

Zhang Henshui's fiction: attempts to reform the traditional Chinese novel

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University of Edinburgh, Ph D, 1991



Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to show the place of the popular author Zhang Henshui (1895-1967) in modern Chinese literature. Discounting his formative period up to 1924, from which almost none of his writing survives, and the period after the author suffered a debilitating stroke in 1949, nine of his major works of fiction are examined in detail. Employing the criteria Zhang claimed in non-fictional writings to have set himself, while exercising proper caution with such material, the fiction is analysed chronologically in search of ways in which the author progressively achieved "reform" of the traditional novel and succeeded in "catching up with the times". With respect to the former criterion, attention is focussed on the structure, language and style of his novels, while the latter criterion chiefly concerns content and mode, although the two are interconnected. It emerges that during his early period (ca. 1924-1930) Zhang's fiction was, as has been generally assumed, strongly influenced by traditional Chinese literature. Almost its only modernity lay in anecdotal content which was superfluous and often disruptive to the plot. Even within this early period, however, in the novel A Grand Old Family, the author began to make attempts to improve the structure of his fiction and in his most successful novel, Fate in Tears and Laughter, which spans the early and second periods of his career, he successfully eliminated extraneous anecdotal material. Structured around a complex system of relationships among the major characters, and while containing elements of realism, this transitional novel remains highly traditional by virtue of its plot's heavy reliance on coincidence and on the supernatural. Most of all, it shares with the early novel a "dreamlike" atmosphere which is seen in this study as the major traditional feature of Zhang Henshui's fiction.

During the second, 1930s phase of his career, Zhang continued to effect modest "reform" on the language and structure of his fiction, drawing on Western literary techniques as gleaned from early 20th century translations and presumably also at second hand from the new Chinese writers of the May Fourth era. He concentrated, however, on modernisation of the content of his fiction as a means of what he termed "catching up with the times". In certain areas, progress may be seen to have been made in this, particularly with regard to the portrayal of women, but frequently modern situations continued to be depicted in a highly traditional light. Indeed, examples of novels which did not have modern subject matter grafted on in the usual way are also seen during this period. An example of an extremely anachronistic novel with an urban setting is briefly discussed, while more space is devoted to an oddity for this phase, a period novel set in the countryside, which paradoxically achieves a relatively stronger realism, being less imbued with the "dreamlike" atmosphere which, in Zhang's fiction, is usually associated with rural values.

During the period of the war with Japan, Zhang Henshui was less concerned with an abstract "catching up with the times" than with meeting immediate wartime needs. Turning his attention to corruption in government and society, he sought a new form for his satire which would be less vulnerable to censorship. Drawing once more on his roots in traditional literature, Zhang wrote the linked-short-story novel Eighty-one Dreams. Via close analysis of selections from this work, the dissertation shows how, by couching his fiction in an explicit oneiric mode, the author achieved new success in eliminating the "dreamlikeness" which has made it difficult for many critics to take him seriously.

Although the form chosen for Eighty-one Dreams was not repeated, during the final productive phase of Zhang Henshui's career (ca. 1942-49), he achieved a new synthesis of the panoramic scope, inherited from traditional Chinese fiction, which characterised his early work, and a realism from which the "comfortingness" of the dreamlike has been removed. His last significant novel, The Root of all Evil, presents a much more challenging view of the world than is the case with his pre-war fiction. There is nothing anachronistic about the novel and it is a radically reformed piece of traditional writing, while retaining some of the features of the old-style Chinese novel, which Zhang believed to be to the taste of Chinese readers.

