is flowing,  
 The tide of life is flowing,  
 Dead Feng and Huang<sup>2</sup> are animate again<sup>3</sup>.

Kuo Mo-jo was in Japan during the May 4th Movement, but he, like the other Chinese students there, was quick to understand its significance. While in Japan he came into contact with the scientific and industrial achievements of the twentieth century, and became conscious of the possibilities of human advancement which they represented, and which would be there for his own people to grasp once they were liberated from their past. He felt the same kind of exhilaration when contemplating "Mist, steam and power" as the early Victorians, and this optimism was fused with the pioneering individualism of the Renaissance. He saw beauty in factory chimneys and

1. Kuo Mo-jo, Feng huang, 鳳凰 pp. 10-25. The translations of this poem are from Harold Acton and Ch'en Shih-hsiang, Modern Chinese Poetry, pp. 91 and 93.

the roar of the city:

Pulse of the city!  
 Surge of life!  
 Beating, panting, shouting, ....  
 Hissing, flying, leaping, .....  
 The four skies covered with a smoky pall!  
 My heart is ready to leap from my mouth!  
 The hills, the houses, like waves,  
 Well up before me!  
 Symphony of myriad sounds!  
 Harmonious blending of man and nature!  
 The curve of the sea is Cupid's bow,  
 Man's life his arrow, shot into the sea.  
 The dark and misty coastline, steamers at anchor,  
 Steamers moving, steamers unnumbered,  
 A forest of chimneys bursting into coal-black peonies  
 Ah! Emblem of the twentieth century,  
 Stern mother of modern civilization.<sup>1</sup>

Another source of inspiration, traces of which can be seen in the poem just quoted, was the great concatenation of mountain, cloud, forest and ocean, which are a feature of the landscape in parts of Japan, and the grandeur of nature, the immensity of nature's power filled his early poems. This almost became a worship of power for its own sake:

Procession of white clouds rolling angrily overhead,  
 Enchanting arctic landscape!  
 The great Pacific gathers her whole strength to  
 engulf the earth  
 The surging flood wells up before me,  
 Unending destruction, unending creation,  
 unending effort!  
 Ah! Power! Power! <sup>Poem</sup>  
 Picture of Power, ~~Flame~~ of Power, Music of Power,  
 Song of Power, Rhythm of Power! <sup>2</sup>

Like Renaissance man in Europe, he believed in the unbounded possibilities of the individual. He compared himself to the hound of heaven who, according to Chinese myth, swallows the sun or moon and causes eclipses. He offered himself as

1. Kuo Mo-jo, op.cit., pp. 39-40.

2. Ibid., p. 49.

3. Ibid., p. 28.

the driver of Apollo's new chariot (a motor-car!)<sup>1.</sup> and he wrote "I sing the praises of the great ego, which created the world out of confusion."<sup>2.</sup>

Running through his early poetry there was also a strong streak of pantheistic feeling, occasionally of the quietist type of Tagore, as though the pace of his pioneering materialism drove his soul to seek refuge in nature, but more often a worship of the great forces of nature, of all things huge and powerful:

I am an idol-worshipper!  
I worship the sun, worship mountains and oceans;  
I worship water, fire, volcanoes, great rivers;  
I worship life, death, light and darkness,  
Suez, Panama, the Great Wall, the Pyramids;  
I worship the spirit of creation, I worship strength,  
I worship blood, the heart;  
I worship bombs, I worship sorrow, destruction;  
I worship the idol-breakers, I worship myself!  
I myself am an idol-breaker!<sup>3.</sup>

He admired explosion and revolution, for they were the opposites of stagnation, which was the great enemy in China. He admitted rebels of every kind, and wrote a poem in praise of them in which the most diverse characters are found together - Cromwell, Washington, Marx, Lenin, Sakyamuni, Martin Luther, Copernicus, Nietzsche, Rodin, Whitman, Tolstoy, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Tagore.<sup>4.</sup> There is often to be found in his poetry the worship of the great man, an element which he had borrowed from Nietzsche, who was then popular among the Chinese students, though in Kuo Mo-jo there was little of Nietzsche's misanthropic brooding.



1. Ibid., p. 34.
2. Ibid., p. 85.
3. Ibid., p. 61.
4. Ibid., pp. 257-260.

Kuo Mo-jo's work falls into a number of periods, the first of which was spent in Japan and came to an end with his return to China in 1921. In the poems written in this first period there is little or no melancholy, except that of the exile who longs for his native country. But after his return to China and contact with the realities of life in Shanghai-<sup>1.</sup> his struggles to earn a living and support a family, the frustrations of his literary life - a more sober note entered his verse. By this time the high political hopes which had spurred the intellectuals in 1919 had proved to be more difficult of achievement than had appeared at that time. Those of them who had been swept into the movement from the right had cooled somewhat, and the movement as a whole had declined. From 1921 to 1923 was a period of relatively slow progress in the Chinese national democratic movement (though not the working-class movement)<sup>2.</sup> and Kuo Mo-jo, who is in some ways the most sensitive literary barometer of the modern period,<sup>3.</sup> reflected this decline in his poetry. It is not that he abandoned the cause, but rather that, in place of unbounded optimism and confidence, there began to appear in his poems the other side of the coin, the disillusionment and melancholia which often afflicts the young intellectual. This poem is called "Impression of Shanghai" (Shang-hai yin-hsiang)<sup>4.</sup>

1. Kuo Mo-jo, Pi-ming ch'un-ch'iu 革命春秋 pp. 373-375.
2. See above, Chapter I, p. 26
3. See Wen I-to, Nü-shên chih shih-tai ching-shên, 閩 - 多女神之時  
 代精神 in Wên I-to ch'üan chi, ting chi 閩 -  
 多全集, 丁集 pp. 185-194, and Mu Mu-t'ien, Kuo Mo-jo ti  
shih-kö 穆亦天 郭沫若的詩歌 in Wên-hsüeh, chüan  
 8, No. 1, January, 1937.
4. 上海印象

I have suddenly awakened from my dreams!  
 Oh, the bitterness of disillusionment!  
 Wandering corpses,  
 Lusting flesh.  
 Men's long gowns,  
 Women's short sleeves;  
 I survey the street, and see  
 Nothing but skeletons, coffins  
 Bustling to and fro.  
 Tears well in my eyes,  
 Nausea fills my heart.

I have suddenly awakened from my dreams!  
 Oh, the bitterness of disillusionment!<sup>1</sup>.

Even more marked is the pessimism of mood in some of the poems written in the following year - 1922 - such, for instance, as Lament (Ai-ko):

The light of the moon is spent,  
 The lotus flowers have withered,  
 Withered and sunk into the slime of the pool.

The swallow has ceased its twittering,  
 The string of the lute has snapped,  
 Snapped like a wu-t'ung tree over a dried-up well.

I am that tree by the dried-up well.  
 And I the lute with a broken string,  
 Strumming a fitful lament:

Ting-tung, ching-chung, ling-lung,  
 Each note is empty,  
 Each note a dream. 2.

But disillusionment, though giving birth to melancholy also produced reaction and revolt, and in Kuo Mo-jo, it produced a turn-away from the high-sounding but impractical ideals of his earlier period, from romantic individualism, from pantheism and the worship of power, towards the political movement of the left, towards comradeship with the poor and oppressed, and towards proletarian literature. This change in

1. Kuo Mo-jo, Fêng huang, p. 268.

2. Ibid., pp. 192-193. (哀歌)

Kuo Mo-jo's outlook and its timing were not accidental. They came at the time when the new purpose which had been put into the working-class movement following the foundation of the Communist Party, was beginning to make itself felt. The strike of the railway workers on the Peking-Hankow Railway, which culminated in the tragedy of February 7th, when forty-eight workers were shot by the military, was an event of great importance in the history of the period. It was <sup>the</sup> turning-point in the fortunes of the national movement. The struggles of the workers provided a direct challenge and inspiration to the intellectuals, whose search of the ideologies of Western Europe and America had failed to reveal anything which could provide an answer to China's fundamental problems. From 1923 onwards they offered their allegiance more and more to the working-class movement and to Communism, which had a clear policy, and a body of theory which provided answers to their problems.

By 1923 Kuo Mo-jo was viewing the streets of Shanghai in a different light from his first impression of disillusionment. He saw the labouring people walking along the pavements as his friends and wanted to shake them all by the hand. These streets, made not of cement, but of the blood of the workers, ground down by the wheels of the cars of the rich, would one day erupt like a volcano. He gave encouragement to an unemployed friend, telling him not to be downcast, because together they

would rise up and overthrow the evil forces oppressing him. In <sup>1.</sup>  
The Seeker of Power (Li-chih chuei-ch'iu che), also written in  
the spring of 1923, he writes:

Begone! Negative spirit!  
Begone! Embroiderer's needle!  
In my left hand I will take up the Koran  
And in my right, a sword!<sup>2.</sup>

In his autobiography Kuo Mo-jo made reference to his  
change of outlook during this period. Previously he had  
regarded himself as a rebel, and even as a leftist, but his  
knowledge of socialist theory had been hazy in the extreme, and  
he had not been sufficiently attracted to Marxism to make a  
close study of it. As he wrote in 1925:

My thought, my style, have completely changed during  
the last one or two years. Hitherto, I had believed in  
individualism and the free personality. But in the last  
two years since I have come into contact with the tragedy  
of the life of those struggling beneath the surface, I have  
begun to feel that at a time when the great majority have  
lost their individuality and their freedom through no fault  
of their own, it is quite presumptuous for a minority to  
advocate individualism and freedom.<sup>3.</sup>

Kuo Mo-jo recounts how, while in Japan in 1921, he  
first came into contact with Marxist thought through an  
acquaintanceship with a Chinese student of a leading Japanese  
Marxist, but that partly because of the limitations of this  
student's grasp of the theory, and partly because of Kuo Mo-jo's  
own inclinations at that time, this first encounter did not  
make a deep impression on him.<sup>4.</sup> But later, after his bitter  
struggles against poverty and apathy in Shanghai, he developed

1. Kuo Mo-jo hsuan chi, pp. 69-72.
2. 力之追求者      Ibid., pp. 73-74.
3. Wang Yao, op.cit., p. 68.
4. Kuo Mo-jo, Pi-ming ch'un-ch'iu, p.102.



a desire to make a study of social science, and particularly Marxist social science:

At first I suffered somewhat from a leftist disorder, and when I was publishing the (Creation) Weekly I had shouted a few impulsive slogans, such as "go among the people", and "go among the soldiers", but after shouting them I found myself still sitting upstairs in Min-hou-nan-li Street. Simply shouting slogans without being able to put them into practice was a great reproof to my own good sense. The pantheism, the so-called development of the individual, freedom and self-expression, which I had held to hitherto, had all been driven from my mind without leaving a trace. Marx and Lenin who had hitherto held a peripheral position in my consciousness, had, at what time I cannot be certain, ousted Spinoza and Goethe and taken a central position there. When Lenin died at the beginning of 1924 I had a real feeling of bereavement, as though the sun itself had died.<sup>1</sup>

In 1924 Kuo Mo-jo translated a work on Marxism from the Japanese, and this work did a great deal to transform his ideas on literature as well as his general ideals. In a letter to his closest collaborator, Ch'eng Fang-wu, written while completing the translation, he finally abandoned the concept of pure literature and wrote:

The literature of today is the literature of the path to the revolution; it is the call of the oppressed and the tormented, it is the oath of those determined to struggle; it is the joy at the prospect of the revolution ..... nowadays talk of pure literature is only to be found in the dreams of the young, or among the comforts of the rich.....<sup>2</sup>

In 1925 Kuo Mo-jo's period of poetic creativeness came to an end. His poems of that year, mainly love poems, were nearly all written in March. In June he wrote one of his trilogy of plays about famous historical heroines (Nieh Ying),<sup>3</sup> and soon after this he travelled to Canton thence to participate in the Northern Expedition, returning to Canton in the following year.

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1. Ibid., p. 174.

2. Ibid., p. 194.

3. 聶 嬰

Kuo Mo-jo's early literary career is interesting, just because it was so typical of the experiences of the intellectuals of the period. He was unique precisely because he was so typical; no other writer soared to such heights of elation in the May 4th movement, nor did any other experience such acute disillusionment after it, or undergo such profound heart-searchings; nor did the feelings of any other writer follow so closely the rise and fall in the fortunes of the national movement.

The influences he absorbed from the West far exceeded in extent those taken by the other poets of the period, but owing to his impulsiveness and exuberance, they were poured out again in his poetry before they had been properly absorbed. Often he would use Western words in his poems, either transliterated direct into Chinese characters or else left in their original Roman form mixed in with Chinese words; for example, in At the Concert (Yen-tsou hui-shang)<sup>1.</sup>:

Violin t'ung piano-ti chieh-hun  
 Mendelssohn-ti "chung-hsia-ti yu-meng"  
 tu i kuo-le.  
 I-ko nan-hsing-ti nü ch'ing-nien  
 Tu-ch'ang-chao Brahms-ti "yung-yuan-ti ai"  
 T'a na Soprano-ti kao yin,  
 Ch'ang-ti wo ch'uan-shen-ti shen-ching  
 chan-li.<sup>2.</sup>

(Violin and piano betrothed.  
 The strains of Mendelssohn's Mid-summer Night's Dream  
 fade away.  
 A girl who looks like a young man  
 Sings Brahms' Von ewiger Liebe  
 Her high soprano notes  
 Set all my nerves a-tremble.)<sup>3.</sup>

## 1. 演奏會上

Kuo Mo-jo, Feng huang. p. 58.

2. Violin 同 Piano 的結婚  
Bendelsolm 的「仲夏夜的幽夢」都已過了，  
一個男性的女青年  
獨唱着 Brahms 的「永遠的愛」  
她那 Soprano 的高音  
唱得我全身的神經戰慄。

As a desire to create atmosphere, such a device might be permissible, but Kuo Mo-jo used it to excess, as in the following example which is taken from a poem inspired by Carlyle:

Oh, oh! Ta tzu-jan-ti hsiung-hun yüeh!  
 Ta tzu-jan-ti Symphony yüeh!  
 Hero-Poet yüeh!  
 Proletarian-Poet yüeh!

(Ah! Chaos of nature!  
 Symphony of nature!  
 Hero-poet, ah!  
 Proletarian-poet, ah!)<sup>1</sup>.

But in spite of these weaknesses, which limit the literary value of his work, this great effusion of uninhibited emotion illustrates well the thoroughness of the break with traditional thought made by the young intellectuals at the time of May 4th, as well as the lines on which many of them developed in the period between May, 1919, and 1925 which was a crucial period in the intellectual history of modern China. During this period Kuo Mo-jo moved from a position of faith in the old democracy of Western Europe and America, through a period of disillusionment and hesitation, towards Communism. He did so because none of the political doctrines inspired by the West had succeeded in finding a solution to the basic Chinese problems, the problems of securing independence and the end of war-lord tyranny.

1. Ibid., pp. 47-48.

Of the other writers of the Creation Society one in particular demands some attention. This is Yu Ta-fu. He was one of the organizers and foremost writers of the Society, and a companion of Kuo Mo-jo in his student days in Japan. But he was a different kind of writer from Kuo Mo-jo, for while both were emotional and introspective, in Yu Ta-fu, unlike Kuo Mo-jo, this introspective element predominated to such an extent that his stories are mainly autobiographical. But this introspection was itself something new in Chinese literature, for he withheld nothing out of consideration for Confucian morals, and his exposition of the emotional problems of young people was extremely bold. He was also a very skilled writer, and Kuo Mo-jo wrote of him after his death at the hands of the Japanese in 1945:

In the early period of the Creation Society Yu Ta-fu's writing had a great influence. His clear fresh style was like a breath of spring air in the desolation of Chinese society, and immediately stirred the hearts of countless young people. His bold self-exposure was like a devastating lightning attack against the hypocrisy of the gentry which had sheltered for thousands of years beneath a crust of falsehood. He terrified the false moralists and leading lights of the intellectual world until they were in a frenzy. Why? Because his frank exposure of the truth made them feel the difficulty of maintaining their pretence....

His early stories, whether they took it as their subject-matter or not, were at least inspired by his student life in Japan. They were filled with an extreme melancholy and sense of isolation in a hostile world. Yu Ta-fu felt the arrogance of Japanese imperialism, and it wounded his patriotic pride.

1. Kuo Mo-jo, Li-shih jen-wu, p. 176.

歷史人物



His Oblivion (Ch'en-lun)<sup>1</sup> which tells of the isolation and personal problems of a Chinese student in Japan ends with the words:

My motherland, oh! my motherland, I die at your hands  
Make yourself strong and prosperous without delay!  
You still have sons and daughters suffering here!<sup>2</sup>

He was a student in Japan during the period of China's greatest humiliation at the hands of the Japanese. He felt the shame of this humiliation deeply, and his patriotism was also deeply felt. But at that time his reaction was almost entirely pessimistic and negative, like, as he put it, "a young widow who has just buried her husband, completely lacking spirit or courage."<sup>3</sup> So the hero of Oblivion had no thought of resistance or struggle, and finally committed suicide. In fact it is characteristic of Yu Ta-fu that this melancholy which had its roots in China's national problems is expressed entirely in terms of the hero's intimate personal problems, and social isolation is translated largely into sexual frustration.

As well as writing a number of stories with this highly introspective content, Yu Ta-fu also wrote, like the other writers of his period, a number of stories about the common people. In the early thirties he even wrote about the peasants, but in the period under consideration he confined himself to the urban poor. Two of his stories, A Spring Evening (Ch'un feng ch'en-tsuì ti wan-shang)<sup>4</sup> and Honours for the Dead (Po-tien)<sup>5</sup>, concern respectively an orphan girl worker

1. 次論

2. Ta hsi, Hsiao-shuo erh chi, p. 71.

3. See the introduction by Ting I 丁易 to Yü's selected works  
(Yü Ta-fu hsuan chi 郁達夫選集) p.9.

4. 春風次醉的晚上.

5. 瘦薄莫

in Shanghai who is insulted by the manager of the factory, and a rickshaw-puller in Peking, who dies an untimely death. In both cases, as Ting I points out in his preface to Yu Ta-fu's selected works, the author is looking at his characters very much from the outside, and though he treats them with sympathy, portraying them as upright and compassionate people, yet the narrator is always very much to the fore and most of the story taken up with a description of his activities.

The last two stories mentioned were written in 1923 and 1924. By that time Yu Ta-fu, like Kuo Mo-jo, had already turned towards the idea of proletarian literature. Kuo Mo-jo's famous declaration of his change of direction, Our New Literary Movement (Wo-mên ti wen-hsüeh ti hsin yün-tung), was written in May 1923. In the same issue of Creation Weekly there also appeared an article by Yu Ta-fu entitled The Class Struggle in Literature (Wên-hsüeh shang ti chieh-chi tou-chêng) in which he called for a united front of the "world proletariat and "all writers opposed to the servile followers of the privileged and propertied class." These two stories were the practical fruit of that coalition. But although he had this ambition to become a proletarian writer, his pessimism and introspection kept coming to the surface in spite of himself, and his later career, although including a period of participation in the League of Left-Wing Writers and the writing of a number of stories reflecting broad social movements, is much less political than those of his colleagues of the Creation Society, Kuo Mo-jo and Ch'eng Fang-wu.

1. Op. cit., p. 12.

2. 我們的文學的新運動 Ta hsi, Wên-hsüeh lun-chêng chi,  
pp. 185-187.

3. 文學上的階級鬥爭 Yü Ta-fu hsüan chi, pp. 216-223.

The Creation Society and the Society for Literary Research were the two main literary groups in the period under review. They contained within them, as we have seen, a great variety of individual opinion, but equally they had certain common characteristics which resulted from their common social background and the conditions of struggle against the old literature.

After 1921, when the May 4th Movement passed its zenith, many of its participants left the struggle and some of those who had been concerned with literature turned towards political work. Nevertheless literature remained an extremely important branch of the intellectual revolution. As in mid-nineteenth century Russia, literature and literary controversy became a focal point of the intellectual development of the whole country. This was partly a result of the esteem in which literature had been held in old China, and partly because of the conditions of censorship which, as in Russia, made the open expression of revolutionary opinion on political terms extremely hazardous. This link between the revolution and literature became even stronger during the Kuomintang period, when the oppression became more complete and systematized.

The spirit of May 4th was carried on most consistently and unhesitatingly by Lu Hsün. He used his short essays (t<sup>h</sup>sa-w<sup>h</sup>en)<sup>†</sup> to attack all those who gave up the struggle or

compromised with the enemy. He attacked those who (like Hu Shih) regarded the battle of the new literature as completed once pai-hua was established as the literary medium, and who joined the movement for "regulating the national heritage" (ch'e<sup>4</sup> li kuo-ku<sup>1</sup>). Lu Hsün was not against a reassessment of ~~the~~ China's traditional culture, but he opposed those who encouraged students to concentrate on the past when so much needed to be done to improve the present and future. He also attacked the "art-for-art's-sake" school, particularly the poet Hsü Chih-mo and the theorists Liang Shih-ch'iu and Hu Shih, and he described this group as "sheep with tinkling bells", who only sought peace and content, and used their bells to lead others unprotesting to their doom. In 1925 he also engaged in a protracted struggle, together with the students of Peking, against the war-lord government, and particularly its intellectual representative the Minister of Education, Chang Shih-chao.

One of the organs used by Lu Hsün to carry on this struggle was the magazine Yü ssü<sup>2</sup> (Threads of Speech), founded in 1924, which in its heyday reached a weekly circulation of about 5,000 in Peking. It was founded after a quarrel with the management of the Ch'en pao<sup>3</sup>, organ of the Political Science Group<sup>4</sup>, to which Lu Hsün was a contributor. As a result of this disagreement Hsü Chih-mo<sup>5</sup> became editor of the literary supplement of the paper in place of Sun Fu-yüan<sup>6</sup>, who had wished to include a poem by Lu Hsün satirizing the "empty melancholy" of the type of love poem favoured by Hsü. Thus the foundation of Yü ssü<sup>7</sup>,

1. 整理國故

2. 語絲

3. 晨報

4. 政學系

5. 徐志摩

6. 孫伏園

which resulted from this incident, was already connected with the new aspect of the literary battle between Lu Hsün and "art-for-art's-sake". The new journal had as one of its statutory aims "to unite against the prejudices and baseness of contemporary life". Although like the other literary groups it embraced a wide range of opinion, including both Lu Hsün and his more easy-going brother, Chou Tso-jên, the group had this common basis of opposition to both the old and the new opponents of the cultural revolution.

Although the split in the intellectual front of the May 4th Movement had begun to show itself in 1921, the writers who adhered to a more strictly middle-class position in society, and who wanted to divorce literature from politics, did not organize into societies until some time later. Hu Shih had published Tu-shu tsa-chih<sup>1.</sup> and Nu-li chou-pao<sup>2.</sup> since 1921, but these were not primarily literary periodicals. It was not until 1926 that the group known as the Crescent Society (Hsin yüeh shé)<sup>3.</sup>, including Hsü Chih-mo and Wen I-to and joined later by Liang Shih-ch'iu and Hu Shih, began to become active. First making some proposals for poetic reform, they also became drawn into the literary controversies, forming the right wing of the literary movement. But this belongs to the following period.



1. 讀書雜誌
2. 努力週報
3. 新月社

CHAPTER IVCHINA'S LITERARY HERITAGE  
AND WESTERN FORMS.New Forms from the West.

Just as in the case of the broader New Culture Movement, the new literature took a high proportion of its inspiration from the West, especially in the realm of ideas. But though they were the vital factor, it was not ideas alone which attracted the new Chinese writers, but also the literary forms by which these ideas and new types of subject-matter were conveyed. Many new forms from the West, such as the modern short story, free verse, and the Western novel provided a strong competitive force able to challenge the traditional forms of writing.

Just as in other fields of Chinese life, it was not simply that Western literature appeared on the scene and produced changes in Chinese literature by virtue of its own dynamic qualities. The relationship of the new influences from the West and the Literary Revolution was not one of cause and effect, but, as we have seen while discussing the New Culture Movement as a whole, the Literary Revolution was primarily a phenomenon of China's internal history, accelerated and given a richer content by Western influences, but having its own independent characteristics. The West offered a new world of inspiration, but China would, in the long run, only

1. See above, Introduction, p. vii

accept those elements which conformed to her own line of development. After the first wild rush of new Western literature after the Literary Revolution, what the Chinese came to be more and more determined by their own internal needs, and these internal needs centered round the struggle for independence and democracy which became even more acute.