This thesis has been composed by myself and is my own work,

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped bring about the completion of this thesis. I shall mention by name only a few of those whose contributions were the most direct. First I must thank my teacher and supervisor, Dr John Chinnery, for his wisdom, for his faith in me and for his good humoured and patient guidance over the years. My second supervisor, Dr William Dolby, another of my very first teachers of Chinese, whom I am now honoured to have as a colleague, has been a constant source of inspiration and his scholarliness continues to provide an example for me to emulate. More particularly, his careful, thoughtful and sympathetic readings of early drafts were invaluable. Without Professor Bonnie McDougall's encouragement and advice while I was writing up I might never have got finished at all and I must thank her too for the scholarly example she represents and for being a very good boss indeed. At an earlier stage, Professor Harry Dickinson also helped to keep me on the academic straight and narrow, which seemed at the time too thick beset with teaching and administration to allow me to carry much in the way of research in my baggage. A special debt of gratitude is due to Don Starr, who performed quite astonishing heroics on my behalf in Peking Library, giving far more generously of his time than I had any right to expect, renowned for generosity though he may be. Hilary Chung provided a little bit of proofreading and a lot of wisdom. She should also be thanked for being one of the prime movers in a newly emerging community of research students in British sinology, an extremely exciting and inspiring development. Margaret Gall typed up my translations of Eighty-one Dreams and is ever a bright and cheerful, efficient and unflappable presence in the office. In the classroom, the lively minds of my students have also helped to make it all seem worthwhile. I must also thank the British Library's Inter-library Loans service, and Jill Evans and Tony Hyder for giving it a human face. On the subject of libraries and human faces, Liu Jing of Shandong University Library remains as warmly in my memory today as the catalogue rooms were bleak in late February 1988. Her unstinting help with sources and her friendship contributed greatly to the success of my six-month research trip. Professor Kong Fanjin of the Department of Chinese at Shanda contributed enormously to a deeper understanding of the processes of modern Chinese literature. I am of course indebted to the British Council, China's State Education Commission and the administration of Shandong University for the arrangement of my scholarship, while the Scottish Education Department funded me through seven years of higher education and two trips to China. Finally, I have been fortunate in my family, for its collectively cerebral yet down-to-earth atmosphere and for the love and comradeship of its individual members. The dedication is, however, to someone who has had had more to put up with on a day to day basis than any of the above.

T.McC.

To Lilian

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"The stream of modern Chinese literature has been broad enough to encompass not only the current of change, both gradual and rapid, but also the current of continuity, always latent and often active." (Tien-yi Li "Continuity and Change in Modern Chinese Literature", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 321, p.99.)

University of Edinburgh, Ph D, 1991



Introduction

Before about 1980, all a typical scholar of modern Chinese literature under the age of fifty would know of Zhang Henshui (original name Zhang Xinyuan) would be, at most, that as a writer of fiction in the traditional Chinese style he was the best known and most successful novelist of an aberration in the history of Chinese fiction known as the "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School" (*Yuanyang-Hudie Pai*) or the "Saturday School" (*Libailiu Pai*). This phenomenon, when not simply ignored, was most often attacked on the one hand as a decadent, unhealthy literary tendency which reflected "feudalistic thinking", and on the other as the product of capitalist commercialisation, catering to the vulgar tastes of the urban petty bourgeoisie. In the last ten years or so, while a reassessment of Saturday School writing has begun, a veritable Zhang Henshui revival has taken place. The unprecedented level of debate on the question of his membership or otherwise of the Saturday School and on the merits and demerits of his fiction has been accompanied by a considerable amount of biographical and bibliographical research and by massive republication of his novels.¹

I shall touch on the question of whether Zhang Henshui should be considered a member of the Saturday School in chapter one, but my main concern will be to show as concretely as possible how a variety of influences combined in his fiction to produce a literary path which, while very much his own, may be seen as a metaphor for the transition from traditional to modern Chinese fiction. The pioneers of the New Literature movement, the "May Fourth" writers who drew iconoclastic strength from the political upheaval surrounding that date in 1919², chose to miss out this transitional stage. If their adoption of foreign literary forms were presented as a way out of the straightjacket of indigenous forms, Zhang Henshui might have said that the Western suit they now sported was ill-fitting and unbecoming.

1. The overwhelming bulk of this activity has taken place in mainland China, but some of the most noteworthy scholarly contributions have come from the non-Chinese world. The steady trickle of interest in the author in Hong Kong has not experienced such a surge, while Taiwan has persisted in its almost total silence. Although the author of the only monograph in English on Zhang Henshui to date, Hsiao-wei Wang Rupprecht, was born in Taiwan, she is a citizen of the U.S.A., where she was educated. Apart from a brief mention in a history of Republican literature (*Yi Xueman*), the only sign of any interest in Zhang Henshui in Taiwan which I have seen is a 1978 (He-Luo Tushu: Taipei) edition of his most famous novel, *Fate in Tears and Laughter*. As regards publication of his novels, before 1980 only a few had seen the light of day under the People's Republic of China, during the 1950s. Since 1980 at least twenty have been republished on the mainland, some in several editions or reprints.