This factor, already discussed in relation to the content of the new literature,<sup>1.</sup> also applied to literary forms. Although the interpretation of China's needs varied with the different social groupings which participated in the new movement, yet the new literature had certain general characteristics that determined which Western literary forms would be most popular.

First, the new literature was the vehicle of new ideas, and sought forms best suited for the expression of these ideas. So the Western short story, with its construction round a single theme, personality or thought, and its economy of style and brevity was found most suitable for the expression of social criticism. It became easily the most important literary form during the early years of the new movement, and the form which was developed to the greatest perfection by Lu Hsün.<sup>2.</sup>

Second, poetic expression had thrown off the chains of convention to which it was bound under the old literature.

1. See above, Chapter III, ~~p.~~ n 160 ff
2. See below, Chapter V.

Themes such as love which could only be expressed within certain fixed patterns in the old poetry, and did not exist in all its great variety of mood, could now come into their own. Other themes were introduced (including social ones) which had never found a firm place in poetry. So free verse which had arisen in Europe and America fairly late in the nineteenth century, had a strong influence on the new poetry, as its freedom of form suited the feeling of emancipation from convention in the new poetry.<sup>1.</sup>

Third, the Western drama was better suited to the portrayal of contemporary life than the traditional drama. It also provided opportunity for presenting modern problems and modern ideas on the stage, which was hardly possible in the old drama. So the Western theatre found its strong advocates among the leaders of the new literature, and quite early in the movement plays in the Western style were written in Chinese.<sup>2.</sup>

Forms which did not so readily find acceptance in China include the Western essay, which, although it had its Chinese exponents, was usually regarded as too gentle for the purposes of sharp social criticism to which prose writing was generally put. The Western novel too did not at first find many exponents, though after the revolutionary upheaval of the mid-twenties it gradually increased in influence. The reasons for this have been discussed already and also relate to the particular needs of the moment in China.<sup>3.</sup>

1. It was not simply a question of the influence of the form itself. Of much greater importance was the spirit of the writers in free verse. Whitman was of great appeal to Young China as the poet of a new age, a pantheist with a fresh approach to imagery, and a lover of freedom. Tagore appealed also because of his Pantheism. Few other writers in the form were of outstanding attraction.
  
2. The most famous of the early plays was Hu Shih's Chung-shên ta shih 終身大事 (Marriage) with its Ibsen-like theme. It was a light one-act comedy (perhaps because Hu Shih wished to avoid "empty melancholy"), and avoided the crucial problems in the old marriage relationships, but it enjoyed considerable popularity. The modern dramatic movement did not really get under way, however, until after 1925. (Cf. Wang Yao, op. cit., pp. 105-118).
  
3. See above, Chapter I, p. 34ff.

Yet although all these various forms had an immediate and deep influence on Chinese literature, they could not in the long run be accepted into Chinese writing without undergoing modifications. No writer can escape from his national tradition. He must write in the language and employ the habits of expression of the people for whom he writes. Being at the mercy of the reading public he must conform to its demands, not forgetting that it is accustomed to the traditional modes of expression developed by centuries of craftsmen in the art of writing. In the chapter on Lu Hsün there will be some discussion of the way in which the traditional Chinese modes of expression, and particularly the Chinese way of telling a story, have made their contribution to the composition of Lu Hsün's individual style. In making a close study of any modern Chinese writer it would be possible to discover such elements, present to a greater or lesser degree.

Even so, owing to the thorough penetration of the New Culture Movement among the young intellectuals after 1919, there grew up a new reading public not so very unaccustomed to Western forms of literature, which could accept these new styles of writing without too much difficulty. In fact, the reading public in China after 1919 split fundamentally between the young intellectuals on the one hand, and the rest of the literate population on the other. However, as the older



generation and the conservative intellectuals were less and less in a position to give the country intellectual leadership, this split in the reading public was not so serious as the split in the "non-reading public", that is, between the small minority of intellectuals in the cities on the one hand, and the great mass of largely illiterate peasants and the small but growing working class on the other. This split had political causes. Because the May 4th Movement did not develop into a broad mass political movement, the intellectuals were not brought into contact with the mass of the population, and remained politically, and therefore physically, in isolation. The barrier was broken down to some small extent during the revolutionary period from 1925 to 1927, but for the great majority of the intellectuals, this isolation in the cities remained a feature of their lives until the war against Japan began to bring them into the countryside. This isolation of the intellectuals had a bad effect on the integration of the new influences with the main stream of Chinese literature. It cut them off to a great extent from the fertilizing influence of the folk tradition, as well as from peasant language which was far richer than the rather dull uniform language of the intellectuals. It also made it much more tempting to turn to the West rather than to the Chinese tradition for inspiration in their literary works, and for

their literary language to become rather esoteric and Westernized. During the thirties, after the foundation of the League of Left-wing Writers<sup>1.</sup>, this problem of language (language of the masses)<sup>2.</sup> was given a great deal of attention, because the writers realised that it was one of the fundamental obstacles to producing a literature for the masses, and that a new "literary vernacular"<sup>3.</sup> was being used by writers which was widening the rift between literature and the people. But it was a question which could not be finally solved until the writers themselves had the opportunity of going and living among the people, or until new writers arose with a broader social origin and background.

Another factor which contributed to the over-emphasis on Westernisation during this period was the failure of some of the leaders of the New Culture Movement to pay sufficient attention to the Chinese tradition and their reference for all things Western.

The New Culture Movement had as its main enemy those aspects of Chinese thought which helped to maintain the old feudal system of society. The movement was directed against the political and social tenets of conventional Confucianism, as well as against various anti-scientific aspects of Chinese thought. It was not, of course, directed against the whole of Chinese traditional thought. It still remained an urgent task to re-examine the whole Chinese cultural tradition from

1. Chung-kuo tso-i tso-chia lien-meng 中國左翼作家聯盟 founded in Shanghai in 1930, its members including Lu Hsün, Mao Tun, Yü Ta-fu, etc. See Wang Yao, op.cit., pp. 155-158.
2. Ta-chung yü, 大眾語 There is a very full account of the discussions centred round this problem in Li Ho-lin, 李何林 Chin erh shih nien Chung-kuo wèn-i ssü-ch'ao lun 近二十年中國文藝思潮論 pp. 354-410, especially pp. 376-392.
3. The form of pai-hua in use at the time was also said to be too Europeanised. See Li, loc.cit.

the point of view of modern needs. In fact, an important part of the New Culture Movement which has lasted right down to the present has been this continual examination and re-examination of the Chinese tradition, as well as of Western ideas. The New Literature Movement has carried out the same process with regard to both traditional and Western literature.

Thus, during the early years of the New Culture Movement, a number of books were written with the object of re-assessing China's old literature, the best of them being Lu Hsün's <sup>Outline</sup> Draft History of Chinese Fiction,<sup>1.</sup> and particular attention was paid to the great novels such as the Hung-lu meng,<sup>2.</sup> the Shui-hu-chuan, etc. Yet two attitudes which ran counter to this spirit of free enquiry and competition between literary forms were evident during the period. The first was the uncritical rejection of all things Western. This was, of course, the attitude of the ultra-conservatives, who were the bitterest opponents of the whole movement.

The Attitude towards China's Literary Heritage.

The other tendency, the worship of the West and the blind acceptance of Western things, grew up as an internal feature of the New Culture Movement itself and came to be associated with some members of the movement who had close association with the West, had been educated in the West and had themselves developed a Western outlook.

The development of this second tendency was in indirect reflection of the political and economic domination

1. Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih-liao <sup>誌</sup> 中國小說史略

2. Hu Shih and others did considerable work on the authorship, editions, etc., of the old novels. Also outstanding was the work of Wang Kuo-wei on the history of Chinese drama.


王國為

of China by the West in the period since the Great War, and the Westernisation of education (as well as the sending of students abroad for study), over a period of years. It also resulted from the over-eagerness of the new intellectuals in their campaign against feudal thought. For example, Ch'en Tu-hsiu, in his defence of New Youth stated that, in order to uphold Mr. Science it was necessary to oppose the old art and literature.<sup>1</sup> By this he may have meant the backward and harmful elements in the old art and literature. But he did not state this explicitly, and for many of the intellectuals of the period, opposition to the old literature would imply total opposition, with its corollary of total acceptance of some Western literary school, or schools.

While it was natural that in the field of ideas, the new movement should look abroad for help in establishing its hegemony in the intellectual life of the country, and that it should uncompromisingly attack the Confucian thought which its opponents used to uphold the old order, it was not correct for it to reject the total Chinese heritage. Even in the field of political thought, where the West had developed far beyond China, the Chinese contribution to the history of thought could not be ignored. Still less could the Chinese literary heritage be treated in this way, for literature is an expression of the whole social reality of an age, with all its many facets, and although one set of ideas, such as that of the ruling class, may be prominent within it, its scope far

1. See above, Chapter I~~1~~, p.66 .

exceeds the narrow expression of the ideas of one class. In fact, because folk traditions are so important as formative influences on a literature, it must contain elements which run counter to the ruling-class tradition, as Chinese literature indeed did. Nor is it satisfactory to consider old Chinese literature from the point of view of its ideas alone. There is also the question of forms of expression, of style and beauty of language, which are the quintessence of the writer's craft, developed throughout history. None of these things could be easily cast aside.





Another of the leaders of the New Culture movement guilty of belittling China's literary heritage was Hu Shih. In April, 1918, just over a year after his initiative in proposing a literary reform, he wrote an article suggesting the lines to be followed in constructing a new literature after the old had been destroyed. He wrote:

What must we do by way of preparation before a superior literary method can be adopted? After careful thought, I believe there is only one way, that is quickly to translate large numbers of Western masterpieces to take as our models.

Chinese literary methods are far from perfect, and not good enough to serve as our models. If we consider literary forms, there are only short pieces of prose, and no sustained long pieces with intricate structure and close argumentation; in verse there is only lyrical poetry, with very little narrative poetry and still fewer long poems; drama is at a still more rudimentary stage; it is only capable of simple narrative and lacks all understanding of construction. There are only three or four good novels, and even these have many faults. As for the more highly developed short story and one-act play, they do not exist. If we consider its content, Chinese literature has still less to offer as models; novels about talented men and beautiful women, or novels about princes and generals, poems about flowers in the wind or moonlight on the snow, a classical style (ku-wen) which is incapable of expressing thought or feeling, the whole of literature an imitation of this or that, none of it with any content worth considering. As for construction or plot, apart from a few very good poems, there is not a single piece of writing which one could say has any..... This is why I say that the Chinese literary method has nothing to offer as a model!

In his eagerness to establish pai-hua as the literary medium, Hu Shih argued that the only literature of value in the past was pai-hua literature, which he called living

1. Ta hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi, p. 138.

literature, in contrast to all literature written in wen-yen which was dead. In pursuance of this idea, he later wrote a Pai-hua wen-hsueh-shih (History of pai-hua literature)<sup>1.</sup> which purported to discuss the cream of Chinese literature. But in this book most of the works discussed were not really in pai-hua in the sense of the vernacular language, but rather in wen-yen without difficult words or abstruse allusions. Thus this History of pai-hua literature was in reality a history of literature written in a simple language, which is at least a novel criterion to choose as the basis for a history of literature.<sup>2.</sup>

Hu Shih expressed his opposition to old wen-yen literature in the following way:

When I carefully study the question "Why is it that in the last two thousand years there has not been any wen-yen literature of true value or with real life?" my reply is "Because the literature written in the last two thousand years by the literati is all dead, and written in a language that is dead." A dead language is incapable of producing a living literature. So, for the last two thousand years, China has only had dead literature and worthless dead literary works.....<sup>3.</sup>

Hu Shih did not, of course, use language as the sole criterion to evaluate a work of literature. For instance, he could not accept everything written in pai-hua as good literature. But his attitude to wen-yen literature shows that he, at any rate, regarded it as the main criterion. For although not everything written in pai-hua was regarded by him as of value, he would not admit the possibility of anything

1. 白話文學史

2. Ta hsi, op.cit., p. 129.

in wen-yen being any good:

... from the Book of Songs up to today, all literature with any value or life is in pai-hua, or near pai-hua; all the rest consists of lifeless antiques, museum exhibits.<sup>1</sup>

This position of Hu Shih, so demonstrably untenable, was the logical corollary of his view of the History of Chinese Literature as a succession of revolutions in literary forms.<sup>2</sup> Once he had formulated the hypothesis that a pai-hua revolution was centuries overdue, and for the whole of that period wen-yen was anachronistic and therefore incapable of being used to produce good literature, he naturally turned to old pai-hua literature to find the cream of the Chinese tradition, thereby ignoring much that was extremely valuable, even though written in wen-yen. One of the chief characteristics of the whole of Hu Shih's contribution to the Literary Revolution was this emphasis on form and technique to the exclusion of content.

The clearest case of opposition to the Chinese literary heritage arose in relation to the traditional drama. On this issue there was considerable controversy, for here the difference in form and style between China and the West was particularly marked. Moreover, the traditional drama was firmly entrenched among all classes of society, and its influence was therefore more far-reaching than than of any other branch of Chinese literature. It was also a great repository of feudal morality and particularly of those ideas

1. Loc. cit.

2. See above, Chapter II, p. 93

which the New Culture Movement had declared war on.

The New Culture Movement, and especially New Youth, was a strong protagonist of Western drama, and of such dramatists as Shaw and Ibsen, whose use of the theatre to expose social evils was of particular appeal. As we have already noted, New Youth devoted a whole issue practically entirely to Ibsen, with translations of parts of his plays and discussions of his work.<sup>1</sup> The movement for introducing Western drama to China and staging Western plays in Chinese cities was just beginning, and the attack on the old drama had the purpose, partly at any rate, of attracting attention away from the old theatre in order to create a following for the new.

In the vehemence of their opposition some of the writers of New Youth advocated the complete abolition of the old drama, as, for instance, Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung:

A certain friend of mine often says that the only way to get a real theatre in China is to close down all the existing ones. I think he is quite right..... For instance, if we wish to set up a republican government we must naturally first overthrow the monarchy; if we wish to establish a vernacular language of the people we must overthrow the abstruse literature of the aristocracy. Similarly, if we want China to have a true theatre, and by this we mean the theatre of the Westernisers and not a theatre of the "painted face-masks", unless we get rid of the characters dressed up so that they don't look human, and who talk in a language that does not resemble speech, rooting them out thoroughly, how can true drama be promoted?<sup>2</sup>

On another occasion Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung wrote that the Chinese theatre had no connection whatever with art or literature, while Chou Tso-jen, another writer in favour of

1. See above, Chapter III, pp. <sup>137</sup>54-55.
2. Ta hsi, wên-bsüeh lun-chêng chi, pp. 410-411.



the abolition of the old drama, called the Chinese drama 1.  
barbaric, and belonging to a pre-civilized stage of society.

It was not unnatural, nor necessarily harmful, that the old theatre should be attacked and made to justify itself in the face of competition from new elements from outside. In fact, even before the period of the New Culture Movement, it had already begun to change, with new elements being introduced under the influence of the popular demand for reform. But the new elements were not by any means all healthy, and many of 2.  
them were the counterpart in drama of the Novels of Darkness in fiction, which, while pandering to the popular impatience with China's subservience to the powers, were full of sensationalism and pornography and devoid of constructive ideas. A description by a Western writer of such a play 3.  
performed in Soochow before 1911 recorded by Paul S. Reinsch, shows the extent to which such popular entertainment had developed even at that early date. In it there appeared such untraditional characters as a comprador in the Netherlands Bank, and the proprietor of a grocery shop in Shanghai with his family. The comprador founds a company of volunteer troops "to better the local situation" which is joined by the hero, a clerk in a large export firm. The grocer's wife, who is superstitious and given to visiting the temple frequently, is mocked by her husband for her beliefs, but when a gang of ruffians breaks into her house, the wretched grocer "invokes the aid of the very gods at whom he has scoffed." It

1. Ibid., pp. 418-419.
2. See above, Chapter I, pp. ~~124~~ 7
3. Paul S. Reinsch, Intellectual and Political Currents in the Far East, pp. 165-169.

is left to the gallant clerk to knock down the burglars one by one, and save the grocer's wife and her helpless husband. According to the account, the play ends with a court scene which is preceded by a soliloquy of the magistrate who "moralizes upon the political situation in China and bewails the general corruption and inefficiency."

Although Reinsch, in his discussion of these new popular plays, said that they retained "the traditional form of the Chinese stage, with no cutting in length,"<sup>1</sup> his informant does not describe (at least in Reinsch's account) the form this particular play took. But the description of the court scene, and especially the sentence describing the magistrate's soliloquy, shows it to be typical of the trend in popular literature of the late Manchu and war-lord periods, which, apart from moralizing on the evils of opium-smokers and gambling, do little more than bewail the general corruption and inefficiency of the nation.

Later, trends of reform of the old-type theatre before the May 4th period, certainly included the introduction of scenery and the modification of the music, but although such alterations were introduced as improvements, they left untouched the main anachronism in the old theatre, which was not any of these formal features, but its propagation of feudal thought and morality, unquestioning obedience to the ruler, elder or husband, a belief in pre-destination or fate, the rules of chastity, etc., and, particularly in more recent

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1. Ibid., p. 165.

years, the anti-social pleasure-seeking of the bad elements in urban life.

Yet, however much the old content had served the purposes of the old rejected and despised morality, it still did not follow that the Chinese classical operatic form was bad in itself, and that it was necessary to abandon it altogether. In the case of some literary forms there was not much to be salvaged after the New Culture Movement because the form was tied too tightly to the old society through its dependence on the literary language. One such case is that of lū-shih<sup>1.</sup> poetry, another still clearer one the pa-ku form of essay<sup>2.</sup> But the Chinese opera with all its many forms could not be abandoned for several reasons.

First, because it provided the great majority of the population of the country with almost their sole form of imaginative diversion - it was the literature of the illiterate. For this reason alone it was impossible to replace it, for the form of the opera was so familiar and well-loved by the people that it is impossible to imagine its replacement by any other form.

Second, it is in its own right a perfectly developed, well-balanced and highly expressive art form, in fact one of the great dramatic traditions of the world. The fact that the would-be abolishers of traditional drama failed to see this shows the extent of the harm which the complete Westernisation of education could do.

1. See above, Chapter II, p. 43 and note.

2. 八股文 Lit. "eight-legged essay". It was the form of essay obligatory for the imperial examinations in the Ch'ing period. See Chou Tso-jen, Chung-kuo hsün wen-hsüeh ti yüan-liu, pp. 53-74.

Third, although the drama had many features unacceptable to a people intent on carrying out thoroughgoing social reform, it also had many features which were in no way contradictory to the new purpose. Like the old novel, although often refashioned by writers imbued with feudal ideas, the drama was popular in origin, and in spite of frequent revision, many of the plays still retained much of their popular content and by no means followed uncritically the rules of conduct prescribed by Confucian moralists. In cases where they did contain such tendencies, the dramatic content was very often seriously impaired, because in such cases the writer of the play was often guilty of meddling with a popular story which contained elements unacceptable to the rulers. If, in spite of such deficiencies, the play was still of good quality, it was perfectly possible to make minor modifications in the plot to restore the original popular content.

After the first sharp controversy on the question of the traditional drama, and particularly after the movement for writing and producing plays in the Western style began to have its first small successes, it came to be realised that the proper course to be taken was reform rather than abolition. There had also grown up a reform movement within the traditional drama itself, led by such figures as the great actor Mei Lanfang and the extremely versatile dramatist Ou-yang Yü-ch'ien which ensured its preservation as a serious art form.

1. See below, note to Chapter V, p.272.

2. 梅蘭芳

3. 歐陽予倩



### New Poetic Forms.

The creation of a new pai-hua poetry was the most difficult task faced by the Literary Revolution. Apart from the technical problems of writing in a medium which had not been used for writing poetry before, there was also much stronger opposition on this question from the opponents of the new literature than in relation to any other literary form. This was because, in the first place, poetry was, as we have seen, the one field in which no real precedent for writing in pai-hua existed - the novel and the drama, and various types of prose-writing had already been proved capable of being written in the vernacular - and, in the second place, poetry was technically the most fully perfected and socially the most highly regarded of all literary forms. It was, for instance, the only wholly creative form which had been consistently accepted as a compulsory subject for the civil service examinations at various periods. So, even before the Literary Revolution had been publicly proclaimed in New Youth, Hu Shih found Mei Kuang-ti saying that although it might be possible to write novels or drama in pai-hua, it was impossible to use it for writing poetry.

But as the organised opposition to the new literature was, in any case, short lived, the technical problems proved a greater obstacle to creating a new pai-hua poetry than the opposition of its opponents.

1. See above, Chapter II, p. 94<sup>1</sup>
2. During the T'ang Dynasty the story also received some encouragement on this account owing to the practice in the T'ang dynasty of having the candidates submit a practice composition (Wén chuan 文卷), but poetry was included entirely in its own right.
3. See above, Chapter II, p. 95

Search for New Forms.

The writer who wrote most about the development of the new poetry was again Hu Shih. He not only was the first to write poems in modern pai-hua, but also laid the theoretical foundations, where poetic form was concerned, for the early group of poets who wrote in New Youth, Renaissance, Short Story Monthly, etc.

Hu Shih rejected the old forms of poetry because they were too brief, and precluded the expression of all the nuances of ordinary speech:

With this liberation of poetic form it has become possible for the first time for rich material, detailed observation, lofty and deeply-rooted ideals and complex emotions to find their way into poetry. Regulated verse (lü-shih) of eight lines of five or seven characters a line is incapable of containing rich material. Poems of twenty-eight characters in the "broken-off lines" style (chüeh-chü) cannot express detailed observation. Poems the length of whose lines is fixed at five or seven characters, cannot eloquently convey lofty ideals or complex emotions.<sup>1</sup>

These claims seem exaggerated, especially when the quality of the new poetry is compared with the poetry of the best classical periods. But basically there was an element of justification for the rejection of many features of the old poetic forms on the grounds put forward by Hu Shih. For the restrictions of the prosodic rules had in fact become a barrier to the further development of poetry.

The worst of these restrictions were to be found in the Regulated Verse (lü-shih)<sup>2</sup> which was composed according to rules formulated in the seventh century. These rules prescribed

1. Ta hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi, p. 295.
2. See above, Chapter II, p. 43 and note.

an invariable rhyme scheme, strict observance of verbal parallelism and certain sequences of tone. Although devised to suit the literary language of twelve hundred years ago, these rules were still being observed by the composers of lü-shih at the time of the Literary Revolution. For example, the rhymes of lü-shih were based on those contained in the standard Ch'ing dynasty dictionary arranged by rhyme, the P'ei-wen-yün-fu<sup>1.</sup> which, though a comparatively recent work, was based on the two hundred and six rhymes in use from the Sui to Northern Sung dynasties. Naturally the pronunciation of many words which originally rhymed had diverged since the rules were first devised, with the result that the official rhymes were sometimes no longer natural rhymes, and poetic effect was lost. The tonal sequences were also anachronistic, as they involved the classification of all words into two categories, those with level tones (p'ing)<sup>2.</sup> and those with deflected tones (tse)<sup>3.</sup> It is possible to argue that this classification still has some phonetic significance in modern Chinese, but there is still the question of those words in the entering tone (ju-shêng)<sup>4.</sup> which has dropped out of use in the mandarin dialects. Though traditionally words in this tone were classified as belonging to the deflected tone (tse-shêng), some of them had in fact acquired the tonal characteristics of the level (p'ing) tone. But in any case, the observance of tonal prosody was not necessary to the writing of good poetry.

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1. 佩文韻府

2. 平

3. 仄

4. 入聲

Not only Regulated Verse, but also Old Style Verse  
 (ku-shih)<sup>1.</sup> often used rhymes which were traditional rather than  
 natural (much as "wind" is made to rhyme with "kind" in English).  
 Writers of ku-shih sometimes even purposely used this kind of  
 rhyme in order to display their knowledge of ancient phonology,  
 and would, for example, rhyme words ending in "ung" with words  
 ending in "iang" because this rhyme existed in Han or Wei  
 dynasty poetry.<sup>2.</sup>

Another rule which applied to the shih forms of poetry  
 (the later tz'ü and ch'ü had already liberated themselves from  
 it)<sup>3.</sup> was that only words in the same tone could rhyme, it  
 being impermissible to rhyme a p'ing word with a tse word.