2. See Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, pp. 310-319.

In an article of 1944, Zhang wrote that:

I felt that the linked-chapter (*zhanghui*) novel was not entirely something to be abandoned. Otherwise, how come *The Story of the Stone* (*Hong Lou Meng*) and *The Water Margin* (*Shuihu Zhuan*) have become world classics? Naturally the linked-chapter novel has its deficiencies, but these deficiencies are not irredeemable (I of course am not the one to redeem them). Although the literature of the new school, on the other hand, was thoroughly progressive, its syntactic structure was not acceptable to ordinary people who were used to reading Chinese books and talking in the Chinese tongue.... I wished to do my poor best to work for such people. You may say that China's linked-chapter novels of old are as many as the particles of the mist on the ocean..., [but] if those people needed novels which wrote about modern things, where were they to seek them? If everyone disdained and abandoned the linked-chapter novel then it would seem that writers must bear some of the responsibility if those [the common] people were forever condemned to read stories of knights errant (*xiaoke*) spitting beams of white light, talented scholars (*caizi*) coming top in the imperial examinations and sensitive beauties (*jiaren*) secretly swearing undying devotion to them in secluded gardens. I would not be so bold as to claim I could shoulder such a responsibility, but I decided there was no harm in trying to cast bricks to attract jade³ (the fact that I have cast a great many bricks without any jade ever appearing is the reason I have been able to enjoy a little fame). As for methods of reforming the old linked-chapter novel, there seemed no harm in having a try there too.⁴

There are, as I shall discuss in chapter one below, major problems involved in assessing writers' attitudes to their art on the basis of their own pronouncements on the subject. Nevertheless, as long as aspects of it such as the obvious conventional humilities are treated with caution, the above passage provides an invaluable frame of reference for judging Zhang Henshui 'on his own criteria'. In it we may discern a positive attitude towards traditional Chinese fiction coupled with an awareness of its "deficiencies" and a belief that the new fiction had deficiencies of its own. We further see a commitment, however diffidently expressed, to "reform" the traditional novel, a commitment apparently motivated at least in part by a certain social conscience with regard to the ordinary reader and to modern content in fiction.

In addition to examining Zhang Henshui's fiction in the light of my interpretation of his own criteria, I shall draw on the work of other contributors to the revival of interest in his work and its background in early Republican (1910s and 1920s) popular fiction. Building on the work of such as Rupprecht, Link, Borthwick and Yuan Jin, I shall attempt to show ways in which Zhang was an inheritor of the essential qualities of Saturday School fiction and ways in which he attempted to remove some of the "deficiencies" he perceived in the genre. In order to do so I shall introduce the concept of "dreamlikeness" which I see as essential to Zhang's

3. "*pao zhuan yin yu*" - a stock phrase expressive of a humble desire that one's work may encourage better efforts in future.

4. "An open letter of thanks" (21-5-1944), in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), *Zhang Henshui Yanjiu*

"unreformed" fiction. I shall show how, while this "dreamlikeness" was far from the only traditional feature of the author's early work, it was to prove the most persistent and only began to make way, or be adapted, for a more modern realistic mode towards the end of his fully active literary career. Let us first define the necessary chronology more precisely.⁵

Zhang Henshui was born on the 18th of May, 1895 in Guangxin County (present-day Shangrao City), eastern Jiangxi Province. His family was from the county of Qianshan in south-west central Anhui Province and had risen to minor gentry status through agricultural and mercantile activity. Early in the second half of the nineteenth century his grandfather, Zhang Kaijia, raised a local militia to protect Qianshan against the armies of the Taiping rebellion and was enlisted into the imperial army. By the time of Zhang Henshui's birth, Zhang Kaijia had risen to a rank equivalent to brigadier (*xiezhen*⁶) and was serving in Guangxin. His third son, Zhang Henshui's father Zhang Yu, was also a soldier but soon after the birth of this, his first child, took up a position in Jingdezhen as a minor tax official. Zhang Henshui spent his first seventeen years in various places in Jiangxi to which his father was posted, including the capital Nanchang, apart from a period of a little more than a year spent in the ancestral home in Qianshan following the death of his grandmother in late 1905. Zhang had begun a traditional schooling based on the Chinese classics at the age of six. In 1909, when he was fourteen and the family had settled in Nanchang, he entered a new-style school and for the next three years he followed a modern Western-style curriculum including English and mathematics. In 1912, his father's sudden death put a permanent stop to recently announced plans for Zhang Henshui to go abroad to study and a temporary one to his education in general.

After a few months spent back in Qianshan, with the help of relatives Zhang was able to resume his studies, this time in Suzhou at the College for the Development of Mongolia and Tibet, which had been founded by Sun Yatsen. Zhang had been developing an interest in

5. The brief biographical sketch which follows is considered adequate for the purposes of this dissertation, which does not purport to be a "life and works" but rather a detailed study of what I consider to be the fundamental aspects of Zhang Henshui's fiction. The most detailed biographical source in English will be found in Rupprecht *Departure and Return*, Chapter 1. Apart from Rupprecht's sources, mainly Zhang's autobiographical writings (see Rupprecht's note 1 to Chapter 1 on page 203 of her book), I have used the "Biographical Chronicle of Zhang Henshui" (*Zhang Henshui Nianpu*) in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), *Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao*, pp. 188-228; Yuan Jin, *Zhang Henshui Pingzhuan* (*A Critical Biography of Zhang Henshui*) *passim* and Dong and Xu, *Xianhua Zhang Henshui* (*Talking About Zhang Henshui*) *passim*. Jonathan Spence's *The Search for Modern China* may be consulted for the historical background.

6. See Yuan (1988), p. 7 footnote.

fiction since an early age and had recently read Lin Shu's versions of western novels.⁷ In addition to the classical verse through which he sought to express the melancholy of his thwarted ambition, he now also attempted, without success, to earn himself some pocket money by sending a couple of short stories to *The Short Story Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo Yuebao*). Apart from a martial arts story he had written a few years earlier to entertain his younger brothers and sisters, this was Zhang's first attempt at writing fiction himself. Around this time Zhang chose the *nom de plume* "He-who-pines-for-flowers-and-bemoans-[the-flowing-of-]water" (*Chou-hua Hen-shui Sheng*) from Li Yu's melancholic lyric (*ci*) to the tune "Crows calling in the Night" ("Wu Ye Ti", sometimes also listed under the alternative title for this tune "Xiang Jian Huan").⁸ The following year, after Zhang's college had been closed down for its part in the abortive Second Revolution against the reactionary President Yuan Shikai, when his name first appeared in print in a minor journal edited by a relative in Hankou it was in the shortened form of this original pen-name: *Hen Shui*. For the rest of his career, this was by far the most commonly-used of Zhang's many pen names and was almost invariably the style in which he signed his fictional work for serial publication. Book editions of his novels were, with few exceptions, published under the name Zhang Henshui, which somewhere along the way supplanted his original name, Zhang Xinyuan.

Zhang's short stay in Suzhou in 1913 was his last concerted effort at completing his education. The next six years were unsettled, with Zhang spending time, in between short stays in

Qianshan, not only as a budding (unpaid) newspaperman in Hankou but also on tour with a

7. Zhang, *Memoirs*, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhifong, *Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao*, pp. 16-17. "Lin Shu was the most popular translator of European and American fiction during the first two decades of this century though he could read only Chinese.... His assistants rendered orally the original texts [of 180 novels and other works] into vernacular Chinese, which Lin then retranslated into the classical language." (Chow Tse-tung, *The May Fourth Movement*, pp. 64-65.

8. Li Yu (937-978) was the third and last ruler (r. 961-975) of the Southern Tang dynasty (937-975), one of the "ten kingdoms" in southern China during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. By the time Li Yu succeeded his father Li Jing (or Li Ying), also a noted poet, the Southern Tang was already threatened with extinction and he spent the last three years of his life as a prisoner of the first Song emperor. Among his *ci* poetry, which is generally characterised by poignant melancholy, the poem which was the inspiration for Zhang Henshui's pen-name is one of the best known: (*Lin hua xie liao chun hong...*) *The spring reds of the woodland flowers are faded, oh too soon! / Alas cold rains come at dawn and winds at dusk. / Tear-streaked rouge, drink-befuddled clinging / Not knowing when we may meet again. / Thus are regrets in this life as endless as the flowing of rivers to the sea.* In the final line, *Ren sheng chang hen shui chang dong!*, there is a natural break between the words *hen* (regret) and *shui* (water ["rivers"]). By taking these two characters for his *nom de plume*, Zhang Henshui changed the emphasis slightly, from life's regrets being like the flowing waters in their endlessness to the regrets being for the flowing of the water, a metaphor for the remorseless passage of time.

professional *wenmingxi*⁹ theatre company and even attempting to work his way to North China as a travelling medicine salesman. This bohemian existence was punctuated by attempts to resume some kind of formal education, but eventually Zhang found himself back working on a newspaper. This time, from January 1918 to autumn 1919, Zhang was formally on the payroll as an editor on the *Wan Jiang Ribao* (Anhui River Daily) in his native province's city of Wuhu.