All these various anachronisms were discussed by  
 Hu Shih in his articles on the new poetry. For example,  
 about rhyme he said the following:

As far as the use of rhyme goes, the new poetry has  
 freed itself in three ways - first, it can use present-day  
 rhymes and is not restricted to old rhymes, still less to  
 the correspondence of p'ing and tse; second, p'ing words  
 may rhyme with tse words.....; third, rhyme may of  
 course be used, but it is not essential.<sup>4.3</sup>

Blank verse was not entirely unknown in the history  
 of Chinese poetry, but it was rather rare, and this was the  
 first time it had been advocated in Chinese literary theory.

More important than these <sup>relative</sup> ~~statutory~~ minor details of  
 prosody was the abandonment of the five-word or seven-word line  
 based on a monosyllabic poetic vocabulary (largely the  
 vocabulary of literary Chinese), in favour of a metre based not

1. See above, Chapter II, p. 93 and note.
2. Loc. cit.
3. Ta hsi, Chien-shê li-lun chi, p. 306.



on the monosyllable, but on the polysyllabic, unevenly stressed modulations of ordinary speech. This was the basic revolution in the prosody which the writing of poetry in pai-hua brought about. It was not simply that the lines were of unequal length (that is to say, having an unequal number of characters), for this had been the case with the tz'u and ch'ü forms for centuries, but rather that the line was divided metrically into feet containing a number of characters, all or only some of which may be stressed. Thus it conformed more closely to the natural rhythm of the spoken language than the old forms which were mainly monosyllabic and evenly stressed. Hu Shih called the metre of the new pai-hua poetry Natural Metre (tzü-jan yin-chieh) because of its affinity to the rhythm of speech. In explaining this term he pointed out that there are many more polysyllabic words in pai-hua than in wen-yen, and while it is usual to group the syllables in a line of traditional poetry in twos, modern pai-hua poetry commonly has groups of three, four or five characters. Hu Shih had no difficulty in finding examples to illustrate this:

Wan-i/che-shou shih/ kan-te-shang/ yüan-hsing-jen<sup>2.</sup>  
 (If by chance this poem should reach the distant one)

Men-wai/tso-chao/i-ko/ch'uan p'o i-shang-ti/lao-nien-jen.<sup>3</sup>  
 (Outside the door was sitting an old man in tattered clothes)

In these two and the other three examples Hu Shih quotes to support this point, he groups the syllables according

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1. 自然音節

2. 萬一首詩趕得上遠行人

Ibid., p. 305.

3. 門外坐着一個穿破衣裳的老年人

Loc. cit.

to their meaning:

If by chance/ this poem/reaches/the distant one.

Outside the door/ was sitting/ a/ wearing tattered  
clothes/old man.

Yet, although the existence of polysyllabic words in great numbers in spoken Chinese may have an important bearing on the phonetic characteristics of the language, stress does not rigidly follow the syntax either of a line of poetry, or of any ordinary utterance. In classical poetry the rules of verbal parallelism made it appear as though syntax and metre had some correspondence, and in five-word lines the caesura after the second word <sup>4.</sup> constituted a syntactical break rather than a pause, or it could be described as a potential pause rather than an actual one.

In modern poetry, on the other hand, which claims to be based on pai-hua, metre cannot be deduced by "parsing" the line into its various parts of speech. The only correct approach is a phonetic one, and, if modern poetry is read aloud, it will at once appear that an entirely new element is present, which was not of great importance in any of the old forms of poetry. This is, as we mentioned above, the element of stress.

If the second of Hu Shih's examples is examined from this point of view, it will be seen that one of the feet in Hu Shih's version disappears:

Mén-wai/tso-chao i-ko/Ch'uan p'o i-shang-ti/lao-nien-jen.

Or possibly:

Mén-wai/tso-chao/ i-kó ch'uan p'ò i-shang-ti/  
lao-nien-jên.

In either case this line has only four and not five feet.

The other examples given by Hu Shih (with the exception of the first where his version happens to correspond with the natural rhythm), could all be subjected to the same criticism.

But although Hu Shih did not properly define what he meant by a natural metre, the majority of the poems of the early period of the New Literature Movement naturally and instinctively followed the new pai-hua rhythm based on stressed and unstressed syllables. This has been the general tendency of poetry during the whole modern period, even though in the mid-twenties attempts at modifying it were made.<sup>1.</sup>

Some of the poets of the early period based their rhythm on the metres of the less rigid of the old forms. For example, as Hu Shih pointed out, Shên Yin-mo's early poems (such as his Rickshaw Puller) (Jên-li ch'ê-fu)<sup>2.</sup> derive metrically from the old Music Bureau (yüeh-fu)<sup>3.</sup> style with lines of unequal length, but based on a monosyllabic pattern. Other poets evolved metres from the tz'ü and ch'ü, which, while allowing the intrusion of more elements from the colloquial language, were still based on a monosyllabic pattern and were composed according to formulae which followed the music of the tunes to which the early poems written in these forms were sung.<sup>4.</sup>

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1. See below, p. 203

2. 次尹默 人車夫

3. 樂府 See Hightower, op.cit., pp. 49-51.

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1. See below, p. 203

2. 次尹默 人世車夫

3. 案府 See Hightower, op.cit., pp. 49-51.

In a period of experimentation, such as that under discussion, it was natural and healthy that this should be the case. These old forms, while in the main unsuitable for expressing the content of the new poetry, still contained elements which could be utilized. As Wen I-to wrote a few years later,<sup>12.</sup> the metre of the tz'u and ch'u should not be entirely taboo for the new poetry, but should be subjected to critical examination, and only those elements which are entirely anachronistic should be rejected. On the other hand, some of the poets who kept closest to the old tz'u form, also adhered to some of the limitations of the traditional tz'u content. Wen I-to has pointed out that this was especially true of Yü Ping-po,<sup>2.</sup> one of the most prolific of the early poets. In addition to some rather unimaginative verse with a humanistic outlook in keeping with the spirit of the May 4th Movement, he also wrote much that was quite trivial, or even straightforwardly conventional, including a number of poems written on the departure of friends, nostalgia for his home district and for times past, etc. Like his prose, Yü P'ing-po's poetry contains much conventional material, and even more traditional literary vocabulary.<sup>3.</sup>

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1. Wên I-to diênnd diu, Ting chi, p. 143

2. 俞平伯

3. See Wên I-to ch'üan chi, Ting chi,

丁集

pp. 141-194



In spite of this early tendency to follow the old styles, the revolution in poetic form was more complete than that in any other branch of literature. As a general rule the early pai-hua poetry was without a closely-knit form, and approximated to the free verse of English. Some poems were so "free" in form that they abjured all aid of rhyme, metre, alliteration, etc. - in fact, all aural devices - and relied entirely upon a certain concentration of language and the use of imagery. Some even dispensed with the latter and became pure prose. Some were written with quite short lines, while others, for instance Liu Fu's Hunger (É) and Rain (YÜ<sup>1</sup>), used lines of twenty to sixty characters in length. Western elements which were introduced quite early included the division of a poem into stanzas, the use of a repeated refrain, and, of course, Western punctuation. Kuo Mo-jo's poems already quoted will illustrate all these various innovations, as well as the use of alliteration and assonance, which was strongly advocated by Hu Shih.<sup>2</sup> The possibilities of Chinese in the latter direction are practically unlimited, and they had been used frequently in old poetry. One line which illustrates the extent to which they can be used in modern poetry is the following from Shen Yin-mo's Three-stringed Fiddle (San-hsien):

P'ang-pien yu i tuan ti-ti ti t'u-ch'iang, tang-chao  
 i ko t'an san-hsien ti jên,  
 Ch'leh pu neng ko<sup>3</sup> tuan na san hsien ku-tang ti shang-  
 lang.<sup>3</sup>

(Nearby was a low earth wall which hid from view a man

1. 餓, 雨,

2. Tai hsi, Chien-she<sup>h</sup> li-lun chi, p. 303.

3. Loc. cit. 旁邊有一段低低的土牆擋着一個  
彈三絃的人  
却不能隔斷那三絃鼓盪盪的聲浪

playing a three-stringed fiddle,  
 But it could not cut off the vibrating waves of  
 sound.)

Here there is not only assonance and alliteration, but also both male and female rhymes, and all combine to produce a marked aural impression. Such lines were, however, rather rare among the early modern poets.

In 1921 Chou Tso-jên translated a quantity of Japanese "short poems" (haiku and kyōka)<sup>1.</sup> and wrote an article in Story Monthly describing their characteristics, and recommending their form to those poets who wished to capture the fleeting impression of a scene in words.<sup>2.</sup> This example of his translation (which was extremely skilled) was followed by a few other writers,<sup>3.</sup> while still others used a brief form to write short epigrammatical poems on lines inspired by Tagore's New Moon and Stray Birds, both of which were translated into Chinese in the early years of the new literature. Hsieh Ping-hsin's collections Stars (Fan-hsing)<sup>4.</sup> and Spring Water (Ch'un shui)<sup>5.</sup> were so inspired, and, with all their mysticism and worship of nature, are full of rich language and fresh imagery. But her influence was relatively short-lived. After 1923 the fashion for short poems declined.

Of greater influence were the English romantic poets and the various poetic forms which they used. One of the first to experiment in the use of these forms was Lu Chih-wei,<sup>6.</sup> but it was not until Hsü Chih-mo began to experiment in Western forms that these English forms became more popular. The

1. 俳句 和歌

2. See Chou Tso-jen, I-shu yü sheng-huo, 藝術与生活  
pp. 245-262.

3. See Wang Yao, op.cit., vol. I, pp. 66-67.

4. 繁星

5. 春水

6. 陸志尊

Chinese language is extremely flexible, and some of its phonetic features, particularly the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, made it possible to use English forms without too much linguistic contortion. Of course, in English the stress is more pronounced than in Chinese, and the proportion of unstressed to stressed syllables higher. But it is quite possible in Chinese to reproduce an impression of some of the metres of English verse, as well as the verse-patterns, rhyme-patterns, refrains, etc., even if strict adherence to the detail of English meter is out of the question. It is even possible to reproduce iambic lines in Chinese, even though this goes against the nature of the Chinese spoken language where there are more consecutive stressed syllables than in English, and where the stress is almost invariably at the beginning of a word rather than at the end. A humorous attempt at reproducing iambic lines in Chinese was Chao Yüan-jên's translation of The Walrus and the Carpenter,<sup>1</sup> where he reproduces the metre of the original as well as the meaning. But although he indulges in the most extraordinary prosodic acrobatics, the stress often strays out of the iambic pattern of the original.

An example of the way in which European, and especially English verse forms were used by Chinese poets is the following poem of Hsü Chih-mo translated by Harold Acton:

If I were a snow-flake  
That lightly frolics in the air,  
Certainly I would know my destination,

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1. See Jaw Yuan~~h~~-renn Mandarin Primer, pp.

Flit, flit, flit -  
There is my destination down on earth.

I would not go to the lonely secret valley  
Nor to the desolate mountain slope,  
Nor would I languish in the empty street,  
Flit, flit, flit -  
You see I really have a destination.

Gracefully I'd fly through the air  
Till I recognized that lovely residence,  
There I would wait for her to walk in the garden -  
Flit, flit, flit -  
Ah, there is the scent of plum-flower around her!

Then with the lightness of my body  
I'd delicately cling upon her dress,  
Draw near to the ripples of her breast,  
Melt, melt, melt,  
Melt into the soft waves of her breast.<sup>1</sup>

To the formal similarities to English verse obvious from the translation, such as the pattern of the stanzas with the third-line refrain, the development and realisation of the idea, must be added the rhyme pattern AA BBB in each verse, and the slightly lilting rhythm of the original. This poem incidentally illustrates the way in which the close following of Western forms was sometimes accompanied by an equally close imitation of Western content.

One poet of the mid- and late 'twenties, Fêng Chih,<sup>2</sup> specialised in the writing of sonnets, which were reproduced down to the smallest detail of rhyme, etc., but, in general, this extreme imitation of Western forms, while producing interesting results for the historian of literature, was not of great permanent value, as it tended to appeal only to a very narrow circle of readers.

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1. Harold Acton and Ch'en Shih-hsiang, op.cit., p. 84.

2. 馮至



The poets of the Crescent Moon Society also experimented with the regularization of new Chinese poetic forms. They believed, like Wordsworth, that the discipline of a compact form inspired, rather than restricted, the writing of good poetry. Wen I-to wrote:

Poetry should possess at once the beauty of music, of painting and of architecture. The beauty of music implies rhythm and rhyme; the beauty of painting implies colour and rhetoric, and the beauty of architecture implies form and structure.<sup>1</sup>

Wen I-to, the chief theorist of the movement, was naturally strongly opposed to the "free verse" tendency initiated by Hu Shih, which was predominant during the first years of the new literature. He was a patriot who deplored the complete Westernisation of some modern Chinese poetry, and desired to build a new poetry out of a synthesis of both Chinese and Western forms:

I believe, he wrote, that new poetry should be quite new, and not merely different from Chinese traditional poetry, but also different from the Western tradition. In other words, it should not be a purely native poetry, but it should retain a local colouring. Nor should it be a purely foreign poetry, but it should strive to be receptive to the best elements of foreign poetry. It should be the favoured offspring of the marriage of Chinese and Western art.<sup>2</sup>

In Wen I-to's poems this approach to form and a strong patriotism of content are both apparent. Although symbolism became fashionable soon after this, and a reaction set in against tightness of form, balance of line and of stanza were sought after by many later poets. The one feature which Wen I-to advocated which has not proved too successful or popular, is exact equality of line, including the

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~~1.~~

1. Wen I-to ch'üan chi, Ting chi, p. 195.

2. loc cit.

number of characters to a line. He believed that if all the lines of a poem contained an equal number of feet, the number of characters would also be equal, and recommended this as a way to regularise the metre of the new poetry. This complete equality of the length of line has not been much favoured by more recent poets (apart from a few of his immediate imitators), though he himself produced some good poems according to this principle. The most famous of these is his Dead Water (Ssu shui), the first stanza of which is as follows:

Ch'è shih ìnkou ch'ueh-wang ti ssu shui  
 Ch'un feng, ch'ui pu ch'i pan tien i-lun  
 Pu-ju to j'eng-hsieh p'o t'ung lan t'ieh  
 Shuang hsing po ni ti-sheng ts'ai ts'an keng<sup>1</sup>.

The translation of the whole reads:

Here is a ditch of dead and hopeless water,  
 No breeze can raise a ripple on its skin;  
 Better cast into it scraps of brass and iron  
 And pour the refuse of your dishes in.

Maybe emeralds on the brass will grow,  
 And rust on the iron turn to ruby flowers,  
 Let rank oil weave a layer of silky gauze  
 And microbes broider cloudy patterns there.

Let it ferment into a ditch of wine,  
 Green wine with opal froth upon the brim,  
 A lustrous pearl will spring and swell in a laugh  
 To be burst by gnats that come to rob the vintage.

And thus a ditch of dead and hopeless water  
 May boast of vivid colour.  
 If frogs cannot endure the deathly silence,  
 The water may have songs.

There is a ditch of dead and hopeless water:  
 The region where no beauty ever is.  
 Better abandon it to ugliness -  
 See from it what a world may still be wrought.<sup>2</sup>

這是一溝絕望的死水  
 春風吹不起半點漪瀾  
 不如多扔些破銅爛鐵  
 爽性潑你的醜態殘羹

1. Ibid., p. 16.

2. Harold Acton and Ch'en Shih-hsiang, op.cit., p. 151.

Most critics agree that this poem was written to describe the condition of Chinese society in Peking when Wen I-to returned there after a period studying literature in America. Certainly from the point of view of compactness and consistency of image it is one of the few entirely successful poems of the period. Its interesting formal feature is, as the transcription of the first stanza will indicate, that each line is of exactly nine syllables, while it can be further divided metrically into four feet per line of two or three syllables each. The whole produces a steadily varied monotony rather like the process of slow fermentation depicted by the poem.

Although the poets of the Crescent Moon Society were careful to indicate that they were not anxious to lay down laws as to what poetic forms should be used, their own followers tended to take equal length of line (in number of characters) as the criterion, and the school came to be called writers of "four-square poetry" or "dried bean-curd poetry" because of the characteristic shape in which this article of food is prepared. But this attention to form was only to be expected, for, as we noted in an earlier chapter, the formalism of the Crescent Moon Society was connected with their whole outlook on literature.

Even more formalistic, however, were their successors, the followers of symbolism, such as Li Chin-fa and Wang Tu-ch'ang (one of the translators of Tagore). Wang Tu ch'ing

Ⅹ.

1. See Hsü Chih-mo, Shih k'an fang chia 詩刊放假 in Ta hsi, Shih-liao so-yin, pp. 119-122, especially p. 121.

2. 豆腐乾

3. See above, Chapter III, p. 172.

4. 李金裝

5. 王獨清

was one of the poets of the Creation Society, but his pessimism was even more marked than that of, say, Yu Ta-fu, and, being combined with a kind of nostalgia for the life of the old official families and a love of antiquity, produced a highly esoteric and decadent type of poetry. Li Chin-fa was even more extreme in his symbolism, and produced quite personal poetry unintelligible except by accident. His inspiration came directly from the French symbolist school.

During the period under review, the new poetry was only just beginning its experimental stage. During this stage it came under the influence of many Western (and Eastern) influences. Having dispensed with the highly perfected prosody of the old poetry and the old poetic language, it was already labouring under a disadvantage of having to build completely fresh conventions almost from the beginning. It laboured under a second disadvantage through also being cut off from the folk traditions and peasant language which had often provided new inspiration in the past. In neither case was this rupture absolutely complete, and the influence of folk song is evident even in the earliest of the new poems; but it was sufficiently definite seriously to increase the difficulties of composition.

Of course, the old language and the old ideas associated with it had gone forever from poetry, just as the old educated official class was disappearing. As feng Fei-ming

1. Before and during the New Culture Movement there was considerable attention paid to the collection of folk songs. These had some influence on the new poetry. See, for instance, Ch'en Ping-k'un, op.cit., pp. 204-210.



wrote in his essay on the new poetry in Harold Acton's volume:

The material which can be manipulated in the old forms has already become too hackneyed. It is impossible for the poets of today to employ them without falling consciously or unconsciously into the pond of plagiarism. Even though a writer be endowed with true genius, he will find it impossible to express fresh feelings and thoughts in crystallised forms.<sup>1</sup>

But while the old forms were largely anachronistic, the new ones were often alien. The good and healthy elements in traditional poetry were often lost sight of, while the vast folk tradition was largely ignored. The extremely personal, unintelligible style of the symbolists and the empty sentimentalism of Hsü Chih-mo, though containing some elements of sensuous beauty, were out of keeping both with the main stream of Chinese literature and with the predominant spirit of the times, which, as we have seen, was strongly against art-for-art's-sake. The extremities of experimentation and formalism often went with a fundamental emptiness of content, and Feng Fei-ming was correct when he emphasised that content was the first concern of modern Chinese poetry.<sup>2</sup>

Naturally "free verse" could not be the only verse form in modern Chinese poetry, any more than it can command exclusive position in the poetry of other nations. The search for new poetic forms was quite legitimate, and a natural process in the building of a new literature, but reconstruction could be most fruitful if it were done (as, for example Pushkin did for Russian poetry), by poets who were vital literary figures

1. Fên<sup>^</sup> Fei-ming, On Modern Poetry, in Acton and Ch'en, op.cit.,  
p. 41.
2. Ibid., p. 44.

at the centre of the social life of the time, and able to reflect it in a vivid way in their poetry. Unfortunately, China did not produce a Pushkin<sup>2</sup> at that time, and this process of construction of a new poetry had to be undertaken slowly and over a fairly long period, during which the effects of the initial disadvantages of the new poetry would gradually be overcome (or partially eliminated by social changes). In the period under discussion this process was just beginning.

In prose there was less Western formal influence to be observed. However, the language of both fictional prose and the essay was influenced by the West. The long, involved sentence including different layers of subordination, though it had existed in old China,<sup>1.</sup> was introduced particularly in political writing, and undoubtedly had its effect on style in general. There was not, of course and could not be, any changes in the basic grammar of Chinese in the new period apart from that involved in the change from wen-yen to pai-hua. The classical grammar was superseded by the grammar of the colloquial language, but in the main no new syntactical features appeared. This is not to say that the grammar of modern pai-hua is exactly the same as that of the variety of pai-hua to be found in the old novels, but the difference between the new and the old lies primarily in the more thorough break with wen-yen which the former represents. Nearly all the famous old novels have long passages almost entirely in wen-yen. Commonly, only the dialogue was in pure pai-hua, and in some cases not even that. The narrative was often in a kind of semi-colloquial style in which some of the grammatical features of wen-yen were retained. The author of the Hung Lou meng at times reverted to pure wen-yen when recording intellectual discussion.<sup>2.</sup>

The changes in the Chinese written language which the new period introduced were the addition of new words, the use

1. Cf. the long sentence near the beginning of the first chapter of the Hung lou meng, in which the author is telling his motive for writing it.
2. See, for example, the discourse of Leng Tzu-hsing 冷子性 in the second chapter.

of punctuation and various stylistic innovations, of which the outstanding one is the use of the long sentence and subordination where short sentences would have been used before. This did not involve any grammatical innovation. One cannot single out any syntactical devices which had not been used in old pai-hua. Thus the changes belonged rather to style than to syntax, though their effect was deep and permanent nevertheless.

During the literary revolution a number of writers discussed the question of the new pai-hua style. Of course the opponents of pai-hua said that there was nothing easier in the world than writing pai-hua, and accused the new writers of taking to it because they were not capable of mastering wên-yen. But, on the other hand, there were some who found it far from easy to switch over to the vernacular after they had been using wên-yen all their lives. Thus it was necessary to discuss the theory of pai-hua writing in order to assist young writers. Hu Shih in his Constructive Revolution in Chinese Literature, as we have seen, paid attention mainly to imitating the style of the old novelists, though he also mentioned the language of every-day speech. Later in the same year (1918) one of the editors of La Renaissance, the historian Fu Ssü-nien<sup>1</sup>, wrote an article on How to write pai-hua (Tsen-me yang tso pai-hua wên)<sup>2</sup> in which he elaborated a little on Hu's proposals.

Fu Ssü-nien<sup>1</sup> rejected the novels as a source of linguistic inspiration not, surprisingly enough, because they

1. 傅斯年

2. 怎樣做白話文

Ta hsi, Chien shê li-lun chi, pp. 217-227.

were not sufficiently near to modern colloquial, but because, as he put it, they were only the language of "little people and women". This was an echo of the aristocratic attitude of Lin Shu and Hu Hsien-hsiu to pai-hua, and provides an interesting contrast with the ideas of the later movement for learning the language of the masses. Fu Ssú-nien also disapproved of the novels as literature, and, like so many of the new intellectuals, disparaged the Chinese literary heritage.<sup>1</sup> But he had one valid point against the use of the language of the novels in modern pai-hua. That was that the old novels contained mostly concrete description with very little exposition or argumentation, or many of the other purposes for which pai-hua writing would be needed. So, from premises which, with the exception of this one point, seem rather doubtful, he reached a sensible conclusion that modern writing should find its main source of language material in every-day speech. In support of this idea he cited the example of Demosthenes and Cicero in Greece and Rome, and Mo-tzu in ancient China, who were all both orators and literary figures, whose writing was identical with their speaking, and pointed out that much ancient literature was created before it was written down, forming the great oral traditions, such as those of Homer and the Niebelungenlied. Although it was true to say that in countries which enjoyed unity of spoken and written languages, there still existed a slight divergence between them, the main



1. He wrote that there were only three good Chinese novels, Shui hu chuan, Hung lou meng, and Ju-lin wai-shih, "the rest are not wanted", see Ibid., p. 219.

danger to writers of pai-hua in China lay not in being too colloquial, but rather in that they might be tempted to backslide into using the habits of expression of wen-yen. Therefore, he said, it was of the utmost importance to use pure National Language (kuo-yü), and to study one's own speech and the speech of others and constantly to practise writing it down.

Fu Ssu-nien had another proposal which was more controversial. This was that the Chinese language was deficient in many ways, and that it was necessary to build a "Europeanised National Language" in which use would be made of European style, grammar, morphology, syntax, composition and figures of speech. The reason for taking this drastic step, which in the way in which he put it seems little less extreme than Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung's suggestion of abolishing the Chinese language in its place, was that he felt that kuo-yü was too direct and too colourless. To make it more lively it was necessary to introduce Western figures of speech, of which Chinese, with its continuous imitation of the past, has failed to develop sufficiently. Another reason, he said, was that Chinese was too "poor", both in words and in sentence construction. Thus it was necessary to seek the aid of Western languages in these aspects too.

The reason for the deficiency in sentence construction was that "Chinese thought was too simple". He praised the wen-<sup>chek</sup>-yen of Chang Hsing-yen's political articles in the Chia-yin tsa- because of their use of long, involved sentences with many

1. Ibid., p. 224.

2. 甲寅雜誌 See above, note to Chapter I, p. 119.

layers of subordination, and complained that, in the past, Chinese sentence construction had been too simple to express conveniently complicated ideas. The ideal kind of pai-hua in his opinion would include the following three aspects:-

(i) A logical pai-hua, having the principles of logic and the order of logic, and able to express scientific ideas.

(ii) A philosophical pai-hua; that is, a pai-hua style which has a stratiform, closely-knit structure which is able to contain the deepest and most refined thoughts.

(iii) An artistic pai-hua created by the skill of craftsmen, and able to penetrate the emotions. †

The only way to achieve this perfect pai-hua was, in his opinion, to imitate European language.

As that time there were not many among the leaders of the Literary Revolution who disagreed with this point of view, but looking back on it now it is clear that it represented an over-emphasis on Westernisation. It is true that Chinese writing has undergone a definite Western influence which has tended towards "stratified" sentences using much subordination. This was inevitable because of the demands of scientific writing (including political science). It was also inevitable that new terms would have to be introduced to express new concepts and new objects, but this was nothing out of the ordinary and had happened throughout Chinese history. But these changes did not extend to all the categories of language which Fu<sup>Ssu-nien</sup> enumerated. For instance, Chinese grammar and syntax were not altered. As far as the charge of "poverty" is concerned, which he levelled against the Chinese

1. Ibid., p. 225.

language, in the absence of any evidence, one must return a verdict of "not guilty". It is true that the every-day language of the intellectuals did tend to be poor in imagery, just as the language of the average university student in England is poor in comparison with that of many farm labourers, but that does not prove that the only way of making it richer is by making a conscious effort to study foreign languages.

The later history of the problem of language in modern Chinese literature consisted in fact of a conscious struggle against Westernisation of language, which unfortunately, came all too easily to an intelligentsia cut off from the life of the ordinary people.

The essay in modern Chinese literature developed along two fairly distinct, though not mutually exclusive, lines. One was the lyrical prose piece of descriptive essay, which was similar to the English essay, and was much influenced by it. The other was the "miscellaneous essay" (t<sup>1</sup>sa-w<sup>1</sup>en) or "miscellaneous thought" (t<sup>2</sup>sa-kan) which was essentially a short, pungent essay on a social or political theme. The latter might not normally be regarded as a literary form at all, but in China a high concentration of thought was combined with a dexterity of language which gave the form a literary status from quite early in the modern literary movement.<sup>2.</sup> The writer who did most to develop the t<sup>1</sup>sa-w<sup>1</sup>en was Lu Hs<sup>1</sup>ün, in whose writings they figure very

1. 雜文 雜感 The distinction between these two is not rigid. Tsa-wên might generally have tended to be longer, but both terms are often used for what is essentially the same form.
2. See Liu Pan-nung, Wo-chih wên-hsüeh kai-liang kuan 我之文學改良觀 in New Youth, chuan 6, No. 3, May, 1917, where he talks of tza-wên as having a permanent status as a literary form.

prominently. But if they achieved their highest perfection at his hands, they were in essence a product of the extremely sharp social and ideological conflict which was characteristic of the modern literary movement. They also suited the requirements of the various journals in which they were published whose editors wished to pack as much punch as possible into limited space, for this was the spirit of the time.

Tsa-wên first appeared in the columns of New Youth where they were called "Records of Random Thoughts" (Sui kan lu). Those who wrote them included Lu Hsün, Ch'ên Tu-hsiu and Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung, and in content they covered the whole range of the interests of the New Culture Movement from social questions such as the emancipation of women to questions of linguistic reform and literature. Later the Ch'ên pao,<sup>2.</sup> a Peking paper, published a regular literary supplement, the first of its kind, but a precedent which was to be followed by many; and as space in it was particularly restricted it often included tsa-wên by well-known authors. Many of Lu Hsün's tsa-wên, written after 1921, were originally published there.

In his preface to a collection of Lu Hsün's tsa-kan,<sup>3.</sup> Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai wrote:-

The keen and fierce social struggle meant that authors could not blend their thoughts and feelings into their works at leisure and express them through the medium of images and typical characters. Nor did the cruel force of oppression allow them to express them in conventional forms.<sup>4</sup>



1. 隨感錄

2. See above, Chapter III, p. 171

3. 瞿秋白

4. Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai ch'üan chi 瞿秋白全集

chüan 3, p. 978.

The chief characteristic of the tsa-kan then was its social criticism, and to serve this criticism humour, irony, satire and persuasion were used in the most concentrated manner. Their main function was to attack, and Lu Hsün wrote of his own tsa-kan:

I well know that in China my pen is regarded as being somewhat sharp, and that I am sometimes merciless. But I also know how some people make use of the fair name of justice and righteousness and assume the title of "upright gentlemen", and with persuasive tongues and fluent pens advance their own selfish interests. Thus, the weak, who have neither sword nor pen, are not given a chance to breathe. Without my pen I would be reduced to the position of a plaintiff without a court. Being awake, I use it often, especially to expose the horse's hoof beneath the unicorn's skin.<sup>1</sup>.

Lu Hsün compared this form of attack to the hand-to-hand fighting of the trench warfare in the First World War. His earlier tsa-kan were more general in content and dealt with fairly broad subjects, though his treatment of them was full of spirited attack on the opposition to the New Culture Movement, such as the Hsüeh-hêng<sup>2</sup> group, or the official public opinion on a variety of matters, such as chastity, "extremism", the national tradition, etc. They are extremely difficult to render in translation as they depend for their effect so much on the skilful use of Chinese words with particular connotations which are lost in the process of translation. Nevertheless they throw more light on Chinese society, and particularly intellectual developments of the period from the May 4th Movement up to Lu Hsün's death than the work of any other

1. Lu Hsün ch'üan chi, chuan III, pp. 228-229.

2. See above, Chapter II, pp. 114 ff

writer. Here is one of Lu Hsün's earliest tsa-kan published in 1918 in New Youth attacking those who opposed the New Culture Movement from a traditionalist standpoint:

From the end of the Ch'ing dynasty up to now we have often heard the words "uphold the national essence".

At the end of the Ch'ing dynasty there were two kinds of people saying this. One was the patriotic enthusiasts, and the other the high officials who had toured Western countries. Behind each group's use of the words was hidden a different meaning. When they said "preserve the national essence", the patriots meant the restoration of old things, while the high officials meant that the Chinese students abroad should not have their queues removed.

Now we have a republic and these two questions have completely gone by the board. So I am not sure what sort of people say it now, or what meaning lies behind it.

I am even not sure what the real meaning of these words is.

What is this thing called "national essence?" On the face of it it seems to be something which one nation alone possesses, and that no other nation has. In other words, it is something peculiar to that nation. But something that is peculiar is not necessarily something good, so why should it be preserved?

For example, a man who has a wart on his face or a boil on his forehead is out of the ordinary, and that which marks him as different could be called his "essence". But to my mind it is better for him to cut away this peculiarity and be like other people.

If it is said that the Chinese national essence is both peculiar and good, then why are things as bad as they are today, causing the new school to shake their heads and the old school to sigh?

It may be said that this is just because we have not been able to preserve our national essence, or because our ports have been opened up. If that is so, then before the ports were opened, when the whole country was permeated with the national essence, things should have been perfect. Why was it then that we had successively

the Spring and Autumn period; the Warring States; the Five Barbarian invasions and Sixteen Kingdoms, in which there was such confusion that the ancients also sighed?

It may be said that this was because they did not follow the way of Ch'êng T'ang, Wen, Wu or Duke Chou. How was it then that, at the time of Ch'êng T'ang, Wen, Wu and Duke Chou first there was the tyranny of Chieh and Chou, and then the rebellion of Yin, and later still came the Spring and Autumn, the Warring States, the Five Barbarian invasions and the Sixteen Kingdoms, causing the ancients to sigh?

A friend of mine rightly said: "Before we can be expected to preserve our national essence, it must be able to preserve us."

Our own preservation is the first consideration. We should only ask if a thing can preserve us and not whether it is, or is not, our national essence.<sup>1</sup>

Later Lu Hsün used the tsa-kan form to attack the art-for-art's sake school, as well as those who have been called those "well-fed and well-washed students who returned from England and America with their 'gentlemanly' ideas of moderation and compromise", whom he called the "new gentry".<sup>2</sup> Sometimes his attacks seemed to be personal, but he was not fundamentally concerned with personalities, but rather with all who stood in the way of the solution of the basic problems of the time:

Our most pressing problems, he wrote, are first our life, second our food and shelter and third our personal development. If anything stands in the way of these objectives, no matter whether it is ancient or modern, man or devil, ..... it must be trampled underfoot.<sup>3</sup>

The tsa-kan was the weapon which Lu Hsün used to defeat these enemies of progress. Because the issues were so pressing and the struggle so vital, the weapon had to be sharp and its user had to be skilled, and these two qualities were the basic features of the tsa-kan form.

1. Lu Hsün ch'üan chi, chüan II, pp. 24-25.
2. See Wang Chi-chen, Ah Q and Others, Introduction, pp. xvi-xvii.
3. Lu Hsün ch'üan chi, chüan III, p. 51.

Although the tsa-kan were strongly influenced by Western thought, and in the case of Lu Hsün by a variety of Western writers, it would be far from accurate to call the tsa-kan form Western. In fact nothing quite like it had existed before in the West, or has been developed since. The particular combination of satire with a poetic concentration of language has a more Chinese than Western flavour. Lu Hsün wrote of the tsa-wên:

In fact tsa-wên are not a modern invention; they have existed from ancient times. If an author's writings were arranged according to categories, they could all be assigned to one. If they were arranged chronologically, they all appeared according to the month and year in which they were written, with all kinds mingled together. Thus they became "miscellaneous writings".

In old China there were many different forms of short prose pieces, such as prefaces, postfaces, discourses, etc., which are collected in countless collections (wên-chi) of different scholars. Lu Hsün's collected works are largely arranged in this way. But it was not only the arrangement of Lu Hsün's work which has a Chinese precedent, the style and flavour of his short prose pieces is also very Chinese. Lu Hsün was a great admirer of the literature of the Wei and Chin dynasties, which was in many ways livelier and less hidebound by Confucian thought than previous or succeeding periods. He spent a great deal of time studying it and lecturing and writing about it. The writer whom he most admired in that period was Chi K'ang, and he admired him because of the skill

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1. Ibid, chüan VI, p. 13.



of his argument, which was far from being on conventional lines, and his use of satire and imagery. There is little doubt that stylistically, Lu Hsün's tsa-kan owe something to Chi K'ang<sup>1</sup> and to other old Chinese writers, though the thought they expressed owes more to the modern West.

The second trend in prose after the May 4th movement was the "belle-lettres" style of essay developed by Chou Tso-jen, Yü P'ing-po, Chu Tzu-ch'ing<sup>2</sup> and others. If the tsa-wen had antecedents within the wen-chai<sup>3</sup> of the old writers, so did the modern essays. Many of them were descriptions of scenery and were the descendants of the pi-chi<sup>4</sup> of a host of classical writers, and many of the stylist elements of the old classic essay are to be found in them.<sup>5</sup> But equally strong was the influence of the humorous discourse of the English essayists of the Elia type, especially among those writers familiar with English literature. In number and variety these new Chinese essays were so great that, as with the drama, a detailed discussion of them has not been included in this study. But before leaving the subject of essay-writing, it might be relevant to our broader purpose to quote what Wang Yao wrote about them in his Draft History of Modern Chinese Literature:

Descriptions of scenery and lyrical prose existed in great quantities in Chinese traditional literature; it was the main stream as well as being the cream of the old writing. This historical background provided favourable conditions for the development of prose. The English essay form also stimulated the writer's interest and provided a model for imitation. So the new prose had considerable achievements. But the present-day lyrical

1. 嵇康

王 瑒 魯迅 与 中国 文学  
 See Wang Yao, Lu Hsiin yü P'ung-buo wên-hsieh  
 1964 for further information

2. 朱自清

3. 文集

4. 筆記

and descriptive prose differs in emphasis from both traditional and Western prose, for it is strongly flavoured with the author's own impressions and emotions. And these impressions belong to present-day China, and especially to the awakened intellectuals of the post-May 4th period. So, even in fragments of narrative or description, it is not difficult to discern the sorrows and sentiments, struggles and battles of the writer.<sup>1.</sup>

Finally we come to the short story which was one of the most popular forms in modern Chinese literature. Lu Hsün and Chou Tso-jen had translated a number of Russian and East European stories while studying in Japan.<sup>2.</sup> Unfortunately they were before their time, and their translations sold only a few copies, though they were republished later. The next collection of translated stories (apart from some short stories among Lin Shu's work) was Chou Shou-ch'üan.<sup>3.</sup> This appeared in 1917. Finally Hu Shih's pai-hua translations appeared in 1920. Among them was a story by Daudet which he translated into pai-hua as early as 1911, and besides Daudet, Maupassant, Kipling, Checkov and Strindberg were also represented. (Not all the translations were in pai-hua.)<sup>4.</sup> Hu Shih also wrote an essay on the short story which was influential at the time,<sup>5.</sup> and contained some comments on the old Chinese story as well as an analysis of the formal features of the Western story, which he recommended should be introduced into China. Our next chapter consists of a discussion of the work of Lu Hsün, the most successful of China's modern story-writers, whose influence on the development of the story was greater than that of any theoretical treatment of the subject. We will therefore confine the question of the Western influence on the story to the following discussion of his work.

1. Wang Yao, op.cit., Volume I, p. 130.

2. See below, p. 235.

3. 月瘦鷓鴣

4. Hu Shih, Tuan p'ien hsiao-shuo. 短篇小說

5. Hu Shih, Lun Tuan-p'ien hsiao-shuo, 論短篇小說  
in Ta hsio, Chien-she li-lun chi, pp. 272-281.

## CHAPTER V

LU HSUN AND THE SHORT STORYIntroduction

Lu Hsün was a pioneer of the modern short story in China. His first story, K'uang-jen jih-chi (Diary of a <sup>1.</sup> Madman), was published in the magazine New Youth in May, 1918, and was the first story to be published in the new style. He is generally recognized to be the best writer of the short story in modern Chinese literature, and was certainly a much better exponent of the genre than any other writer in the particular period under discussion.

The purpose of this chapter is to make an assessment of Lu Hsün's stories, giving particular emphasis to the manner in which he solved in practice some of the theoretical problems touched on in the previous chapters, but bearing in mind that only a writer of considerable talent and individuality could approach a solution of these complex questions in his work, and that the very nature of his solution is bound up with his individuality.

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1. For an English translation of K'uang-jen jih-chi 狂人日記 see Wang Chi chen (trans.), Ah Q and Others pp.205-19. For the Chinese text see Lu Hsün's complete works, Lu Hsün ch'üan-chi 魯迅全集 (hereafter abbreviated to L.H.C.C.), Vol.I, pp.277-291.

A discussion of the work of one writer in some detail should contribute to an understanding of the actual conditions in which all the writers of the period worked. It should also serve to put the theoretical problems into proper perspective and show how they affected the writer's approach to his work and his technique.

The chapter has been divided into three parts. The first part concerns Lu Hsün's early life and the influences which have been paramount in his career as a writer; the second part deals with what might be best defined as the overall "pattern" of his stories, that is, broadly speaking, the ideas and view of life which they contain; and the third with Lu Hsün's style.

Lu Hsün was a writer for whom the social purpose and content of his art was of the greatest importance,<sup>1a.</sup> and whose stories, though far from being allegories or moral fables, especially when taken together, present a definite and consistent view of life. This view of life was derived more directly from his own experience, and less from an intellectual position than with many writers concerned with social themes and so Lu Hsün never ran the danger either of seeming to sermonize, or of distorting reality by forcing it to conform

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1a. See Lu Hsün's own confession of how he came to write stories in L.H.C.C., V, pp. 106-110, particularly p.108 where he emphasises the social purpose of his writing.

to a shallowly conceived dogma. He was able to say what he wanted to say by simply refashioning those parts of his own experience which had made the deepest impression on him.

It is particularly important, therefore, to have a good understanding of the background to Lu Hsün's stories, and especially of his own life and the people and events which influenced him most. And again, before any detailed study of the style of the stories can be undertaken in any of its aspects - language, imagery, construction, etc. - it is necessary at least to draw attention to the most important of the correspondences and patterns which, as an artist, he created out of the raw material of his experience. Hence the order in which the chapter has been arranged. The limited scope of this study precludes completeness in any of these aspects, and it is not intended that this chapter should be more than illustrative of the study as a whole.

#### Formative Influences

For the purposes of this study it is not necessary to enter into the biographical details of Lu Hsün's early life, especially as brief surveys already exist in English and more detailed biographies in Chinese. <sup>1.</sup> In many ways the formative

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1. There is as yet no standard biography of Lu Hsün in English, but biographical material is contained in the following articles:- Wang Chi-chen, Lusin: A Chronological Record, in China Institute Bulletin, January, 1939 (a shortened version of this forms the introduction to Wang, Ah Q and Others), and Feng Hsueh-feng, Lu Hsün: His Life and Thought, in Chinese Literature 2, 1952. The most useful biography of Lu Hsün in Chinese is Wang Shih-ching, Lu Hsün chuan. Another very full account of Lu Hsün's life prior to 1927 is Ou-yang Fan-hai 歐陽凡 Lu Hsün-ti shu. 魯迅的書

Stories of Lu Hsün

influences in his early life were typical of his generation, and were determined by the social and political crisis of modern China, which has been discussed in a previous chapter. Here it is necessary to concentrate attention on the particular parts of his experience which first of all led him on to the path of creative writing, and, second, contributed most to the growth of his particular kind of realism and other elements of his artistic individuality.

We are fortunate in having a wealth of material which enables us to estimate with more than usual precision the progress of his art. Scattered about Lu Hsün's works are a large number of autobiographical fragments, in addition to a collection of reminiscences, largely of his childhood. Particularly since his death in 1936, a further source of information on the early period of his life has been provided in the reminiscences of friends and acquaintances, notably his lifelong friend Hsü Shou-shang<sup>1</sup>, who was a contemporary of Lu Hsün as a student in Japan, and whose friendship lasted right up to Lu Hsün's death.

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1. According to Sun Fu-yüan 孫伏園 (Lu Hsün hsien-sheng 魯迅先生二三事 pp. 68-69), Hsü Shou-shang was of a similar disposition to Lu Hsün. They studied together from 1902 to 1904, and according to Hsü's own account there were only six years out of the twenty-five from 1902 to 1927 when they were separated (see Hsü Shou-shang, Wo so jen-shih-ti Lu Hsün 我所認識的魯迅 p. 8).



Lu Hsün's younger brother Chou Tso-jên<sup>1.</sup> has also provided much valuable information on Lu Hsün's childhood and student days, which is particularly relevant as the two brothers collaborated on a number of literary projects. In the preface to his collection of stories, Battle Cries<sup>2.</sup> (Na Han), Lu Hsün has himself drawn attention to the deep influence of his boyhood experiences, particularly those surrounding the illness and death of his father and the decline in his family fortunes.<sup>3.</sup> The frequent visits to the pawn-shop and the medicine shop which these circumstances entailed made him experience at the age of twelve some of the harshness and cruelty of life. When all the expense of the exotic medicines prescribed by the old-style doctors had been met - and they included items with names such as "pairs of crickets" and "the winter roots of rushes" -

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1. Chou Tso-jên 周作人 gives details of his early collaboration with his elder brother in Kuan-yü Lu Hsün ti-êrh 關於魯迅第二 in Yü-chou fêng No. 30. 宇宙鋒

A previous article Kuan-yü Lu Hsün had appeared in No. 29 of the same journal, containing information about Lu Hsün's childhood. Both articles were published under the pseudonym Chih T'ang shortly after Lu Hsün's death in 1936. Lu Hsün broke with Chou Tso-jên in the mid-twenties, and thereafter their careers were quite different, Chou Tso-jên finally being discredited for collaboration with the Japanese occupation forces after 1937.

2. L.H.C.C., I, pp. 269-270.

3. Sun, op.cit., pp.64-67. Besides giving some details about Lu Hsün's grandfather's imprisonment, and the decline in the family fortunes, Sun also draws attention to other reasons which have been suggested as contributing to Lu Hsün's attraction to medicine.

Lu Hsün's father, so far from improving, became gradually worse and finally died. This event clearly had a deep effect on Lu Hsün, both in the immediate sense that it helped to establish his resolve to study medicine, and, more permanently, that it gave him an insight into the injustices of the old society, of which the old-style doctors were an integral part, and a sympathy for its victims, who, like his father, were helpless in the grip of superstition, and the merciless extortion of parasites.

The old-style medicine features as important material in at least two of Lu Hsün's stories, Medicine<sup>(Yao)</sup> and Tomorrow<sup>(Ming-t'ui)</sup>. In the former Hua Lao-shan goes to the execution ground to purchase a steamed roll dipped in the blood of a revolutionary who has been shot, in the belief that it will cure his son's illness. But the hope and joy which he feels at the prospect of curing his son only add to the poignancy of the boy's inevitable death. In the latter, the widow Tan Szu-sao, whose little boy is the only thing which makes her hard and bitter existence worth while, is deprived of him through the ignorance and deception of an old-style doctor.

It was the impoverishment of his family which led Lu Hsün away from the traditional path normally followed by a young man of his social position. But for this, he would

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1. L.H.C.C., I, pp. 298-310 and I, pp. 311-320.

perhaps have entered for the examinations and embarked upon an official career, for which the education provided by his family fitted him. As it was, in 1898 at the age of 17, he entered one of the newly established foreign schools run by the government, the Nanking Naval Academy, later transferring to the College of Mines. The importance of this step emerges from his own comment:-

"Anybody who has gone through the experience of a decline in his family fortunes from reasonable prosperity to poverty, will, in the course of this decline, be able to discern the true faces of people. My desire to go to N and enter the K academy, seemed to result from a wish to travel a new path, escape to new places and search for new kinds of people. My mother could do nothing about it. She scraped together eight dollars for the journey and said I could do as I pleased. She cried, and it was quite natural that she should do so, for in those days the correct and proper path of life was through studying and entering for the examinations. The so-called foreign learning was something for people at their wits' end, whose only course was to sell their souls to the foreign devils. My departure would only add to her shame and social ostracism, and this supplemented her grief at the thought of not seeing me again. But I was not concerned about this, and in fact went to N and entered the K academy. It was there for the first time that I realized that such things as science, mathematics, geography, history, art and physical training existed. They did not teach biology, but we saw some block-printed copies of New Anatomy and Chemical Hygiene, and so on. I remember that when I compared the theories and prescriptions of doctors I had known with this new knowledge, it gradually dawned on me that Chinese-style doctors were nothing but swindlers, whether they were conscious of it or not. At the same time there arose in me a deep sympathy for those who were swindled and their families. Moreover, from translated books, I learned that the Japanese Reform owed its origin largely to Western medicine." 1.

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1. Ibid., I, p. 272.

While he was in Nanking, Lu Hsün bought and read all of Yen Fu's translations of Western philosophical and political works from Huxley's Evolution and Ethics onwards. He described later how his imagination was stirred by the picture of Huxley<sup>1</sup> sitting in his study overlooking the downs of Southern England. That such a person could exist at all was exciting enough to him, and how much more exciting were the strange and wonderful thoughts and ideas which came from his pen! Not only could he not put the book down, but this first contact with the new Western learning stimulated a desire for new knowledge which was only limited by the amount of translation available.

Huxley's essay did more for Lu Hsün than open up this new world of knowledge. It laid the foundation of what was to be the main edifice of Lu Hsün's philosophy for the next thirty years. He came to believe in the inevitable success of man's effort to better himself, to the extent of believing that the new is of necessity better than the old, and that in conflicts between the young and the old it is the young who are in the right. He believed in the power of reason to solve human problems, and, like Huxley and the other champions of Darwinian materialism, that much can be done by the exercise of human intelligence to change man himself.<sup>2</sup> This optimism of belief

1. Ibid., VI, pp. 405-6.

2. Cf. T.H. Huxley and Julian Huxley, Evolution and Ethics, 1893-1943, particularly the conclusion of T.H. Huxley's original Romanes lecture on pp. 79-84.

remained with Lu Hsün throughout the period of his life when the majority of his stories were written, and often conflicted with a less rational and more intuitive melancholy, which was bred in him by the frustrations of his own life and the darkness of the world around him. This conflict is one of the dominant features of Lu Hsün's early life, and, as we shall see, was constantly reflected in his writing. Many years later, when his outlook had already undergone some changes, he testified to the importance for him of the idea of evolution:-

"I had hitherto believed in evolution and so considered that the future must be better than the past, the young better than the old. I had a constant respect for youth and considered that 'they gave me ten swords and I repaid them with an arrow'. But later I realised that I was wrong. .... It was young people I had witnessed in Canton, who were divided into two camps, some betraying secrets by letter and some helping the officials to make arrests. My way of thinking was shattered, and I subsequently always viewed the young with more critical eyes, and never again held unconditional veneration for them." 1.