By this time Zhang had written a few more stories and had been encouraged by the response from friends. In 1919 several of these and more recent works were published in *Wan Jiang Ribao* and elsewhere. Only two appear to have been preserved and these have not been available to me, but all reports indicate that up to this time Zhang Henshui's fiction was very much in the traditional popular style of stereotypical romance and flippant scandalmongery which characterises the "Saturday School" of which he is often counted a member.¹⁰ In 1919, however, excited by the wave of patriotism and new ideas of the May Fourth Movement, a side product of which would be the decline of the Saturday School, Zhang Henshui decided to go to Peking to have one last try at getting himself a modern education. In the event his hopes of attending Peking University classes while working to pay the fees came to nothing as he found himself having to work fifteen hours a day for news agencies and on newspaper editorial boards just to make ends meet. Burdened by the duty he felt to his family as his late father's heir, Zhang finally gave up thoughts of his own education. His fortunes beginning to improve with steadier and better paid journalistic work, and in 1922 he moved his family to Wuhu and arranged for his brothers and sisters to enter school there.

By 1926, when Zhang brought his siblings to the capital, he was well established as a newspaper editor and had begun to make a name for himself as a novelist. In that year the literary section which he edited for *Shijie Ribao* (The Daily World) was carrying not only his first important novel An Unofficial History of Peking (Chunming Waishi), begun in 1924, but also two others. By 1930, when An Unofficial History of Peking was published for the first time in a single book edition, Zhang was in great demand as the most popular novelist in north China and had attracted a commission for a novel from one of the most important journals in Shanghai, the hub of popular publishing in China. The novel he produced was the phenomenally successful Fate in Tears and Laughter (Tixiao Yinyuan), possibly the best-

9. *Wenmingxi* ("civilised [i.e. Western] drama") was a short-lived hybrid dramatic form which, promoted in China during the early part of the twentieth century, combined elements of traditional Chinese theatre with those of European drama before the full introduction of the latter in the 1930s.

selling Chinese novel of the twentieth century. For the next five years Zhang devoted his full energies to fiction, leaving his editorial positions in Peking and dividing his time between the former capital¹¹, Shanghai and other cities in the South as well as making a short trip to northwest China in 1934. In Peking, as well as the large residence which he rented for his family, Zhang found agreeable surroundings for his writing in the rooms set aside for him as director of the art college he had founded in 1931 with some of his royalties for his artist brother, Zhang Muye.

In 1935 Zhang agreed to help his former employer at *Shijie Ribao*, Cheng Shewo, to set up a new journal in Shanghai. At the expiry of the three months to which he had agreed he was advised against returning to Peking because of hostility from the authorities there. The latter were under pressure from the Japanese to clamp down on writers who had expressed opposition to the growing influence of Japan in North China, as Zhang had frequently done since the Japanese annexation of Manchuria in 1931. At the start of 1936, he went instead to Nanking to set up a newspaper of his own for the only time in his life. He remained in Nanking as proprietor of *Nanjingren Bao* (Nanjing People) until shortly before the fall of the city to the Japanese in December 1937. Following the government in its retreat westwards to the city of Chongqing in Sichuan, Zhang was appointed chief editor of the new Chongqing edition of *Xin Min Bao* (New People's Journal) and took charge of the paper's literary section. He lived with his third wife and their children in the Chongqing area for the rest of the war, while his other two wives and their children remained in the ancestral home in Qianshan.

In early 1946 Zhang Henshui returned north to found the Peking edition of *Xin Min Bao* and worked on the paper until his resignation in autumn 1948 brought his journalistic career to an end. His autobiography, *Memoirs of My Writing Career*, was published in *Xin Min Bao* between 1st January and 15th February 1949, but the Chinese Communist Party took control of Peking on 31st January and at the beginning of March Zhang was accused, in the same columns, of having collaborated with the KMT secret police in turning the paper into a reactionary organ. In June he suffered a stroke which left him paralysed down one side and impaired his powers of speech and memory, though he made a partial recovery. Zhang was admitted to the major writers' organisations under the new People's Republic of China and lived peacefully and comfortably in Peking with his large family until another stroke killed him on the 15th of February 1967.