The inadequacy of the "foreign schools" of the time has been mentioned in a previous chapter, and needs no repetition.<sup>2</sup> This particular school in Nanking was no exception, and served for the studios only as a stepping stone to foreign universities. In Lu Hsün's case the next step was the medical college of Sendai in Japan, which he started attending in 1904 after two years in Tokyo learning Japanese.

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1. L.H.C.C., IV, P.18.  
 2. See above, I, P.52

The story of how Lu Hsün abandoned medicine in 1906 in favour of literature need not be repeated here.<sup>1.</sup> His interest in literature, as in many other things, arose partly from a natural bent and partly from an intense patriotism which was shared by most of his fellow Chinese students in Japan. Lu Hsün believed from an early age in the necessity of overthrowing the Manchu Dynasty. He was much inspired by the example of the famous scholar Chang Ping-lin,<sup>2.</sup> who had been imprisoned in Shanghai for his journalistic activities. He admired his unswerving opposition to the Manchus and his refusal to follow K'ang and Liang into the path of compromise and support of the Dynasty. In 1907 he attended Chang Ping-lin's course of lectures on the Shuo-wên-chieh-tzŭ,<sup>3.</sup> though he confessed later his reason for attending them was a feeling of loyalty to the great patriot, and he understood rather little of the lectures. Later, when Chang was put in prison for opposing Yüan Shih-k'ai's aspirations for the throne, Lu Hsün went to visit him personally.

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1. Cf. Fêng, op. cit., p. 228. and

2. 章炳麟

3. 說文解字 Chang was a well-known philologist, and a traditionalist who taught the re-introduction of the old forms of characters in the Shuo-wên into modern writing. Cf. J.R. Levenson: History and Value: Tensions of Intellectual Choice in Modern China, in The American Anthropologist, Vol. 55, No. 5, Part 2, Memoir No. 75, pp. 146-194, especially pp. 167-170, where Chang's intellectual position is discussed briefly. For Lu Hsün's interest in Chang's revolutionary activity see Sun, op.cit., p. 53, and L.H.C.C., VI, pp. 547-551.

Lu Hsün's interest in literature, at least in foreign literature, was exceptional as most of his contemporaries were studying more practical or financially more promising subjects. From the first Lu Hsün regarded literature as a means of arousing the spirit of the Chinese people, and of curing the diseases of the spirit. The function of literature as a regulator of social behaviour had long been recognized by orthodox Chinese thought. The position taken by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao on the question has already been discussed.<sup>1</sup> Lu Hsün had, according to his brother, read and been much impressed by Liang's article on the social function of the word. But Lu Hsün differed from Liang in that he was not, at any rate for long, concerned with the direct educative effect of literature. He wanted to use it not to educate but to stimulate; if the literature of the Confucian moralists had for centuries acted as a soporific, a preserver of the orthodox, could not a new kind of literature act equally effectively as a stimulant?

Lu Hsün's own reading of foreign literature and its history confirmed his view of literature as a social force. It also took him considerably further than the majority of his contemporaries in an understanding of western culture and the attitude China should take towards it. While in Japan he

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1. See above, I, p.42

published a series of articles on various aspects of Western science and culture in a Chinese students' journal. The fourth of these articles was entitled The Power of Mara Poetry (Mo lo-shih-li shuo)<sup>1.</sup> after the Hindu god of destruction and rebellion. In this article, which is a long one in the region of seventeen thousand words, he extols the power of the writer, and particularly of the poet, as the voice of the nation, and even the saviour of the nation. About the German "martyr" poet Theodor Körner he wrote:-

"Körner's voice was the voice of all Germany, Körner's blood was the blood of all Germany. One may go further and say that it was not the State which defeated Napoleon, not a king, not arms, but the people. The people were moved by poetry and poets, and so Germany was saved. How could those who favour utilitarianism and reject poetry, those who pin their faith in the obsolete weapons of foreign lands for the defence of their homes, possibly comprehend this? ....."<sup>2.</sup>

Those referred to in the last sentence were the followers of the "Old New-Party" of K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao who advocated wedding Western technology and some social institutions to Chinese culture as a means of reviving China.

Lu Hsün in this essay wrote mainly of the poets of the various national movements in literature of the early nineteenth century in central and eastern Europe. He was also

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1. 摩羅詩力說

2. L.H.C.C., I, p. 64.



attracted to the English romantics, particularly Byron and Shelley, valued the Romantic Movement chiefly for its attacks on the artificiality of Eighteenth Century society. The essay is remarkable in the extent of knowledge of European literature it displays. This knowledge, though much of it gained at second hand through reading German and Japanese, provided a rich range of ideas, styles and techniques for him to draw on in his own original work.

During his early years in Japan Lu Hsün had paid much attention to the question of "national character",<sup>1.</sup> and considered that the Chinese people were in a state of mental or spiritual paralysis. His investigation of national character was not merely a matter of interest or curiosity, but rather the diagnosis of a doctor seeking a remedy for what he felt sure was a curable ailment. The Power of Mara Poetry is important as Lu Hsün's assessment of the national tasks of the Chinese writer, a plea for what he termed "warriors of the spirit" (ching-shên-chieh chin chan-shih),<sup>2.</sup> who with their inspired writings could save China from her atrophy, like those "strong upholders of truth who did not seek an easy popularity by complying with old habits, but spoke out boldly in order to

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1. For a discussion of Lu Hsün's ideas on the Chinese national character see Hsü, op. cit., pp. 50-54.

2. 精神界之戰士

stimulate new life in their compatriots and increase the stature of their country ....."<sup>1.</sup> At the time when he wrote this he had not experienced many of the frustrations which his early literary life were soon to bring; the methods advocated or implied in the essay were in fact quite out of tune with the mood of the Chinese people at the time, though some of the "warriors of the spirit" who later led the New Literature Movement, if not Lu Hsün himself, equalled the Western nationalist writers in fervour.

Towards the end of his stay in Japan Lu Hsün made some attempts to publish a literary journal which failed, but he succeeded in 1909 in publishing two volumes of his own and his brother's translations of European stories.<sup>2.</sup> From the point of view of contemporary influence these translations were also a failure. The first collection sold twenty-one copies in Tokyo, the second only twenty. (The reason for the difference in sale of one copy was that, in the case of the first volume, a friend - it was Hsü Shou-shang - bought a test copy to see that the price charged by the bookshop was correct.) It was not until 1920 that a Shanghai publisher issued a new edition. The stories were interesting, not only as being among the first translations of modern European stories into Chinese, but also from the point of view of what kind of stories Lu Hsün selected for translation.

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1. Ibid., I, p. 101.

2. Ibid., XI, pp. 185-306.

The collections contained one story each from America, England and France, seven from Russia, three from Poland, two from Bosnia and one from Finland. Of these Lu Hsün translated two stories of Andreev and one of Garshin. All three were retranslated from the German. Lu Hsün and his brother had already made up their mind from the start to which countries to look for material which suited their purposes. Their method was hurriedly to peruse all the literary periodicals they could find, and if they came across translations of Russian or other Eastern European works they would buy them and read them. Lu Hsün himself wrote about this work:-

"Because the works we were seeking were works expressing protest or resistance, it was natural for us to look to East Europe. For that reason the works of writers from Poland and the small Balkan countries were especially prominent. We also searched very keenly for Indian or Egyptian works but without success. I remember that the writers whose works I was most fond of reading at the time were the Russian N. Gogol and the Polish writer H. Sienkiewicz. There were also the Japanese Natsume Sōseki and Mōri Ōgai."<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that Lu Hsün had already moved his position from his earlier fondness for the romantics towards the more sober realists who were to become his chief teachers, particularly Gogol. Chou Tso-jên has also mentioned Lu Hsün's fondness for Gogol at the time, particularly for his stories Diary of a Madman and How the two Ivans quarrelled and the play The Inspector General.<sup>2</sup>

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1. L.H.C.C., V, p.107.

2. Chou Tso-jên, in Yü-chou fêng, No. 30, p.306.

The influence of Gogol on Lu Hsün's stories is something which may be discussed in more detail in criticising the stories themselves, but it is worth noting that he attracted Lu Hsün from an early date and made a lasting impression on him. Another writer whom Lu Hsün liked at that time was Andreev, traces of whose influence are also to be found in Lu Hsün's stories, while a little earlier Nietzsche's ideas, or rather those parts of them relating to the liberation of the full potentiality of the individual, had also attracted him, and found a place in his writing.

The period following Lu Hsün's return from Japan in 1909 is particularly important for an appreciation of his stories, for it was then that he first experienced the problems of living and working in Chinese society, and it was this period and the years immediately following it that he took as the background of a large proportion of his stories. The reason for his return was the necessity to support his family, and it was for this purpose that he took a teaching post in Hangchow in 1909. The following year he returned to his native Shaohsing where he held posts first as Director of Education and teacher at the Middle School, and later, after the Revolution, as headmaster of the Normal School. The latter job was fraught with many difficulties, especially during the revolutionary period, when normal life was subject to all kinds of unexpected disruptions. Finally the new governor failed to pay the grant due to the school for a considerable period, and when all Lu Hsün's

efforts to extract the money failed, he resigned, leaving only a few dollars to his successor. His replacement was typical of the times, and was merely the local parallel of the replacement of Sun Yat-sen by Yuan Shin-k'ai as President of China. This pattern was repeated all over China as the war lords established and tightened their rule and squeezed out the more radical of the revolutionaries.

The depth of the impression made on Lu Hsün by his experiences of this period may be gauged by the way in which he lived during the following six years. He obtained a post in the new Ministry of Education under Tsai Yuan-p'ei and moved to Peking in 1912 when he was thirty-one years old. From then until 1918, apart from his job at the Ministry, he spent nearly all his time on research, copying inscriptions and editing texts. Much of the preparatory work for his later works on fiction, including his <sup>Outline</sup> History of Chinese Fiction (Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shih-lüeh)<sup>1.</sup> was done during this period, and he further extended and developed his taste for the literature of the Wei and Chin periods which he had had from an early age.

When Lu Hsün's important creative period began in 1918, he had a deep and thorough knowledge, not only of his own literature, but of the literature of Europe as well. He had had considerable experience of life both in Japan and, what is more important in China and his native Shaohsing. The breadth

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1. L.H.C.C., IX, pp. 147-450.

of his reading of Western literature gave him a wide choice of models for his own work, while the acuteness of his observation, his feeling for language and situation, and not least his sympathy for the ignorant and oppressed ordinary people, provided the necessary basic factors for creative writing. It has only been possible in the introductory section to this chapter to allude to these main influences in Lu Hsün's early life, those that contribute most to an understanding of his stories.

The story of how Lu Hsün came to contribute his first<sup>1</sup> story to the magazine New Youth has already been told in English, and does not need to be repeated here. Professor C.C. Wang has also alluded to the scepticism with which Lu Hsün viewed the prospects of the Literary Revolution, and described his frame of mind while writing his first stories.

#### The Stories

Although Lu Hsün was modern China's outstanding exponent of the short story, the total volume of his output is quite small. Even if we count all the pieces included in the three collections in his works devoted to stories - and a few of them are hardly more than reminiscences - the total number is only thirty-three. This fact alone requires some explanation, and, before embarking on a criticism of his stories, it will be

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1. Wang Chi-chen, *op.cit.*, pp.xiv-xv.

necessary to consider their place in his work as a whole, and particularly their relation to the short essays (t<sup>1</sup>sa-wèn) which make up the bulk of his work.

We have already seen how deeply Lu Hsün was affected by the plight of his country from his earliest youth. Most of the characteristics of Lu Hsün as a writer and as a historical figure result from his living in a semi-colonial country which was engulfed in civil strife and struggles for emancipation. No writer could remain entirely aloof from these struggles, even if he desired to, and Lu Hsün's nature and temperament drew him more deeply into them than most. During and after the New Culture Movement he used the t<sup>1</sup>sa-wèn form and the numerous literary journals of the time to combat the ideas of those whom he regarded as the enemies of progress.

His target was primarily the old-style gentry and their associates, and the spokesmen of the various war-lord governments, who were mainly conservative, and upholders of the "national essence" (k<sup>2</sup>uo-ts'uei) to the exclusion of modern reform. He also attacked the new-style, western-trained lovers of compromise and "gentility", who were often associated in literature with the theories of "art-for-art's-sake" and the "ivory tower". Intermediate between these two types was a third, which received an equal amount of attention from Lu Hsün.

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1. 雜文      See above, IV, p. 214.

2. 國粹      See above, IV, p. 216.

This was the eclecticists who, while remaining fundamentally conservative, realized that, in order to preserve some of their dwindling prestige, it was necessary to adopt a Western veneer. These were the "sons and younger brothers" of the earlier reformers, people who, in Lu Hsün's words, "bowed with clasped hands in the morning and shook hands in the afternoon; who talked of light, sound and electricity in the morning, and quoted Confucius and the Book of Songs in the evening." Lu Hsün considered that this dualistic approach was especially harmful, for "although the world is not small, a nation in two minds may not find a place in it."<sup>1.</sup>

The most outstanding characteristic of Lu Hsün's social criticism was his refusal to compromise with hypocrisy, servility, cruelty of indifference, and the relentlessness of his attacks on those who did. He became one of the outstanding figures of the New Culture Movement, quite apart from his purely literary work. He differed from many of the other leaders of the movement in that he never deserted it, even during the period of the early and mid-twenties, when the tide of enthusiasm receded, and when many turned their attention to more academic pursuits.<sup>2.</sup> Nor did he depart from the pioneering spirit of the movement and regard the attainment of certain limited objectives as the whole battle won. He was not

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1.L.H.C.C., p. 1

2. See above p. 171



primarily a political figure, yet he did not hesitate to champion the cause of students and young people menaced by oppression, as were the women students in Peking at the end of 1925.

In view of his historical role and his fighting spirit, it is not unnatural that Lu Hsün should have regarded his stories, not as pieces of finely-polished art, but rather as "battle cries"<sup>1.</sup> to cheer on the new leaders, and to prevent them from falling into the kind of discouragement and isolation which he himself had experienced during the previous decade. Thus his stories had the same underlying social purpose as his essays, though the technique he employed was, of course, quite different. In making this assertion it is, however, necessary to make the reservation that there are among his stories a number of more lyrical pieces which owe their inspiration to another facet of Lu Hsün's make-up, to which allusion will be made later.<sup>2.</sup>

From this it follows that Lu Hsün's tsa-wen formed not only the bulk, but also, considered at least from the point of view of their immediate social effect, the most important part of his writings. It also follows that in the stories themselves the element of social criticism was prominent. But while the tsa-wen have been aptly described as "close-combat weapons," the stories were far more indirect in their effect, and it is this indirectness which is their strength.

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1. L.H.C.C., I, p.275.

2. See below, p.281.

Lu Hsün was not a sociological writer. He did not aim, as, for example, Balzac did, at uncovering the inner workings of society. Nor was he interested in naturalistic description for its own sake. He had certain fixed aims - certain definite things to say about various aspects of behavior in Chinese society which he found either ugly or pathetic, and he said these things in the simplest and shortest way possible - by giving us brief glimpses of people and showing us without complications of plot, how they react to situations, some of which are unusual, but none fantastic or very extraordinary. He had become convinced that the distortion of the human soul was a product of the old Chinese society, or "man-eating" society as he called it in Diary of a Madman. Starting from the idea that the reform of society depended on the liberation of the individual from feudal ideas and ignorance, he had, by the time he wrote his stories, moved towards a deeper understanding of what was involved in effecting that liberation. His earlier romantic nationalism, contained in his essays of 1907, had been tempered by the difficulties he himself had faced in his life and work, and by a growing understanding of Chinese society and the strength of the opposition to change. He had just passed through a period of silence and withdrawal from literary life and this had affected him deeply. He was able to view society far more calmly than before, and give that impression of cold objectivity in his stories which gives them extraordinary power. The

passion and urgency are there, but they are expressed in such things as the choice of subject, in character and situation, in the total pattern of the stories rather than in the style or the surface treatment.

This apparent conflict between subject and treatment is in fact a strength rather than a weakness, for the coldness gives the appearance of an objectivity which is an essential part of the total effect. By presenting life in this cold hard light he wrings the heart of the reader and stabs his conscience, divesting him of any illusion that life will get better of its own accord, or that it can be allowed to go on as it is.

Of the twenty odd stories in Lu Hsün's first two collections, nearly one-half take their subject matter from life in the countryside. This fact alone greatly strengthens their social realism, for apart from the fact that the countryside and the peasants are of overwhelming importance in all aspects of Chinese life, it was in the village that the particular cruelties and evils of old Chinese society which Lu Hsün indicted were most prevalent. Lu Hsün's stories about the village cover the period from about 1911 to 1918, that is to say before the great modern agrarian revolution had passed out of the stage of an unorganized, partly-conscious desire for change. This time the breakdown of the rural economy had reached an advanced stage. The impoverishment of the peasants made it an easy matter for war-lords to raise large local armies, but the desire of the peasants for revolt was, as is

exemplified in The Story of Ah Q, still no more than a potential menace to their rule. In taking the village as the scene of so many of his stories, Lu Hsün was bound to touch on the most pressing problems of modern China at their roots.

Under the particular conditions of the decay of the old society, the latent cruelties of life became exaggerated. This exaggeration was brought about mainly by the pressure of poverty, which loosened the fabric of society, broke up the family and increased the number of landless peasants and rootless people of all sorts. Such people had no economic security, nobody to turn to when in difficulty, and easily fell a prey to usurers and those who make it their business to profit from the distress of others.

This deterioration in the economic position is referred to frequently in Lu Hsün's stories. The outstanding passage is in My Native Heath (Ku-hsiang)<sup>1.</sup>, where the narrator (Lu Hsün himself) asks his childhood playmate, now a peasant, how things are:

"It is very bad. My sixth is now old enough to help, but there is never enough to feed them all. Moreover, times are not peaceful - everywhere money, money, and always new and irregular taxes - harvests bad. When we do harvest something and try to sell it, we hardly get enough to pay the various taxes imposed all along the way. If we don't try to sell, then it only rots away on our hands ..."

..... After he went out, mother and I sighed at the man's lot: too many sons, famine, oppressive taxes,

1. 故鄉

L.H.C.C., I, pp.344-358.

soldiers, bandits, officials, the gentry - all these contributed to make the burden heavy for the poor peasant, crushing him and draining the life out of him until he was scarcely more than a wooden image."<sup>1</sup>

This was Yün-t'u who, as a boy, had been given a silver ring to wear round his neck to chain him to this life. But now Yün-t'u's son had no silver ring and was thinner and more sallow than his father had been twenty years before.

Other examples of this impoverishment spring to mind, such as the increase in the price of rice-bowls in Cloud over Luchen (Feng-po)<sup>2</sup>, but perhaps the most important instance of all is that of Ah Q, the most famous of all Lu Hsün's characters, for although he could have lived at any time, it was precisely in this period of rural breakdown that the Ah Q type of rootless, landless peasant is most numerous.

Yet although the harshness of life was exaggerated by the impoverishment of the countryside at this time, Lu Hsün regarded cruelty as something which was an integral part of the old society. He was less concerned with temporary economic factors than with "four thousand years of man-eating". In all the stories there is an air of permanence, an insistence that this is how things really are, that these things are actually going on now. It is almost the central theme in Cloud over Luchen and The Everlasting Lamp (Ch'ang-ming-t'eng)<sup>3</sup>, and in none

1. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p.12.

2. 風波 L.H.C.C., I, pp.332-343, and Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., pp.65-76.

3. 常明燈 L.H.C.C., II, pp.206-222.

of the stories do the characters develop or show any promise, not even the slightest thing, that they may develop in the future; the only changes that seem possible being a continuation of the decline that has marked their lives hitherto. This was partly a feature of the world which Lu Hsün was depicting, and was partly dictated by the discipline of the cold objectivity with which he wanted to present it.

Lu Hsün chose his subject-matter in order to provide situations from real life which, without seeming forced or unnatural, served best to illustrate the inhumanities of the old society. His choice was determined by the nature of his early experiences, or "that part which I have not succeeded in completely erasing from my memory," as he put it, <sup>1.</sup> for although he wanted to forget, his memory obstinately clung on to many vivid pictures of the Chinese village and its inhabitants, sufficient for his artistic faculties to select and modify to suit the purposes of his art. His life among Chinese intellectuals provided material for further stories, for which it was not necessary to explore the remoter recesses of his memory; but his scholarly seclusion during the period before the Literary Revolution, the turbulence of his life after it, and the physical impossibility of returning to his native village

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1. Cf. L.H.C.C., I, p.269.

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during the Kuomintang period, denied him fresh supplies of material for story-writing, or at least for writing the particular type of story which suited his genius. During the thirties the only stories he wrote were some of the historical pieces in Old Tales Retold (Ku-shih hsin-pien)<sup>2.</sup>, and although on at least two occasions he did consider attempting longer pieces, the circumstances of his life and the nature of his material made him abandon the idea.<sup>3.</sup>

Lu Hsün's attitude towards Chinese society is best seen in the two stories with the greatest social content, namely The Diary of a Madman and The Story of Ah Q. The former story, Lu Hsün's first, took its title and some of its inspiration from Gogol's story of 1843. Both use the age-old device of the inspired fool to indict society. Gogol's madman is an underling in a government office who is in love with his chief's daughter. His frustrated longing sends him mad, so that he

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1. During the last few years of his life Lu Hsün was practically confined to Shanghai owing to his association with the left. For a brief description of the political persecution of writers after 1927 see Nym Wales, The Modern Literary Movement, in Edgar Snow, Living China, pp. 335-355.

Lu Hsün also felt that even if he did go back to Shaohsing, the people of his old district would regard him as an outsider, and he would be unable to contact them on the intimate terms necessary to obtain material for stories. (See Feng Hsüeh-feng, Hui-i Lu Hsün, p. 88.)

2. 故事新編 L.H.C.C., pp. 449-608.

3. The first of these occasions was in 1924 when he conceived the idea of writing a historical novel about the T'ang Dynasty, and even went to Sian in the late summer of that year partly with a view to visiting the T'ang relics. (See Ou-yang Fan-hai, op.cit., p. 260.) The second occasion was ten years later when he considered writing a novel based on material from the Chinese Soviets.

believes he is the King of Spain. He is locked in a madhouse and imagines that he is in the torture chambers of the Spanish Inquisition. He can see his native Russia far off over the sea, and his mother sitting at the window of his own home. The last words he writes in his diary are:- "Mother! Take pity on your sick child!"<sup>1.</sup>

Lu Hsün's story is, as he himself realized, much more specific and outspoken in its social content than Gogol's.<sup>2.</sup> It tells of an intellectual who is driven mad by the cruelties of Chinese society and the old family system. His madness takes the form of a persecution mania, which makes him imagine that everyone is out to eat his flesh. Not only this, he sees the whole of Chinese history as the record of cannibalism:

This history has no dates ..... on each page there appear two characters: 'man-eating'.<sup>3.</sup>

He feels that it is because of his opposition to the old culture that they have marked him down as their next victim. Had he not once trampled on the "account books of old Mr. Hoary Tradition?"

1. Cf. the comparison between Gogol's and Lu Hsün's stories by Feng Hsueh-feng in the daily paper Jén-min jih-pao. 人民日報 Peking, 4th March, 1952.

2. See Lu Hsün's introduction to Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsüeh ta-hsi hsiao-shuo erh-chi p.1.

3. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p.209.



In spite of the directness of this method, the story is not without subtlety, much of it resulting from Lu Hsün's close study of the Chinese national character while he was in Japan. One thing which he particularly detested was the servility engendered by the old society, and he attacks it repeatedly in his work. In Diary of a Madman he exposes the attitude of those who are constantly insulted and ill-treated, but when faced with the prospect of any change - even one which will benefit them - they are so terrified that they oppose change and support the interests of their oppressors:

"They - some of them - have been bamboed and put into cangues<sup>1</sup>. by the magistrate, some have been slapped in the face by the gentry, some have had their wives assaulted by the constables, and some have seen their parents hounded to death by creditors; but their faces were never so fearful and menacing then as they were yesterday."<sup>2</sup>.

Here there is not exposure alone, but also a large measure of sympathy for the ignorant and helpless victims of society.

Lu Hsün saw the "man-eaters" not simply as individuals but as a social force, and he understood the tactics they would use in order to destroy their opponents - slander and vilification and attempts to drive them to give up the struggle or "commit suicide". But the madman will not die. He resists. And though he hates this cannibalistic society he is convinced

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1. Wang Chi-chen, op. cit., p.209.  
 2. Ibid., p.207.

of the future supremacy of "true people" and convinced that it is possible for the "man-eating" men to "repent":

"What a relief it would be if everyone banished such thoughts from his mind and went about his work and ate and slept with a carefree heart! It takes but little effort to step over this obstacle that bars the gateway to freedom, and yet they - parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, teachers and pupils, friends and enemies and strangers - they all band together, encourage and restrain one another, and refuse to step over this one barrier even till death."<sup>1</sup>.

The story ends with words which are reminiscent of Gogol's ending, though, in the circumstances of the New Culture Movement in which Lu Hsün was writing they had a more obvious and forceful social meaning:

"Although I have a tradition of four thousand years of man-eating, I did not know till now how difficult it is to find a true and innocent man.

Maybe there are still some infants that have not yet eaten men.

Save, save the infants .....<sup>2</sup>!"

The plot of Diary of a Madman was comparatively simple to manipulate, for the device of the madman provided licence to say almost anything about Chinese society, and freed Lu Hsün from the trammels of real life. Yet the story is not basically unrealistic, for only the madman is fantastic. the society which he sees through his queer distorting mirror

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1. Ibid., p.214.

2. Ibid., p.219.

represents the true world, and although, concretely, the story concerns China, it contains much that is universally valid, for is not the defeat of "man-eating" the aim of humanist writers everywhere?

The Story of Ah Q has received so much attention from writers and critics the world over, and particularly in China, that it seems unnecessary to add anything more. But if we are discussing questions of literary reform and building a new literature, it is impossible to avoid discussion of what is, after all, the most important work of fiction of the modern period.

We have seen how while in Japan Lu Hsün paid considerable attention to the question of the Chinese national character, and in particular to the weaknesses he saw in many of his compatriots. It was the belief that China was suffering from a kind of spiritual sickness that had started him on his career as a writer. By the time he came to write The Story of Ah Q, he had modified his ideas considerably, and in particular, as we have seen in our glance at Diary of a Madman, he had begun to see the problem of cruelty and inhumanity as a social problem with its roots deep in old Chinese society, rather than as a purely spiritual one, which could be solved by the efforts of a few bold "warriors of the spirit". Yet he still retained this original interest in the national character, and had long had the idea of expressing his diagnosis of its maladies in a work of literature.

To find a parallel to Ah Q in Western literature, the place to turn to is again Russia, where I. A. Goncharov had in his long novel Oblomov, done much the same kind of thing in relation to the Russian "soul" as Lu Hsün did for the Chinese. Oblomov was an indolent, good-for-nothing member of the petty-aristocracy, who has been so pampered and spoilt as a child that all his energy and desire for action and achievement has been drained out of him. He spends the greater part of the novel lolling on a couch shirking all the challenges that life holds for him - his estate, his work and his love. Finally he dies in anonymity, without a single achievement to his name, his only asset the possession of an honest and loyal heart, and even this is of hypothetical value, for the most that he ever did for his friends was to express abstract sympathy.

In his article on Goncharov's Oblomov, the critic Dobroliubov remarked:-

"Now, when I hear a country squire talking about the rights of man and urging the necessity of developing personality, I know from the first words he utters that he is an Oblomov.

When I hear a government official complaining that the system of administration is too complicated and cumbersome, I know that he is an Oblomov .....

When I am in the company of educated people who ardently sympathize with the needs of mankind, and who for many years have been relating with undiminished heat the same (and sometimes new) anecdotes about bribery, acts of tyranny and lawlessness of every kind, I, in spite of myself, feel that I have been transported to old Oblomovka .....

Stop the loud declamations of these people and say to them:- 'You say this is bad and that is bad, but what is to be done?' They do not know..... Propose some simple remedy to them and they will say:- 'What's this, all of a sudden?' They will say this without fail because the Oblomovs cannot answer differently....." 1.

To Dobroliubov, Oblomovshchina was a disease which pervaded life: the unwillingness to shoulder responsibilities, or to attempt the solution of problems by practical action. Although it was primarily the product of the aristocracy and the gentry, it pervaded the whole of Russian society, to the extent that Lenin declared later:-

"The Oblomovs are not only the landowners but also the peasants, intellectuals, workers and communists. The old Oblomov still lives, and we must wash and scrub and shake and push him around to make him sensible and useful." 2

In the same way Ah Q'ism is a disease of the whole of Chinese society, and not merely one disease, but a compound of many. But while Goncharov took a member of the land-owning class as his subject - the class which provided the heroes of the greater part of nineteenth-century Russian literature, Lu Hsün chose a member of the lowest stratum of society - a landless peasant. He did this possibly for a number of reasons: first, he wanted a figure in whom the weaknesses of the old Chinese

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1. N. A. Dobroliubov, Selected Philosophical Essays, p. 209.

2. Quoted in M. Slonim, The Epic of Russian Literature p. 186

spirit were present in the highest degree of concentration, and the ignorance, superstition and complete helplessness of the rootless vagrant enabled the deeper social weaknesses to appear unaffected by any of the sophistications or pretences of the intellectual or the landowner. Also, Lu Hsün was not aiming at completely cold destructive satire, but rather wished to express a degree of sympathy and warmth towards those caught in the grip of Ah Q'ism, and it was quite impossible to treat a landlord in that way. Besides this, it was no longer either necessary or fashionable to confine literature to descriptions of the life of higher society. It was the age of Gorki and Upton Sinclair, and Lu Hsün had himself translated Art<sup>1</sup>bashev's The Worker Shevrvev. Finally, Lu Hsün was always at pains to ensure that his writings were not taken as personal attacks on any particular individual, especially as literature had frequently been used for this purpose, even in modern times (e.g., Lin Shu's Ching Sheng), and writers and politicians were less likely to mistake Lu Hsün's intentions if he wrote about a landless peasant. In spite of this, it is recorded that Ah Q was in fact so interpreted, some people being convinced that it was a personal attack on themselves.

Ou-yang Fan-hai has listed twelve characteristic weaknesses which are exposed in The Story of Ah Q. They are:-

1. Empty boastfulness (or better, German: Hochstapelei)
2. A liking of flattery.

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1. L.H.C.C., XI, pp. 575-748.

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3. The ability to rationalize to one's own advantage by means of claiming the "moral victory".

4. Conceit.

5. The habit of "backing out" of things, or shirking responsibility for one's words.

6. The habit of turning upon the weak out of fear of the strong.

7. Liking to be thought "a lad" or "a great guy".

8. Following the crowd.

9. Attributing all evils to women.

10. Knowing nothing of love other than lust.

11. Dreaming empty dreams of making an easy fortune.

12. Believing implicitly in the old morality and the ideas of the oppressors.<sup>1</sup>

Some of these twelve points, numbers 2. and 4. for instance, are closely connected, and careful examination of the story will reveal a number of additional ones, notably distrust and ridicule of anything new or strange (as in the case of the ridiculous way the city people fried fish and the absurd word they used for a wooden bench), and fatalism (Ah Q felt that it was in the nature of things that some people should be unlucky enough to have their heads cut off).

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1. Ou-yang Fan-hai, op.cit., pp. 187-188.

It is not difficult to find numerous instances in the behaviour of Ah Q, and not only of Ah Q but also of all the other characters in the story, which exemplify these weaknesses. Perhaps the most famous of them is the "moral victory", as it has reference not only to a common human failing, but to a political attitude of particular importance to twentieth-century China: the idea that, however much China is defeated and humiliated at the hands of countries possessing modern armaments, they cannot take away or destroy the superiority of Chinese spiritual civilization:

As the idlers still would not let him alone, a fight usually followed. Ah Q inevitably lost and ended up by being held by the queue while his head was thumped noisily against the wall. This was, of course, only an outward defeat. After his adversary had gone with the laurels of victory, Ah Q would say to himself, "I have been beaten by my son. What a world we live in today!" - and he too would go off satisfied and spiritually victorious.

At first he thought this only to himself; later he got into the habit of saying it aloud. This method of securing spiritual victory became generally known, so that an idler, holding him by his queue, would say to him:-

"Now Ah Q, this is not a case of a son beating his father, but a man beating a beast!"

Protecting his hair with his hands, Ah Q would plead:

"You are beating a worm. I am nothing but a worm. How is that? Now let me go!"

Even after this humilitating admission, the idler would not let his victim go without first banging his head half-a-dozen times against anything convenient. "Surely Ah Q cannot claim a victory this time," the victor would think as he went away in triumph. But in less than ten seconds Ah Q would also go away in triumph, for he felt that surely he was the most self-deprecatory of men, and is not a superlative - the first or the most of anything -



a distinction to be achieved and envied? Is not a chuang-yüan only the first in the ranks of the successful candidates in the triennial examinations? "So what are you, after all?"<sup>1</sup>.

This characteristic attitude of those who opposed fundamental reform and sought cultural and spiritual refuge in China's past history had often been attacked by the leaders of the New Culture Movement, including Lu Hsün himself, but this was the first time that it had been so skilfully exposed in a work of literature. Lu Hsün made it quite clear that he had this attitude in mind when writing The Story of Ah Q, for at one point in the story he wrote of Ah Q:-

"He was always happy in his victories. Perhaps he was a living proof of the supremacy of the spiritual civilization of the Chinese."<sup>2</sup>.

Just as the "moral victory" is symbolical of the political position of the out-and-out traditionalists, so all the other characteristics listed by Ou-yang Fan-hai to some extent represent the way of life of the old ruling class. Much of the pathos of the story lies in the ignorance of Ah Q and his helplessness in the face of events which he is quite unable to understand, let alone control. This pathos is heightened by his aping of the ways and habits of thought of such characters as His Honour Chao. On the question of women, for instance, it was the news that His Honour was thinking of

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1. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., pp. 84-85.

2. Ibid., p. 92.

taking a concubine that prompted Ah Q to ask Wu Ma to sleep with him, the main difference between the approach of Ah Q and His Honour to the subject being Ah Q's ignorance and stupidity. Also there is little difference between the attitude of Ah Q, who claimed to kinship with His Honour and the attitude of His Honour himself, who forced Ah Q to promise not to make such a claim.

The form of The Story of Ah Q, in which Ah Q is the central figure, makes His Honour appear as a reflection of Ah Q and Ah Q'ism, yet socially and politically it was really Ah Q who was the imitator and His Honour Chao the true representative of these traits, though part of what makes Ah Q the pathetic figure he is, is that in spite of Ah Q'ism being against his basic interests, he is completely incapable of breaking with it.

The Story of Ah Q is the most complicated of all Lu Hsün's stories, and though unity is provided by concentration on one character, yet the story suffers to some extent by being produced in serial form. The story is a little top heavy in the sense that the excellent satirical description of the first part, before Ah Q leaves the village, is not matched by the ending, in which the action is more involved and the narrative more hurried. The opening section of the story has been criticized by Chinese critics for being too obviously "humorous" - the result of its being commissioned for the humour column of a paper, and it is certainly long in proportion to the rest of the story.

Some Chinese critics of the later twenties criticised The Story of Ah Q and the other stories of Na Han and P'ang Huang<sup>1</sup> for presenting a society that was already dead, and problems that were no longer important. Yet this criticism, while having some elements of truth, missed the whole value of the stories, which was not to paint an accurate picture of life in the Chinese villages of the twenties - a thing which Lu Hsün would have found it difficult to do while confined to Peking - but rather, to expose the inhumanities of life in contemporary society. It may be true to say that he failed to take cognizance of the positive potentialities of revolutionary movements, and of the power of peasant discontent, but his stories will not be remembered for their historical accuracy so much as for their comments on the deeper social forces, and on human nature itself, which have more than a local validity. As long as "man-eating" exists as a social force, so will its concomitant in human behaviour, Ah Q'ism. Even on the level of descriptive accuracy, it could not be said that Lu Hsün's stories represented an entirely untrue picture of rural society in the twenties. Although the details had changed somewhat, it was only in a few areas that the new revolutionary thought

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1. Cf. Ch'ien Hsing-ts'un, Ssu-ch'ü-liao ti Ah Q shih-tai in Li Ho-lin, ed., Lu Hsün lun, pp.71-116.

死去了的阿Q時代 李何林，魯迅論

had penetrated sufficiently to modify the old-world feudal atmosphere, and whole provinces had remained under unbroken war-lord rule ever since 1911.

Lu Hsün's second story, and his own personal favourite, was K'ung I-chi<sup>1.</sup>, written early in 1919. In it the scene is set in a wine-shop in Lu Chen, an imaginary place, which, according to Lu Hsün's friend Sun Fu-yüan, is a combination of his father's home in Shaohsing town and his mother's native village in the same county. The same name is used for the village which forms the background to Cloud over Luchen. As for the wine shop, it is the name of a real tavern which was situated near the Chou family house in Shaohsing. Sun says that Lu Hsün told him that K'ung I-chi really existed, or rather someone who had a similar history and a similar name; the real K'ung I-chi was apparently called Meng and given the nickname Meng Fu-tzu<sup>2.</sup>

Lu Hsün told Sun that his chief aim in writing the story was to describe the callousness of society towards the poor and unfortunate, a theme which is prominent in a number of other stories, notably in Tomorrow and The Widow. The central character is an old-style intellectual who has fallen on bad times. Although he has spent most of his life studying

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1. 孔乙己

2. Sun Fu-yüan, op. cit., pp.27-28.

he has never been successful in the examinations, and he has to make a living copying books and so on. But he has no powers of endurance, no equipment with which to struggle with life, and even such a simple job as this is beyond him, so he drifts further and further towards utter destitution. He is a "regular" at a certain wine shop, where people poke fun at him because he is the only one among the poorer customers (those who take their wine standing up) who wears a long gown, and because he affects the manner and speech of a scholar, making abstruse allusions and speaking in literary particles. One day K'ung I-chi is caught stealing something in the house of someone of importance, and is beaten until his leg is broken. After this he has to crawl along on his hands and knees, but still the customers at the wine shop will not stop baiting him; on the contrary they deride him all the more: but soon they are deprived of the source of their amusement, for quite suddenly K'ung I-chi disappears and nobody knows what has become of him.

K'ung I-chi never did much harm to anyone. If he did steal, it was only petty theft and not a great social menace. The innkeeper did not feel it was worth-while to take any serious measures to recover the debt which K'ung I-chi accumulated "on the slate". As far as the customers were concerned he was at least a source of amusement, and children liked him. It cannot be said that he deserved any of the treatment he received at the hands of society. But he was a

misfit in that society, and this was his greatest crime. He was an intellectual "by birth", that is to say he was a member of the scholar-official class, even if near the bottom fringes of that class and, therefore, without rich or powerful connections, but he had not got the energy and initiative to make a success of life. He was too lazy and <sup>un</sup>reliable to keep a job even of the most straightforward kind, and one imagines that an unnecessarily large slice of his life was spent in the wine shop. Yet his cruel treatment at the hands of the licentiate, his horrible decline which was accompanied by the mocking laughter of the other customers of the inn, were a punishment quite out of proportion to these "crimes". And after he had gone life went on just as before at the inn, the only change being that eventually the innkeeper rubbed out the small debt chalked up next to K'ung I-chi's name, and nobody thought again about the queer character who had given everyone so much amusement.

In many ways K'ung I-chi foreshadowed the much more celebrated Ah Q. Both were vagrants without relatives or property, both were the victims of the cruelties of society, as well as being the helpless prisoners of their own natures. In both cases Lu Hsün's sympathy was strongly with them, and his hatred directed fiercely against the cruelties and callousness of society. In both stories the direct source of oppression - the ruling landlord class and local gentry -

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is clearly exposed, though because of his maturity as an artist and the depth of his direct experience, he did not depict either K'ung I-chi or Ah Q merely as the victims of oppression, but showed them both as to some extent (K'ung I-chi less than Ah Q) tainted with the infection of their oppressors, that is, as real people and not mere symbols.

The plot of K'ung I-chi was as simple to manipulate as that of Diary of a Madman, being almost down to the scale of a short sketch, but the elements of Lu Hsün's characteristic style, his achievement of great pathos by the employment of seemingly concrete, matter-of-fact narration, are already present. He let the situation and his memory of actual people do their work without purposely injecting any extraneous emotion into the story. There is no exaggeration, little caricature in K'ung I-chi, and yet the effect on the reader is powerful and immediate. In this sense, Lu Hsün had already in his second story, achieved a very high technical standard, more integrated perhaps than in some of his later stories which were more ambitious in their conception and complicated in their plots.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See Du-yang Fan-hai, op.cit., p.150, where he discusses the defects in the technique of the story Medicine (Yao).

Lu Hsün's treatment of his characters is a direct reflection of his outlook on life and view of Chinese society and history. The characters in most of Lu Hsün's work fall into two classes - the oppressors and the oppressed. For the latter, Lu Hsün is filled with sympathy, even while he is exposing their weaknesses, while there is no trace of mercy for the "man-eaters", even if some of their faults are not so different from those of their victims. Thus Lu Hsün's treatment of His Honour Chao is quite different from that of Ah Q, for although Lu Hsün regarded "man-eating" as something which pervaded all sections of society ("I did not know till now how difficult it is to find a true and innocent man"<sup>1.</sup>), yet he distinguished clearly between those ultimately responsible for the custom and those who are driven to it, or who drift to it.

In the stories so far discussed, His Honour Chao in The Story of Ah Q finds his counterpart in Chao Kuei-wêng<sup>2.</sup> and the licentiate Ting<sup>3.</sup> in Diary of a Madman and K'ung I-chi respectively. But in the earlier two stories Lu Hsün only hints at their nature and does not develop them as proper characters. It is not until the story Cloud over Luchen (Feng<sup>4.</sup> po), written after the previous two but before The Story of Ah Q

1. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p.219.

2. 趙貴翁

3. 丁舉人

4. Wang Chi-chen op.cit., pp.65-76, and L.H.C.C., I, pp. 332-343.



that a character representing the traditional ruling class is depicted in any detail in his stories. This character is <sup>1.</sup> Mr. Chao.

The story of Cloud over Luchen concerns the repercussions on a typical village of the war-lord period, of the news of the abortive attempt at restoring the made by Chang Hsien <sup>2.</sup> in 1917.

Mr. Chao, the proprietor of the wine-shop in the next village and "the most distinguished personage within a radius of thirty li", welcomed this news and immediately seized on it as a means of terrorizing the villagers, for the boatman, Seven Pounds (Ch'i-chin) <sup>3.</sup>, had no queue, and the Emperor would certainly be very severe on those who had had their heads shaved! Mr. Chao had a little learning that he had picked up from a few volumes of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms which he had in his possession:-

"The extent of his erudition was such that he not only knew the names of the Five Tiger Generals, but also their derived names. He knew, for instance, that Chao Yun's derived name was Tzu-lung, Chang Fei's was Yi-te, and so on. After the Revolution he coiled up his queue on top of his head, like a Taoist priest. He used to say with many a sigh that if Chao Tzu-lung were alive today, the world would not have come to such grief<sup>4</sup>."

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1. 張勳

2. See Li Chien-nung, op.cit., pp.493-501.

3. 七斤

4. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p.69.

The first intimation of impending trouble the villagers had was when they saw him approach, wearing his long gown that he kept for special occasions, and, what was worse, with his queue not coiled on top of his head, but "with the familiar closely-shaven circle around it"<sup>1</sup>. This was clear proof that the Emperor had indeed mounted the Dragon Throne, and that the wearing of queues was once more obligatory.

After Mr. Chao's appearance on the scene the whole village was upset. His menacing words about Seven Pounds' queue was the signal for Seven Pounds' wife's accumulated frustration and resentment to be directed against her unfortunate husband; for their little daughter to drop and break a precious rice-bowl; while all the time the old grandmother was mumbling to herself about each generation being worse than the last.

The crisis eased somewhat after Mr. Chao's departure, but the general anxiety was not completely banished until some time later when he was seen once more reading his books in his shop with his queue coiled up on top of his head, a sign that the attempt at restoration had failed.

While Mr. Chao was undoubtedly a representative of the traditional ruling class, he was a very down-at-heel representative, and had, as Lu Hsün says, "seen better days"<sup>2</sup>.

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1. Ibid, loc. cit.

2. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p.69.

In fact, Lu Hsun's treatment of him is, on the whole, satirical<sup>1.</sup> rather than straightforward, using the kind of satire which makes a character look wholly ridiculous to the reader. This was in keeping with the spirit of his miscellaneous essays, which have as one of their main aims the exposure of the rottenness lying behind the respectable outward appearance of the traditional gentry and their followers in the intellectual world.

In direct contrast to Lu Hsun's treatment of the enemies of progress and those most responsible in his eyes for the suffering of innocent people, some of the characters in Lu Hsun's stories are treated with nothing but sympathy and understanding - without, that is to say, the element of satire that is present in his portrait of Ah Q. With the exception of K'ung I-chi and Yün-t'u, these characters are nearly all women (unless one includes the madmen in Diary of a Madman and The Everlasting Lamp, but the madman in the latter story is not a real character).

Tan-ssü<sup>2.</sup> sao in Tomorrow (Ming-t'ien)<sup>3.</sup>, Hsiang-lin<sup>4.</sup> sao in The New Year's Sacrifice (Chu-fu)<sup>5.</sup> and Ai-ku<sup>6.</sup> in Divorce (Li-hun)<sup>7.</sup> all exemplify this compassion of treatment. In the case of each one of them, they have not only had to bear the economic hardships common to the poor of both sexes, but also a whole number of extra burdens brought about by the special insecurity of women in Chinese society. For although women

1. For a discussion of Lu Hsün's ideas on satire, see below  
p. 291 ff

2. 單四嫂

3. 明天

4. 祥林嫂

5. ~~離婚~~ 祝福

6. 愛姑

7. 離佳姑

have on occasion wielded great power, they were very rarely economically entirely independent; and because of this, individual women suffered terribly, either at the hands of their husband's family, or if left without support, as widows. Lu Hsün must have known of such cases from his childhood memories, and several of the characters in his stories are widows. He felt that their fate was much too terrible to be treated in any way but seriously, and so, in his stories, the women become solely the victims of injustice or cruelty.

Perhaps the most heart-rending case is that of the widow Tan-ssü sao in Tomorrow. She is ruthlessly exploited by the village doctor, insulted by her brutish neighbour, and robbed by the crowd of vultures who descend on her after the death of her little son, extorting money from her for this, that and the other item connected with the funeral arrangements, and even arguing among themselves which articles of her scant furniture they would take in lieu of payment. The fact that this inhuman behaviour is in no way out of the ordinary only serves to strengthen the story's indictment of the callousness of society.

Tan-ssü-sao is an entirely sympathetic figure. The only fault one can find with her is her extreme passivity. She, like K'ung I-chi, is the victim of the whole of society, which fastens its clutches on to her relentlessly. Lu Hsün shows

that this society has no sympathy for the unfortunate; on the contrary, so bitter is the struggle for existence, especially at the lower margin of poverty, that even death and misfortune is made the occasion for a scramble for morsels, while the unfortunate victims are pushed still lower. Tan-ssu sao is such a victim, while her immediate oppressors, a hoard of typical "man-eaters", are the ordinary neighbours, shopkeepers, etc., who surround her every day. Yet she is not like them. She has no strength to profit at the expense of others, even if she wished. And because she is depicted as a mother who loves her son, and who sacrifices everything for him, the reader feels that here there is someone perfectly good and gentle whose only sins are weakness and ignorance.

Another such character is Hsiang-lin sao in New Year's Sacrifice. Having once been happily married, she loses her husband and becomes a servant in a well-to-do household. Then her family force her to marry again, but she loses her second husband. What is worse, while she is struggling alone to make a living for her little son, she leaves him one day outside the door of her cottage, which is in a poor mountainous district, and a hungry wolf carries him off. This so distresses her that afterwards she can talk of nothing else, to the extent of making everyone tired of hearing her doleful story. As time goes by she becomes more and more a person to be avoided, and because she is no longer as efficient as before, her employers are displeased with her and threaten to dismiss her. Finally

1. See Selected Stories of Lu Hsün, pp. 95-118.

they do so, and she becomes a beggar, with nothing to look forward to but death. But even death is something to be feared, for her tormentors tell her that after death, because of her sin of marrying a second time, her spirit will be sawn in half by the King of Hell, and divided between the spirits of her two husbands.