11. The KMT (Nationalist) government under Chiang Kaishek had moved the capital to Nanking in 1927, whereafter Peking (Beijing) was known as Beiping. In this study I shall refer to the city as Peking throughout, except in the bibliography, where Chinese names are given for places of publication (except Hong Kong).

Various periodisations of Zhang Henshui's career in fiction have been suggested, all of which have their merits. For the purpose of this dissertation, I have discounted not only the formative period prior to the novel An Unofficial History of Peking, from which I have been unable to trace any of his works, but also the period after his 1949 illness, from which Zhang's only completed novels are a few rewritings of ancient legends, which although not without artistic merit for their genre, are unrepresentative of his fictional work. I shall subdivide the remainder of his career into the early period corresponding to the writing of his first two important novels (roughly 1924 to 1930), the prolific middle period during which Zhang made great efforts towards his stated aim of reforming the traditional novel (1930-1937), and the later period of 1938 to 1949 when, as I shall show, he made the greatest progress in this regard. My chapters one and two deal in turn with the first two periods, which I shall refer to as his 1920s and 1930s phases for convenience. The final two chapters are devoted to the later period, chapter three being a study of Zhang's Eighty-one Dreams (1938-41), the pivotal work at its start.

Not only is the study of Zhang Henshui and the Saturday School in its infancy, with a lot of basic groundwork still to be done, but this is also true of much of Chinese literature in general. In this context, where for instance modern literary theory has yet to be brought into full play even in the broader field let alone in "Henshui studies", this dissertation can only hope to be another brick thrown to attract jade, though I shall try to compensate for the lack of modern methodology by adopting a holistic, eclectic approach. I should like to have undertaken more in the way of comparative study between Zhang's work and his traditional antecedents and progressive contemporaries, but have not had space. In any case, as Doleželová-Velingerová has pointed out, in an underdeveloped field, detailed particularist studies are necessary to offset the shortcomings of generalist and comparative work.¹²

Another limitation is that any average book-length study of a writer as prolific as Zhang Henshui is bound to be incomplete. The most complete bibliographical source lists 101 novels and novellas (predominantly the former, and long novels at that) and 33 short stories reliably attributed to our author.¹³ Very few of the short stories have survived¹⁴ and only forty-nine (around two thirds) of the longer works are believed to have been published in book form, of which I have been able to locate forty-seven. Even after discounting seven books

12. The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century, pp. 3-4.

13. Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 377-698.

which fall outside the chronological span of my study and the dozen or so I have not found time to read, that still leaves an unmanageable number. The nine works I have chosen for close study are representative of the general trends.

CHAPTER ONE

The Early Period: 1924-1930

My discussion begins with An Unofficial History of Peking, a novel begun in 1924 and generally known as Zhang Henshui's first. I shall refer to the two other important novels I touch on in this chapter, A Grand Old Family and Fate in Tears and Laughter as Zhang's second and third novels respectively. The facts are more complicated than this suggests, since our novelist had been publishing fiction since 1919¹ and not only Fate in Tears and Laughter but also several other novels were completed while A Grand Old Family, Zhang Henshui's longest novel of all, was still continuing its newspaper serialisation. To keep things simple, I follow the rather imprecise practice used by many, including Zhang Henshui himself, who refers to the three novels under discussion as his first, second and third novels in one of his autobiographical writings.²

The first two novels, An Unofficial History of Peking (Chunming Waishi, 1924-30) and A Grand Old Family (Jinfen Shijia, 1927-33)³, are also the two longest and among the most popular of Zhang Henshui's career. These novels were serialised in the literary sections⁴ of Shijie Wanbao and Shijie Ribao (The Evening World and The Daily World, the Peking

1 Two works of fiction from 1919 listed alongside three others of that year in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong's "Chronology of Zhang Henshui's writings" (Zhang and Wei, Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 377.) have survived in a contemporary anthology. I have, however, been unable to locate this book and must therefore follow most other writers in dismissing the year 1919 as a false dawn of Zhang Henshui's career in fiction.