Not only does Lu Hsun show a deep sympathy for his women characters, he often makes them much more resilient and positive than the men. For instance, Hsiang-lin's second marriage is forced on her against her will. She is kidnapped from her employer and taken by force to the house of her bridegroom in an out-of-the-way village in the hills. Yet she fights all the way, shouting until she has completely lost her voice, and continues struggling after she is locked up in the bridal chamber. Many years later she still bears the scars of that fight, though it is made an object of ridicule by her tormentors.

An even clearer case is Ai-ku, the maltreated wife of the "Young Beast" in Divorce. Even in the house of His Honour Seven, awed by his opulence and the accoutrements of a household of a member of the gentry class (including "something which the ancients inserted into the anus of the dead at encoffining time"<sup>1.</sup>), she continues to argue her case after the male members of the family have been scared into acquiescence with the decision of His Honour ("her father had not said a word, her brothers had not even dared to come"<sup>2.</sup>). Although



1. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., pp. 36-37.
2. Ibid., p. 40.

faced with the combined opposition of His Honour Wei and His Honour Seven, she has nowhere to turn, and finally succumbs to their intimidation, she does not do so without defying in a most resolute manner both them and the good-for-nothing husband who has deserted her.

Again, in Cloud over Luchen, when the whole village is upset by the news of the Restoration of the Manchu monarchy, one character who remains calm and unaffected by the threats of Mr. Chao is Sister Eighteen<sup>1</sup>, who appears for a brief instant like a sane being in an insane world. She has also suffered more than usual, her husband having died leaving her a young son to bring up, and she is described as being the most kind-hearted among the onlookers. She is not only kind-hearted, but like Ai-ku she too has the courage to stand up against authority, for while Mr. Chao is prophesying dire calamity for those who, like Seven Pounds, have had their queues removed, Sister Eighteen calmly remarks "there has been no official proclamation by his honour the magistrate". This so angers the august Mr. Chao that he lunges towards her as if holding the "eighteen-foot snake spear" which, he has assured the assembled villagers, will be wielded by the commander of the imperial troops when he marches in. Sister Eighteen does not dare to say any more, but she trembles with anger as she sees Mr. Chao lunge at her, and she walks away carrying her child in her arms.

1. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p.72.

2. Ibid., p. 73.

In treating his women characters in this way Lu Hsün was no doubt drawing on his memory of the women in the village life he had been familiar with as a child. Sister Eighteen is in many ways similar to Tan-ssü sao, though much less passive, and both may have been modelled on some particular person he remembered. But he was also writing in the tradition of Chinese popular literature where it is very common for the women to be depicted as very much more courageous than the men. This is especially true in themes connected with love, where the women often stand out in sharp contrast to their lovers, who are often weak and vacillating characters.

For example, in A Peacock Flew South-East (K'ung-ch'iao<sup>1.</sup> tung-nan fei)<sup>2.</sup>, Liu Lan-chih is a much braver character initially than her husband Chiao Chung-ch'ing<sup>3.</sup>, who acquiesces in his mother's demand for her expulsion from the family; in the more popular versions of The Story of the White Snake (Pai-she<sup>4.</sup> chuan), both the White Snake and the Green Snake are much more loyal and resourceful (even bearing in mind their natural advantage!) than the feeble Hsü Hsien<sup>5.</sup>, who is easily enticed away from the White Snake by the monk Fa Hai<sup>6.</sup>; in all versions of the legend Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-t'ai<sup>7.</sup>, Chu ying-t'ai is depicted as being a determined and intelligent girl, while Liang Shan-po is at best good-natured but rather slow-witted, and in some versions he is even reduced to the status of a clown. There are many more such examples that could be cited in

1. 孔雀東南飛

2. 劉蘭芝

3. 焦仲卿

4. See the discussion of the Pai-she-chuan in Wen-i pao, 文藝報  
No. 16 (No. 23, 1952) especially the short piece by A. Ying on the character  
of Hsu Hsien. 許宣

5. 許宣

6. 潘海

7. See Jen-min wen-hsueh, 卷 5, No. 2, December, 1951, pp.  
32-53, and the article by Jao Kung on the history of  
the story of Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-t'ai in No. 40  
of the same journal (February, 1953) pp. 104-108.

梁山伯與祝英台

Chinese fiction of all ages, and although the phenomenon is not confined to China, it is nevertheless a reflection of the positive reaction of women to their position of economic dependence on men, which in China was particularly strong.

Before discussing Lu Hsün's style, there is one more aspect of the content of his stories which must be mentioned. That is Lu Hsün's treatment of the intellectuals, both new style and old. Ou-yang Fan-hai has listed four main sources<sup>1.</sup> which Lu Hsün used for material for his stories. These were:-- (i) Past experiences, which he thoroughly reorganized and transformed; (ii) Material from the not-so-distant past which he altered less; (iii) Childhood memories which he told practically without modification; (iv) Historical material, which formed the basis for the stories in Old Tales Retold (Ku-shih hsin-pien), though one of them, Repairing the Heavens (Pu-t'ien)<sup>2.</sup>, originally appeared in Battle Cries (Na-han).

In our discussion we are concerned with the first two types, for the third type consists of pieces which are reminiscences rather than stories, even though a few of them are included in the collections Battle Cries and Wandering, in which short stories predominate, and the fourth type was written, with the one exception mentioned, after the period in which we are directly interested.

The stories about the life of intellectuals were mostly of the second type, or of a combination of the first two,

1. Ou-yang Fan-hai, op.c.t., p. 329.

2. 補天

系。

for while Lu Hsün had been in lifelong contact with intellectuals, the modern intellectual was a comparatively recent phenomenon; and because Lu Hsün wanted these stories to bear a more direct message, the problems he wrote about were mostly concerned with contemporary life.

However, Lu Hsün did not only concern himself with the modern intellectual; he also depicted a number of the old type - the direct descendants of the scholar-official class and their adherents, who, although living in a modern world, had not broken with the ideals of the past, in particular with orthodox Confucianism. Most of the characters he so described were not people of any importance. Some were even the victims of circumstance (the oppressed rather than the oppressors); these he treated with some sympathy. Others he satirized because he was always trying to expose the ridiculous facets of the behaviour of the enemies of the New Culture Movement.

The best examples of Lu Hsün's satire of the old type of intellectuals is to be found in the story A Cake of Soap (Fei-tsao)<sup>1</sup>. In The Cake of Soap the target of the satire is an old supporter of K'ang Yu-wei's Reform Movement, who, many years before, has contributed towards the establishment of the new schools, but who by now has become a bitter opponent of the New Culture Movement:

Even as far back as the Kuang Hsü period, I was one of the most outspoken advocates of modern education. But I never, never thought that schools would come to this;



1. 肥皂

it is emancipation this and freedom that, but they never learn anything. I have spent lots of money on Hsüeh-cheng, and it has all been spent in vain.....<sup>1.</sup>

This character, Ssü-ming,<sup>2.</sup> from being a progressive and active figure has so declined that he is now a pitiful follower of a fossilized conservatism, a preserver of the National Essence<sup>3.</sup> and an opponent of progress, while his friends Ho Tao-t'ung and Pu Wei-yüan<sup>4.</sup> are even more directly representative of Confucian conservatism. These friends call on Ssü-ming in order to discuss the themes for a poetry contest to be held by the local "Ethical Literary Society", having already drafted the theme for the essay competition:

A proposed petition to be sent by the citizens of the entire Nation to His Excellency the President requesting him to promulgate a mandate commanding the study of the Confucian Canon and the Canonization of the mother of Mencius as a means of saving the declining morals and preserving the National essence.<sup>5.</sup>

Ssu-ming has already thought of a title for the poetry contest. It is "The Ballad of the Filial Maid" and relates to a beggar-girl who has been seen in the vicinity accompanied by an old woman who is supposed to be her grandmother. Everyone has been saying that the girl has been going hungry in order to feed the old woman, and that she is therefore a model of filial piety. But when Ssu-ming suggests this as a title for the poetry contest, Pu Wei-yüan has an objection to make, for he has personally spoken to the "filial maid" and discovered that she is quite unable to write poetry. This is a serious question. "It would" he said, "be much better if she could write poetry."<sup>6.</sup>

1. Wang Chi-chen, op. cit., p.19.
2. 回銘
3. See above, Chapter 4, p.
4. 何道統 卜微園
5. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., pp. 26-27.
6. Ibid., loc. cit.

The idea that a girl only qualifies to be a "filial maid" if she can compose poetry is too hypocritical even for Ssu-ming, who brushes Pu Wei-yüan's objection aside and proceeds to enlarge on his suggestion for the poetry competition. But the very fact that it is discussed at all is Lu Hsün's way of pouring scorn on the intellectual activities of the opposition to the new culture, and exposing its futility and absurdity.

A still more pointed attack on traditionalism arises from Ssu-ming's description to his highly respectable Confucian friends of the episode concerning the cake of soap. When he tells how a low fellow in the crowd watching the filial maid said that all one needs to do is to buy a piece of soap and give her a good scrub and she would be "as nice a piece of goods as you'll ever find"<sup>1.</sup> he expects his companions to be suitably shocked. But not at all. Instead, Ho Tao-tung roars with laughter at the idea, and can only be calmed with difficulty. Even though they return to the business of drafting the insertion in the newspaper advertising the terms of the contest, the conversation and the laughter have been overheard by Ssu-ming's family, and after he has seen his friends out, "perceiving that the atmosphere was unfavourable, he extinguishes his candle and strolls out again into the yard, where he begins to pace back and forth"<sup>2.</sup> But one can hardly feel much sympathy for him, even though he does overhear one of his children calling him and his companions "shameless wretches" for talking and laughing about the episode of the soap. After

1. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p. 28.

2. Ibid., p. 29.

all, has he not bought a piece of soap to make his own wife a "nice piece of goods" after hearing the suggestion from the "ruffian" in the street?

Another old-style intellectual is Ch'ên Shih ch'eng<sup>1</sup>, the central figure in the story The White Gleam (Pai-kuang). This story is set in the days of the old examination system, when all the scholars in China were set the arduous task of passing a series of examinations, local, provincial and national, in order to qualify for official posts. Ch'en Shih-ch'eng is a man of about fifty years of age who has been trying all his life to cross one of these hurdles without success. He has used all his resources and his house is let to tenants "of other surnames", and he is left with only one room. When the story opens he is feverishly examining the list of successful candidates in the local examination to see if this, his sixteenth attempt, has at last been successful; but although there are many Ch'êns on the list, there is none with the name Shih-ch'eng, and he slowly turns and makes his way home, plunged in the depths of misery.

That night he suddenly remembers the words of his grandmother who told him when he was a child how their ancestor had buried a hoard of silver when they founded the house, and composed a riddle giving a clue to its whereabouts. Ch'ên Shih-ch'eng has tried many times in the past to discover the hoard, even digging under the floor of his room. Now in a fever he tries this again and eventually comes upon a skull

1. 白光

L.H.C.C., I, pp. 429-436.

which grins at him mockingly, and he imagines he hears it say "This time it is the end!".

Ch'en Shih-ch'eng rushes out and lies down to rest in the cool outside, and as he does so he remembers some words he by chance overheard someone say in the street: "There's none here, go to the hills." Immediately he jumps to his feet and looks towards the hills where he sees a distant peak surrounded by a white halo of moonlight.

After this, nothing more is seen of him, but next day someone finds a body floating in a pond some five miles away. It is eventually fished out and found to be the body of a man of about fifty years of age. It might very well be that of Ch'en Shih-ch'eng.

The White Gleam is remarkable for the extreme objectivity with which it is told. In some of his previous stories, such as K'ung I-chi, Medicine and Tomorrow, Lu Hsün combined an objective style with considerable strength of feeling. But in The White Gleam the feeling is repressed to a minimum, and all that is left is this cold hard portrait of a miserable individual, who has lived and ended his life in futile pursuit of personal ambition and wealth.

Although set in the Manchu Dynasty the story is meant as a warning to the intellectuals (and others) of Lu Hsün's time who waste their lives in a similar manner to Ch'en Shih-ch'eng, even if in a changing society their activities take a different form.



1. L.H.C.C., I, p. 435.

But while Ch'ên Shih-ch'eng is not meant to arouse compassion in the reader, one feels at least that he is more sinned against than sinning, and is, broadly speaking the victim of a sick society, just as much as K'ung I-chi. But where he differs from K'ung I-chi is that the motive power behind his whole life's activities is the desire to become one of the official class; that is, one of the oppressors himself. He pictures himself being able to turn all his tenants out of his house, and to erect a big, freshly-painted inscription over the gate, and to fill his house with important guests. Such mundane ambitions would never have been shared by K'ung I-chi, who was an entirely artless, likeable character. All the same, Lu Hsün chose not to treat him with satire, as similar characters were depicted, for example in the Ju-lin wai-shih,<sup>1</sup> but with his characteristic objectivity and restraint. The result is a sketch of extraordinary coldness and melancholy, unmatched in any of Lu Hsün's other stories.

Lu Hsün's stories about the modern intellectuals have, perhaps, a more explicit moral to them than those which concern other aspects of Chinese life. As a leader of Chinese cultural life he was deeply concerned with the problems of intellectuals, which in the difficult period of the early nineteen-twenties were both deep and complicated.

1. For Lu Hsün's attitude to the Ju-lin wai-shih see below  
p. 297

As we have seen, the May 4th Movement, although suggesting solutions for many of China's problems, failed to apply them in practice, and the youth of the period, while being carried away by the ideals of the modern movement, found that in the Chinese society of the years following 1919, there was no scope for living up to them, so they either had to compromise with the old society or else were forced into a lonely isolation. A minority found their ivory tower in some university or publishing firm, but it was only a very small minority. The majority had economic and social difficulties of one kind or another, which were often very acute. The only group of intellectuals who found a solution to these difficulties were those who entered the left-wing political movement, assisting in the regeneration of the national movement by helping to organize the working class.<sup>1.</sup>

Lu Hsün felt the difficulties of the intellectuals very keenly, and experienced many of them himself. He had a sense of the impotence of his own efforts to break through the barriers which were preventing the creation of a better society. However hard he fought against the old forces, however effectively he battled with the enemies of the New Culture, still China was plunged into civil wars under the various war-lord governments, and the same upholders of the National Essence still fastened themselves on the lives of young people. One of his stories, Dragon Boat Festival (Tuan-wu-chieh),<sup>2.</sup> though not

1. See above, Chapter I, p.
2. 端午節 L.H.C.C., I, pp. 417-428.

one of his best, seems to reflect this self-searching of Lu Hsün, at least in part. And the characteristic melancholy which we have discussed in relation to The White Glean, and which is present in many of the stories collected in P'ang-huang (the second of Lu Hsün's two chief collections of stories) was partly caused by this sober awareness of the size of the task still to be done.

In P'ang-huang, Lu Hsün uses his more highly perfected style to write directly about the lives of the intellectuals. As we have seen Lu Hsün was skilled in the use of satire, and did not use it indiscriminately, and he used it most sparingly in the case of those characters for whom he felt the most compassion. In his treatment of the modern intellectuals, there is only one whom he treated almost entirely satirically, and he represents a type of attitude which Lu Hsün regarded as harmful for the healthy development of a new culture in China, and which he wanted to expose. This attitude was that of the ivory tower intellectual who, while neglecting the needs of China for fundamental reform, sought abstract perfection and beauty in art or literature, often looking to the West as the source of all good things. The story in which Lu Hsün takes this as the theme is A Happy Family (Hsing-fu ti chia-t'ing).

We have seen in a previous chapter how the ivory tower made its first appearance on the Chinese literary scene

1. In the stories in P'ang-huang, which were written after 1924, not only is this melancholy more in evidence, but there is less fire than in his earlier collection, Na-han. Though the style was more mature, they were on the whole, less popular than the stories in the latter collection. Lu Hsün was himself aware of this difference; see Lu Hsün's introduction to Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsüeh ta-hsi, hsiao-shuo erh-chi, pp.1-2.

2. 輿論的家庭 See L.H.C.C., II, pp. 178-188, and Selected Stories of Lu Hsün, pp. 135-144.

1.  
with the Creation Society, and how from being cherished by a group of rebels against classical orthodoxy, it later became the retreat of a number of writers who shunned contamination by politics.<sup>2.</sup> Not long after writing the story, Lu Hsün was himself engaged in bitter polemics with the latter group. But in the story A Happy Family he is not concerned with the leaders of the fashionable literary groups, but rather with a foolish writer who tries to put their ideas into practice, but finds his dreams shattered by reality. So Lu Hsün's satire has a lightness of touch, lighter even, perhaps, than in the other story with a similar style of presentation, A Cake of Soap, though, like A Cake of Soap, the story is not so much concerned with human suffering as with human folly.

The hero of A Happy Family is an author who, suddenly awakening to the need for some income to keep his family alive, decides that he must do some writing, and impetuously types the title of a story on a piece of blank paper: "A Happy Family". But then his inspiration fails him. If he is writing about a family it must have a background, and the background must not be allowed to spoil the family's happiness. Every part of China that he can think of has some drawback, and so he finally decides to denote the place where the family live by the initial A.

Next he must decide what section of society his ideal family belong to, and such things as their likes and



1. See above, Chapter 3, p. 53
2. See above, Chapter 3, p. 172

dislikes, taste in literature and so on. This is more difficult, but after some thought he decides on the following:

.... they have both had a higher education and belong to the cultured élite.... Japanese-returned students are no longer the fashion, so let them be Western-returned students. The master of the house wears a foreign suit, his collar is always snowy white. His wife's hair is always curled up like a sparrow's nest in front, her pearly white teeth are always peeping out, but she wears Chinese dress.....

(At this point the author is interrupted by the voice of his own wife haggling with a vendor over the price of cabbages.)

.... They are the cultured élite, devoted to the arts, But because they have both grown up in happy surroundings they don't like Russian novels. Most Russian novels describe the lower classes, so they are really quite out of keeping with such a family. )

But the author is not allowed to finish his reveries about his happy family. First it is his wife bargaining over the price of cabbages, then his children who need attention. ("In a happy family ..." he thought ... "children should be born later. Or perhaps it would be better not to have any at all.")<sup>2</sup> Finally he is driven to tear up what he has written and he lies back in his chair, closes his eyes in an attempt to concentrate on the job of writing. But even in his day-dreams he cannot escape from the troublesome details of life which return to mock him even while the study door is shut and his eyes tightly closed:

He saw floating before his eyes a spray of flat, round, black-freckled flowers with orange centres, floating from the left of his left eye to the right, then

1. Selected Stories of Lu Hsün, p. 137.

2. Ibid., p. 142.

disappearing; then a spray of bright green flowers, with dark green centres; and finally a pile of six cabbages, formed themselves before him into an enormous letter A.<sup>1.</sup>

In the collection P'ang-huang there are three other stories which deal with the problems of intellectuals. Each is distinctive both in the type of individual it depicts and in the style of presentation, though, none is treated in the same satirical way as those discussed above.

The first story of these three, In the Restaurant (Tsai chiu-lou shang)<sup>2.</sup>, concerns an intellectual who, in his young days, used to be a revolutionary, but who, after years of having to find a living by teaching and private coaching, has had all his spirit ground out of him, and lost all his fire and zeal. Whereas in his young days he "pulled the whiskers off the idols of the temple of the City God"<sup>3.</sup>, and became heated in arguments over how to revolutionise China, now he is merely content to teach the Confucian classics to the children of a fellow provincial. This would have been quite contrary to his principles in his younger days.

Lu Hsün treats the story with a lightness and lyricism which is reminiscent of Checkov. Superficially it is simply the story of two friends who have not seen each other for many years meeting by chance in a restaurant, with one of them recounting some of the experiences he has had since they last met. Even the nature of those experiences is not very

1. Ibid., p. 144.

2. 在酒樓上 L.H.C.C., II, pp. 163-177,  
Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., pp. 45-58.

3. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p.51.

remarkable - but the scene is set with such delicacy and the incidents of the re-interment of Lu Wei-fu's baby brother and the presentation of the artificial flowers so subtly conceived, that the story makes a lasting impression. As with so many of Lu Hsün's characters, Lu Wei-fu has a universality which far transcends the historical circumstances and specific purpose of the story.

Like Ssu-ming, Lu Wei-fu has capitulated to the enemy, though unlike him, he has not joined forces with him, and thus one feels that all is not lost. But he is a weak character and his story is one of spiritual as well as physical decline, even if one feels that his air of resignation to fate is somewhat assumed, or at least not so far advanced as he professes. A much stronger character is Wei Lien-shu, the Hermit of A Hermit at Large (Ku-tu che<sup>1</sup>). But although he is more resilient he is proud and aloof, treating others with disdain. Because of his reputation for being a radical he cannot find regular employment as a school teacher, and because of his strength of character he refuses to compromise and take a job which is against his principles. As time goes on he becomes poorer and poorer until he is reduced practically to begging, and the tuberculosis from which he (like so many Chinese intellectuals) suffers becomes worse. Finally he breaks down under the strain, and becomes the advisor to a war-lord, spending his time doing the things that he used to hate and

1. 孤獨者 L.H.C.C. II, pp. 245-265, Wang Chi-chen,  
op.cit., pp. 130-157.

rejecting everything that he used to admire and believe in, but dying soon after.

Lu Hsün allows himself to express considerable compassion for this strange and complicated person, who refuses to give in until on the point of death. But it is impossible for the reader to avoid making a connection in his mind between Wei Lien-shu's eventual surrender and his aloofness and self-imposed isolation, and this note of criticism, directed no doubt against the individualist tendencies of some of the young people of the period, prevents the reader from feeling the full tragedy of Wei Lien-shu's end. The story contains a strong element of the more leisurely contemplation of life, mingled with a touch of melancholy which pervades some of Lu Hsün's later stories, though there is also anger against the old society.

The one story in which the air of cold objectivity is least to be seen is Regret for the Past (Shang-shih<sup>1</sup>), one of the last stories in Lu Hsün's second collection. The pathos of it even exceeds that of the ending of Tomorrow. It is A Happy Family over again, but this time there is not even the means to buy cabbages. The theme is the tragedy of young lovers believing passionately in the ideals of the modern age, but having nothing but love on which to live; and however pure and wonderful love seems, it is no substitute for bread. Anywhere else it might have been possible for them to live together, but



1. 傷逝 L.H.C.C., II, pp. 276-304, Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., pp. 158-183.

in China at that time it meant complete social ostracism, and love which seemed at first omnipotent hastens its own doom by creating new insoluble problems of living.

cf. Ibsen

From this brief survey of the nature and content of the stories of Lu Hsün, one thing has emerged above all, and that is the extraordinary concentration in them on social problems and analysis, and the importance of the topical element. We have seen how this emphasis on social purpose resulted from Lu Hsün's whole make-up as a person, as well as being determined by the historical circumstances of the period in which he was writing. Feng Hsüeh-feng has written the following of his thought and his work:

The essential value of his thought is not that it has made any philosophical contribution to the general problems of mankind, but arises from his unprecedentedly deep and observant dissection of Chinese history and the old society; for he revealed all the manifold strata of the dark, oppressive reactionary forces, historical, social and ideological, warning the people and the youth and giving them guidance over and over again.<sup>1</sup>

This underlying function of Lu Hsün's work applies, as we have seen, to his stories as much as to his more direct miscellaneous writings. For in his stories he painted a picture of the Chinese village in which the social forces which lie behind and determine personal relationships, stand out in sharp relief. Yet because he was a mature artist with great powers of observation, he was able to incorporate his analysis of society into convincing and moving images of people and scenes. Part of the reason for his success, as we have seen, is that his ideas were themselves in large part derived from the very same material experience as his stories, and thus there was

1. See his introduction to V. N. Rogov: Lu Sin o Russkoi Literature, p. 23.

little conflict between Lu Hsün's philosophical generalizations and the reality which he was portraying. Although he refashioned this reality to suit the purposes of what he wanted to say about it, his message was itself the fruit of keen and subtle observation, and so the characters of the stories appear as real people, motivated by their own feelings rather than mere robots designed to illustrate sociological analysis. In other words, like all good realist writers, he did not force his characters to wear badly-fitting, ready-made clothes. Yet he is outstanding for the depth and penetration of his social analysis, and his untiring search for a solution to social problems. The fact that he combined these purposes with a high artistic level gives his stories a unique quality.