2 "My Life and Work", Ming Bao Yuekan, 133, p.31.

3 Similar complications for chronology to those mentioned in my first two paragraphs result throughout Zhang's career from the fact that almost all his novels were first serialised and sometimes not published in book form until much later. For this reason, dates given at first mentions of novels are for the period of serialisation. Dates of the first book edition of each novel are given in my bibliography, but in certain cases mention of such dates in the text has seemed desirable.

4 An Unofficial History of Peking was carried in the "Yeguang" ("Night Radiance") literary *fukan* of "The Evening World", A Grand Old Family in that of "The Daily World", "Ming Zhu" ("Bright Pearl"). Although the word *fukan* is defined in Chinese-English dictionaries as "supplement", *fukan* are often merely sections of newspapers. Certainly this is the case not only with The People's Daily today, but also with the "Zui Hou Guantou" ("Last Bastion") *fukan* of Chongqing's Xin Min Bao in which Zhang Henshui's Eighty-one Dreams was serialised around 1940 (see Chapter 3 below). The Dictionary of Modern Chinese (Xiandai Hanyu Cidian, Beijing, 1985) defines *fukan* as "special page(s) or column(s) in a newspaper carrying art and literary work, academic articles etc." I therefore translate the word as "section" throughout, since this word can most accurately convey the different sizes and forms involved. Some *fukan* are true supplements in the sense in which the English word is usually understood, an example being the famous Peking "Chenbao Supplement" which carried so much early May Fourth writing, including Lu Xun's best-known work, The True Story of Ah Q. Chenbao's original *fukan* was just one page of the newspaper until a separate sheet began to be published alongside it on 12th October 1920, calling itself "Chenbao Fujuan", *fujian* being a fancy word for *fukan* (see Zhang Jinglu, Materials on the History of Modern Chinese Publishing [Zhongguo

newspapers on which Zhang worked), appearing from April 1924 to January 1929 and from February 1927 to May 1932 respectively. Although Fate in Tears and Laughter (Tixiao Yinyuan) was serialised and published in book form within the year 1930, this third novel marks a definite progression towards a new phase of Zhang's career.⁵ The first two novels, on the other hand, may be regarded as representative of Zhang's early period. Thus, although A Grand Old Family was not completed until 1932 and even An Unofficial History of Peking was only revised for its first book edition in 1930, I consider these two to belong to Zhang Henshui's "1920s phase", while Fate in Tears and Laughter marks the true beginning of his 1930s writing.

According to the novelist's daughter, Zhang Mingming, An Unofficial History of Peking and A Grand Old Family were among the favourites of the author himself⁶ and to this day, along with Fate in Tears and Laughter, these two seem to be among Zhang's most popular novels, if only to judge from the number of copies of each in the lending section of Shandong University Library in 1988, and by their more than well-thumbed state relative to other novels by Zhang Henshui, or indeed anyone else, in the library. They also rank among the finest of his writings.

Like many of the old Chinese novels, such as The Water Margin⁷, The Scholars⁸ and even more like the novels of the late Qing which were their closest antecedents⁹, An Unofficial History of Peking and A Grand Old Family appear lacking in structure to the Western reader. Compared to Western realist fiction, their central plot is relatively weak and subsidiary characters and storylines are profuse. Rupprecht has shown how Zhang Henshui in fact used the traditional Chinese artistic principle of "bipolar unity" as the structural basis of these two

Xiandai Chuban Shiliao], pp. 216-217.)

- 5 Details of the dates of publication of the three novels, including details of the first book editions, are found in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp.377-378, p.413 and p.502. In the separate list of book editions on pp.688-698 of this book, the date of the first edition of A Grand Old Family is mistakenly given as 1932 instead of 1933. I assume that the date of December 1931 given on page 502 for the first edition of Fate in Tears and Laughter is also an error and that the correct date is December 1930, as given on page 688 in the "Index of Book Editions" and on page 241 as the date of the edition in which the "Author's Preface to Fate in Tears and Laughter" appeared. The circumstantial evidence of the widely known massive popularity of the novel also supports the date of December 1930 for the first edition, since it seems highly unlikely that Zhang and his publishers would delay cashing in on this success for as long as a year after the novel had completed serialisation on 30th November 1930 (Zhang and Wei, p. 502). The fact that a 1931 "third edition" is listed in the National Library of China also tends to support my assumption.
- 6 Zhang Mingming, Reminiscences of My Father Zhang Henshui, p. 44.
- 7 Shi Nai'an and Luo Guanzhong, Shuihu zhuan (14th century).
- 8 Wu Jingzi, Rulin Waishi (ca. 1730).
- 9 See Doleželová-Velingerová, The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century.