#### Lu Hsün's Style.

Brief reference has already been made to the characteristic blend of strong emotional content with a cold objective style which is to be found in Lu Hsün's stories, and to other features of his style. In order to proceed further with an analysis of Lu Hsün's method, it would be worth while to examine his own contributions to the theory of story-writing which are contained in a number of articles written towards the end of his life.

If one had to assign Lu Hsün to a category, the most suitable one would be that of the critical realist, and his

method might perhaps be described as realistic satire. He did not use fantasy (except in Diary of a Madman) or allegory, but gained his effect by confining himself in the main to telling the truth about ordinary people, and by working in the tradition of Gogol and Chekov rather than in that of Poe and Stevenson. We have seen how his choice of subject, in the broadest sense, had accorded with his social aims. In the same way his technical approach was also in accord; for though he told the truth about people, he was not interested, as the novelist is, in telling the whole truth. Rather he was concerned with the most essential aspects of people only, those individual parts which told most about the whole person - what he called "depicting the eyes":

I forget who it was who said that the most economical way of depicting a person's character is to draw his eyes. I consider this to be quite correct. You can draw a whole head of hair in the most minute detail, but it will be of no interest. I have always tried to follow this method - alas! without great success.

I never try to introduce things which can very well be left out, and when something cannot be done I never try in spite of the impossibility to do it.

The things I wrote about mostly had their origin in what I had myself seen or heard, though I did not make use of the whole fact but only selected one aspect, which I refashioned and developed until it seemed adequate to express fully what I wanted to say<sup>1</sup>.

For this approach, the modern short-story form offered Lu Hsun the best medium, for it consists, as Mr. S. O'Faolain has suggested,<sup>2</sup> of a series of camera angles on people rather than (to continue the analogy) a full-length film.

1. L.H.C.C., V, p. 108.

2. S O'Faolain; The Short Story, p. 164.

Lu Hsün made the same kind of comparison in an essay on satire:

I believe that whenever a writer writes in such a manner as to transform, or even exaggerate the truth about a group of people, or an aspect of life - provided of course that his writing has artistic qualities - then the group in question will call his work "satire".

The lifeblood of satire is truth. It does not necessarily have to consist of "facts" or events that have actually taken place, but it must be something that could have happened; thus it can neither be "fabrication" nor "slander". It consists neither of "revelations" or "sensations" meant to shock the reader, nor of miracles. What it is concerned with is publicly known and even commonplace things which normally would never be regarded as remarkable, or even worth noticing. Yet they must be things which appear either unreasonable or ridiculous and capable of arousing scorn, or even repugnance - things which are so much a matter of habit that, though plain for all to see, nobody regards them as out of the ordinary, yet if attention is specially drawn to them they will have a stimulating effect. For example, for young people in Western clothes to do obeisances before the Buddha is now quite a usual phenomenon, and Confucian gentlemen venting their spleen is an even more usual sight. They are actions which usually last only a few minutes. Satire is a snapshot taken just during those few moments - while the one has his bottom in the air and the other's brow is knitted in a frown. Such a snapshot, will not only make these people look a little inelegant to others, but even they themselves will hardly consider themselves a pretty sight, and when they are published abroad, their pictures will not prove helpful when they talk so eloquently of "science" and "self-education". It is not quite correct to say that what is being displayed is not the truth, because they are there for all to see and everybody knows that such things happen. But neither would it be convenient to admit that it was the truth, because of the resulting loss of dignity - and so, after a lot of brain-searching, the name "satire" is given to it, which signifies: "So they insist on bringing these things up - it just shows what low creatures they are!"



The conscious "insistence on bringing these things up" - and the transformation - even exaggeration of "these things" is the special property of "satire".<sup>1</sup>

Although Lu Hsün was talking of satire in general, there is little doubt that what he said applied to his own writing to a very large extent, especially as he was himself often referred to as a satirist. Yet, as we have seen, in his stories he very rarely indulges in completely merciless and cold-blooded satire, and never at the expense of the unfortunate and oppressed.

It was not Lu Hsün's intention merely to expose, or rather to expose indiscriminately without distinction between right and wrong, between oppressors and the oppressed:

A satirical work which has no good intentions and no warmth of feeling will only make the reader feel that there is nothing worth while in the world and nothing to be done about things. This is not satire, it is merely "irony".<sup>2</sup>

In his approach to satire, as in other things, Lu Hsün was strongly influenced by Gogol. Apart from the Diary of a Madman we have noted that in his early days Lu Hsün was also especially fond of The Inspector General and How the Two Ivans Quarrelled,<sup>3</sup> and Gogol's approach to satire in his stories was very similar to that of Lu Hsün. For instance, Akaky Akakievitch, the little copying clerk in The Overcoat is treated by Gogol with much the same blend of sympathy and raillery as Ah Q is by Lu Hsün, while the "Two Ivans" and a whole host of characters in Dead Souls are matched by Mr. Chao in Cloud over Luchên, the characters in A Cake of Soap, etc. Lu Hsün also used a similar

1. L.H.C.C., VI, 323-325. & Ibid., loc.cit.
2. See above, p.235

type of cold objective narrative to that of Gogol; in fact, with a few exceptions, he carried it even further than Gogol. For instance, in K'ung I-chi there is no incident parallel to that of the young man in The Overcoat who is stricken with remorse when Akaky Akakievitch protests "Leave me alone! Why will you worry me?" when tormented by him. Although the narrator of K'ung I-chi, the boy who serves the wine, has the seeds of a similar compassion within him, it is not explicit in the story.

Apart from this common regard for the poor and oppressed and common approach to satire, it is possible to find quite close correspondences of minor detail between Gogol and Lu Hsün. In addition to the obvious parallels between the two "Madman's Diaries", in which Lu Hsün even used some of Gogol's phrases, there are other passages in which Lu Hsün seems to be echoing Gogol. For example, Ivan Ivanovitch in the "Two Ivans", the highly respectable citizen of Mirgorod, had precisely the same degree of learning as the Mr. Chao in Cloud over Luchen; Gogol's idyllic description of Mirgorod at night contrasting so sharply with the anything-but-idyllic behaviour of its foremost citizens, finds its parallel in the description of the rural charms of Luchen as seen by the travellers on the passing river steamer.

Lu Hsün not only borrowed ideas and technique from Gogol but also from many other writers, particularly Russian and East European writers. His debt to Checkov has already been

1. Nikolai Gogol, The Overcoat, ~~in~~ Short Stories by Russian Authors, 1941
2. Mr. Chao owned some ten odd volumes of the Romance of Three Kingdoms, whereas Ivan Ivanovich had one rather torn volume of a novel.
3. Cf. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p.65, and Nikolai Gogol; Taras Bulba and Other Tales, p.208.

noted in relation to the story In the Wine Shop,<sup>1.</sup> while Checkov's lightness of touch and subtle use of contrast is often to be found in Lu Hsün's later stories, together with a calm and contemplative observation of life which is also reminiscent of Checkov. Perhaps this is because, in these stories, Lu Hsün was often concerned with rather Checkovian characters (Lu Wei-fu, Wei Lien-shu, etc.). Chou Tso-jen also drew attention to Lu Hsün's liking for Andreev, though Lu Hsün's indebtedness to him is more in respect of certain elements of technique than in anything fundamental, for although some of Lu Hsün's prose pieces as well as his stories actually approach Andreev's melancholy, they do not share his sentimentality or pessimism. Apart from Regret for the Past, where it forms part of the whole pattern of the story, there are only two places in which sentimentality obtrudes in Lu Hsün's stories. One is in Medicine, where flowers mysteriously appear on the grave of the dead revolutionary, and the other in Tomorrow, where Tan Szu-sao is left the one consolation of dreaming of her little son on the night after his death. But Lu Hsün himself considered these touches to be blemishes on the cold hard surface of his narrative, and said that he had added them in order to conform with the spirit of the leaders of the New Culture Movement,<sup>2.</sup> for the times demanded something more positive than his style provided.

Of other writers who influenced Lu Hsün, perhaps Sienkiewicz was the most important, more important in fact than

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1. See above, p. 284

2. L.H.C.C., I p. 275.

Andreev, being like Lu Hsün, a patriot and master of realistic satire. Chou Tso-jen also pointed to his indebtedness to the Japanese writer Natsume Sōseki,<sup>1</sup> though the naturalistic trend of Japanese writing did not appeal to Lu Hsün, and while in Japan he took far more interest in translated works in Japanese than in contemporary Japanese literature. He took practically no interest in French, Italian or Spanish literature, and hardly any in German literature. Though one phrase reminiscent of Also Sprach Zarathustra does appear in Diary of a Madman,<sup>2</sup> Lu Hsün's philosophy was far removed from that of Nietzsche. As we have seen, his early interest in the English romantics was soon abandoned in favour of the Russian realists, and such writers as Petöfi Sandor, Adam Mickiewicz and the German patriotic poets influenced him as patriots rather than as artists.

But while Lu Hsün took so much from Western masters of the story, and could not but do so as the modern story is largely a product of the West, yet at the same time he remains an essentially Chinese writer. The primary reason for this is that he wrote solely about China and Chinese life, using Chinese modes of expression and Chinese speech. Belinsky once wrote of Gogol:

All Gogol's works deal exclusively with the world of Russian life and he has no rivals in the art of portraying it in all its truth. He tones down and embellishes

1. Chou Tso-jen, op.cit., p.306.

2. Lu Hsun wrote: "I have only a few words but I find it difficult to say them. Brother, in the beginning all the savages probably ate a little human flesh. Later on, some of them gave up this practice because their hearts were different. They tried their best to improve themselves, and they became human, real human beings, while others continued to eat human flesh. The case of these savages is similar to that of the insects, some of which became fish and birds and monkeys and eventually men, while others did not try to better themselves and remained insects." (Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., p. 215.)

Nietzsche wrote: "Ye have trod the way from worm to man, and much in you is yet worm. Once ye were apes, and even yet man is more ape than any ape." (Thus Spake Zarathustra, p. 5.)



nothing for the sake of ideals or any preconceived ideas, or some habitual bias..... Of course, the predominant feature of his work is negation; to be valid and poetical every kind of negation must be made in the name of an ideal - and this ideal, with Gogol, as with all other Russian poets, was not his own, that is to say, not native, since our social life had not yet taken form or established itself sufficiently to be able to supply literature with this idea. But one must agree that, as far as Gogol's works are concerned, it is entirely out of the question to ask: "How prove that they could have been written only by a Russian poet, that they could not have been written by a poet of another nation?" Obviously only a Russian poet could have depicted Russian life with such fidelity and truth. And in the main it is in this that, for the time being, the national character of our literature lies!

Lu Hsün differed from Gogol in that his conscious analysis of society was deeper and his search for a way forward much more urgent than Gogol's. It would not be entirely true to say that negation was the predominant feature in Lu Hsün. Neither are the ideals which motivated him entirely taken from abroad. But apart from this, what Belinsky was saying about Gogol as a national writer also applies to Lu Hsün. Feng Hsüeh-feng in discussing the national element in his work said this:

The content of his work consists entirely of the life and problems of the Chinese people; his thought and feelings are all those arising in a Chinese in contemporary Chinese life and revolutionary struggles. Neither has he, in his style, followed in the footsteps of any single foreign master.

For while the form of his stories was basically that of the Western short story rather than of the Chinese story, Lu Hsün did not follow any set pattern or formula in writing them. Each of his stories contains some creative features of form as well as of content, and each one is distinctive. A complete

1. V. G. Belinsky, Selected Philosophical Works, p.412.
2. Feng Hsüeh-feng, in Rogov, op.cit., p.17.

analysis of their form is not possible within the scope of this study, but something of this creativeness will have emerged from our discussion of their content.

But although the overall shape of Lu Hsün's stories owes much to the West, there are also elements in the stories which Lu Hsün took from old Chinese literature. For example, in relation to satire Lu Hsün not only took Gogol and Sienkiewich as his pattern, but also the Ju-lin wai-shih. In his History of Chinese Fiction he devotes a whole chapter to the Ju-lin wai-shih under the heading Satirical Novels of the Ch'ing Dynasty,<sup>1.</sup> and cites the instance of the character Fan Chin, who, after a lifetime of trying, finally succeeds in the provincial examination. Unfortunately the shock of his success and the resulting change in the family fortunes and property causes the death of his mother, and he is obliged by convention to spend a period of time in mourning. The rules of mourning extend to the matter of the type of bowls and chopsticks that a person must use, so when Fan Chin is invited to dine with an important person he refuses to eat either with the best inlaid utensils, or with the ivory ones that are substituted for them. Finally he consents to use white bamboo chopsticks, but the rules of mourning do not prevent him from using them to pick out a large morsel of shrimp and put it into his mouth! Lu Hsün quotes this incident as an example of how Wu Ching-tzu, "without using a word of reprobation, exposed hypocrisy,"<sup>2.</sup> and there is

1. L.H.C.C., IX, P. 38

2. Ibid., loc. cit.

little doubt that Lu Hsün consciously modelled his style in his satirical pieces on this feature of Wu's writing.

Other elements of the style of the old novels and stories which Lu Hsün used are a little less tangible, but present nevertheless. One of the characteristics of the Chinese method of telling a story is that there is no superfluous description, that the story is told from beginning to end without being embroidered by "art". The "purple passage" is very rarely found.<sup>1</sup> This was also a feature of Lu Hsün's stories and, as we have already remarked, he did not regard his stories as works of art. As in the case of the old Chinese stories, so in Lu Hsün's, the dialogue is of the greatest importance, and sometimes a short snatch of conversation is made to do the work of a long passage of description. A good example is the following short conversation between Tan-szu sao and the doctor in Tomorrow:

"Please, sir, can you tell me what is wrong with my Pao-erh?"

"A stoppage of heat."

"Is it serious? Will he ....."

"Just give him a couple of doses of medicine."

"He can't breathe and his nostrils are quivering."

"This is the fire melting the metal....."

After saying these few words Ho Hsiao-hsien closed his eyes; Tan-szu sao felt afraid to question him further. A man of about thirty who was sitting opposite her had by this time already written out a prescription, and pointing

1. This is particularly true of the traditional short story, whether in wên-yen or pai-hua, for the former have strong affinities with the biographies of the histories in which emphasis is on the plain recording of facts, while the latter, springing from the oral story-telling tradition aimed at reproducing the effect of the mass entertainer in the written word, and therefore avoided elaborate descriptions either of people or scenery. The best concise description of the art of the traditional pai-hua short story is in Sun K'ai-ti, Lun Chung-kuo tuan-p'ien pai-hua hsiao-shuo, pp. 1-18.

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to the characters on it said:

"This is our baby-saving pill, type No. 1. You can only buy it in the Chi-shih pharmacy."!

This short passage conveys the anxiety of the mother for her son, and her timidity before authority which prevents her from asking as much as she would like, the ignorance of the doctor and the deception he uses to hide it, and his conspiracy with the pharmacy, combining in a social force to exploit the ignorance of the weak.

Although an equal compression can often be found in the stories of the West, it is not often to be found expressed almost entirely in dialogue, whereas in Chinese fiction, with its strong affinities with oral story-telling, the use of dialogue is often as skilled as this, with the essential features of characters standing out in sharp relief the moment they open their mouths to speak. If one compares the entry of Wang Hsi-fêng<sup>2.</sup> or characterisation of Liu lao-lao<sup>3.</sup> in the Hung-lou meng with Lu Hsün's treatment of the "Bean-curd Hsi-shih" in My Native Heath, Lu Hsün's indebtedness to the Chinese literary tradition becomes clear. It may be that other features of Lu Hsün's writing which, to a Western reader seem attributable to this or that Western influence, are in fact taken from old Chinese literature.

Lu Hsün was aware of the affinity of his style with the old Chinese modes of expression. When discussing how he came to write stories, he wrote:

1. L.H.C.C., I, pp. 313-314.
2. Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in, Hung lou mêng, hui 3.
3. Ibid, hui 6.
4. Wang Chi-chen, op.cit., pp. 8-9.



I strenuously avoided wordiness, and provided what I wrote was sufficient to convey what I wanted to say, I was content to dispense with illustrative embellishments. In the old Chinese plays there is no scenery, and on the coloured pictures sold to children at the New Year only the chief characters are depicted (though nowadays there is more background on them). I was firmly of the opinion that this method suited my purpose, so I did not describe the wind and the moon, nor did I write lengthy dialogues.

After I had finished writing something, I always read it through once or twice, and if there was anything which I felt read awkwardly, I added or subtracted a few words, for it had to read smoothly. If there was no suitable pai-hua expression, then I would prefer to employ an old one, hoping that there would be some who understood. I seldom used terms that I had invented and which nobody but I understood, or that were even incomprehensible to me./

This last paragraph emphasises the strict way in which Lu Hsün avoided Westernisation of style. For not only did he not invent terms of his own, neither did he resort to the easy way out for stylistic problems of simply translating English expressions into Chinese, or of using long, involved, Westernised sentences. His style was terse and Chinese. That he used some rather unusual literary expressions is a charge which could be levelled against him, though he did this much more rarely in his stories than in his short essays. Kuo Mo-jo has listed the phrases from Chuangtz used by Lu Hsün in his writing and they amount to a formidable number, but they occur largely in his polemics where he was writing the language of the educated elite since he had to fight them with their own weapons. Moreover, many of the phrases which he used, although originating with, or commonly used by Chuangtz (a writer of whom Lu Hsün was very fond), have nevertheless passed into fairly common use in

1. L.H.C.C., V, p.108.

2. ~~Kuo Mo-jo~~,

modern writing. Yet the problem of creating a new literature in pai-hua was partly a linguistic problem, as we have seen in a previous chapter,<sup>1</sup> and, given the social conditions of the period in which Lu Hsün wrote his stories, it is difficult to see how he could have thoroughly solved it alone.

To sum up, the success of Lu Hsün in the field of the short story was the product of a number of factors. It was not just a question of being a gifted story-teller, or a literary genius, though as has been indicated, Lu Hsün was both of these things. In the difficult situation of modern China, in which standards and values were changing and new forms were being created from a complex fusion of the old and the new, the native and the foreign, it was still more necessary to have a conscious awareness of the fundamental social problems of the times, and a knowledge, not only of Chinese tradition, but also of the traditions of the various foreign literatures which were becoming part of the Chinese heritage. Lu Hsün's achievement stems from a combination of these things. Many other writers were able to imitate the style of Western story writers, but few were able to write so convincingly about the vital problems of China, or to blend various useful elements of the short story as developed in the West with methods of expression which were essentially Chinese. That Lu Hsün was able to do all these things resulted from the fact that he was particularly receptive to the deepest impulses of the life of his time and particularly to China's national political problem.

1. See above, chapter IV, p. 177

Lu Hsün's conscious and unconscious choice of "influence", particularly foreign influence, illustrates well the importance of his preoccupation with national problems. We have seen how, during his early literary career, he consciously sought examples of the writings of what he termed "the oppressed nations" - and how this led him to an appreciation of Russian literature, particularly of Gogol, which was extremely fruitful to the development of his own art. This practical approach remained with him throughout his literary life and guided all his translation work and his introduction of foreign literature to China.

In a similar way, his instincts enabled him in the main to suppress or transform those influences which were not in accord with the spirit of his writing, or, more concretely, with what he considered to be in the interests of the Chinese people.

While accepting certain influence from Nietzsche and Andreev, he even discarded their chief characteristics as writers, the mystical doctrine of the superman in the case of Nietzsche and the pessimistic sentimentality of Andreev.

Lu Hsün stands out not only as the best story-writer of the period, but also as the most talented personality in the whole of modern Chinese literature, and especially in the early period which we have dealt with. Some of the reasons for this may have emerged during our discussion of his stories. Kuo Mo-jo when comparing Lu Hsün's achievements with those of his

contemporaries, including himself, had this to say:

I spent practically the whole of the twenty years of the New Literature Movement abroad. I constantly felt deeply my separation from Chinese life and my being unable to draw material from living reality and the living language . . . . . But Lu Hsün was quite different. He completed his study abroad before the May 4th Movement, and throughout these twenty years he maintained a close connection with reality. Because of his greater years, his experience of life, and hence his criticism of it, was much richer than ours. . . . .

Of course, this was not the sole reason for Lu Hsün's success. It was not simply his closeness to reality, or his superior experience to other writers which made him pre-eminent, but also the great efforts he made throughout his life consciously to understand that reality, spurred on by his desire to change and improve it. This great sustained effort merged with his artistic creativeness, both liberating it and enriching it, and giving his work its distinctive pattern.

1. Kuo Mo-jo, Chin-hsi p'u-chien 今昔蒲劍  
p. 344.

CONCLUSION

Much of the summing up which should normally be consigned to the conclusion has already been included in the last chapter, the purpose of which was to put in a more concrete form the ideas which were outlined in Chapters I to IV. If the aim of this study was to show how the conditions of the development of the Chinese revolution were reflected in the literature of the period immediately following the May 4th Movement, there could be no better exemplification of this response to the spirit of the time than the stories and prose writing of Lu Hsün. But, as we have not been concerned exclusively with one writer, it might be worth our while to summarize briefly the main characteristics of the new literature in its first years of growth.

First, the new literature was born in a revolutionary period in which the old feudal values of the Chinese tradition were first challenged, then overthrown, and finally replaced by new values taken from both the Renaissance tradition of individual emancipation and the new ideas of socialism. This gave the literature of the period a strong ideological content, and especially prominent were the ideas of science and democracy which the New Culture movement had emphasized.

Yet although the May 4th Movement brought about a revolution in Chinese culture, it did not succeed in creating conditions in which the new culture could flourish. The new intellectuals, who were a product of the social changes of the



period, suffered hardship and impoverishment, and were denied an opportunity to use their talents to rebuild the country. Thus the new literature, while inspired by the new ideals, was forced to engage in a hard struggle against the old conditions in order to keep alive. Thus literature more and more became an integral part of the social struggle, valued for its contribution towards the fight more than for anything else. At the beginning of the period we have discussed few of the new intellectuals had any clear ideas on how the reform of society was to be achieved. Thus the new writers advanced general theories of "literature for society" without linking them with *specific* political <sup>Theories</sup> ideas. But gradually, as the movement developed, and as the social changes which the May 4th period had introduced matured, more writers adhered to the ideas of Communism, and began to advocate proletarian literature, even though they still lacked a clear understanding of it. At the same time a minority, following the middle-class position, sought to keep literature clear of political content and attempted technical perfection above all else.

As the old values were being discarded in favour of new ones taken from outside the orthodox tradition, this was necessarily a period of experimentation in which only a moderate amount of a high technical quality was written. Inspiration came above all from the West, and thus many writers, having discarded the Chinese classical tradition, and, at the same time being cut off from the popular tradition, were unable

to master the great technical problems presented by the influx of varied ideas and literary forms from many different alien traditions. Much of the literature of the period is derivative and even crude, but, as we have seen, there emerged from this mass of immature writing a few authors who retained a sense of keen observation and a sure critical faculty, and who were able to write good stories and prose; and one, Lu Hsün, who is of true international stature.

Throughout this period it was the needs of Chinese literature, and, above all, the conditions of the Chinese revolution which determined which influences were paramount, both on the level of ideas and <sup>in</sup> that of forms and techniques. While many transient ~~transient~~ <sup>easy</sup> fashions of the West, such as symbolism or naturalism, were introduced into Chinese literature, they could not retain a firm foothold because neither the literary nor the social soil was prepared to take them. Lu Hsün showed sounder sense when he sought guidance from the literatures of countries which, like China, were, or had been, engaged in a bitter and protracted struggle for national and political emancipation, and particularly from countries with social systems not so dissimilar from China's.

After 1925 the trend towards proletarian literature and socialist realism became even more prominent, until in 1949 it received general acceptance in China. The history of modern Chinese literature from 1925 to 1949 is inseparable

from the great social struggles of the period, notably the war of resistance to Japan and the civil war which culminated in 1949. This development bears out the importance which has been placed in this study on the social background, and the discussions of the relation of literature to society. Technical problems, such as the devising of new prosodic patterns, were given less prominence because the Chinese writers themselves did not pay much attention to them.

While further study of the literature of the period would reveal much of interest to historians of modern China, such study can only be undertaken profitably in conjunction with a much closer investigation of the social currents of the period than has been possible in this survey. Perhaps the greatest lesson which the present writer has learned from undertaking it, is that far more intensive and detailed research is needed before anything approaching a complete history, literary or social, of this formative period of modern China can be undertaken.

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