novels.¹⁰ As well as providing a clear insight into the aesthetic foundations of Zhang Henshui's writing and demonstrating the novelist's indebtedness to Cao Xueqin and The Story of the Stone (Honglou Meng, 1791¹¹), Rupprecht's analysis helps to explain the success and appeal of An Unofficial History of Peking and A Grand Old Family in the light of this traditional aesthetic.

Briefly summarised, Rupprecht's thesis is that although the central storyline and characters may be obscured for long periods in the novels, the author maintains a constant juxtaposition of contrasting themes (or motifs) and moods, thus weaving subsidiary plots into the fabric of the novel. In this way, it does not matter that the central characters and their storyline are lost sight of for a chapter or more at a time,¹² as long as the moods of joy and sadness, calm and restlessness and so on continue to alternate with one another from one episode, central or subsidiary, to the next.

Although Rupprecht's analysis is based purely on literary features, she would presumably explain the popularity of these two novels, in spite of their lack of obvious cohesiveness, on the underlying structure which she describes. Thus, the average contemporary reader of these novels would not require a more obvious structure, in terms of strong central plot and clear definition of protagonist and central characters, as long as he or she could discern the underlying pattern of contrasting and complementary themes and moods which Zhang Henshui had supplied.

Zhang Henshui's conception of himself as a novelist

In considering the strengths and weaknesses of these first two novels and seeking evidence of artistic improvement in his subsequent writings, it is important to attempt to assess such evidence of authorial intention as is available from Zhang's non-fictional writing, even if the final analysis must be based on the fiction itself.

10 Rupprecht (1987), Chapter 2, esp. pp. 34-40.

11 This is the date of the first 120 chapter edition.

12 In An Unofficial History of Peking all the central characters are posted missing on one occasion for as long as 64 of the novel's 1400 pages or fully four of its 86 chapters (1985 ed., pp. 859- 924).

In order to assess Zhang's own testimony, we must first attempt to judge whether he really considered himself an artist at all where his novels were concerned. Zhang was a journalist turned newspaper editor by trade and admitted that many of his novels were written to fill column space, as favours to editors of other journals or, quite simply, to earn the money necessary to support his sizeable family. For example, in his longest work of autobiography, Memoirs of My Writing Career (hereafter Memoirs), Zhang wrote of two of his early novels that:

These two novels were commissioned because of [the success of] An Unofficial History of Peking. My whole family, meanwhile, had moved to Peking by this time and the financial burdens on me were very heavy. To be honest, my writing was done entirely for gain, and no longer out of creative impulse as a few years previously.¹³

and

Around the years 1930 and 1931 was my busiest creative period. In fact...I did not need all that much money for my living expenses, and the reason I was so busy was to pay debts of gratitude to acquaintances.¹⁴

These quotes not only show the financial and social pressures on Zhang to publish, they also mention another important motivation, that of "creative impulse". In the first quote Zhang refers to his earliest writing having been solely motivated by this desire to create. It may be that when not pressed by financial or social obligations, the creative impulse came into play again. This does not, however, necessarily imply a serious commitment to writing. Such an impulse might just as easily be linked to an idle fascination with seeing one's name in print or with fantasies of achieving the elevated status of a writer. Certainly Zhang indicated in Memoirs that such a desire simply to see his own name in print had been a motive in his very earliest writings.¹⁵

In view of these aspects to Zhang's motivation for writing, and from certain of his non-fictional writings, it is not always clear from his own statements how seriously Zhang concerned himself with the artistic merit of his novels. If the denigrations of the artistic worth of his own fictional works that are to be found in Zhang's own essays are sincere then that must have a bearing on any assessment of his pronouncements on the subject.

13 Memoirs, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p.37. The 1944 preface to I Alone and the novel's first few lines (1948 ed., pp. i-ii and 1-2) are another prime source for autobiographical references to the profit motive and to the lowly status of fiction (see translated extract on pp. 24-25 below).

14 Ibid. p.52; "weile renqing zhai" - I have translated this phrase rather literally, but it is my impression that Zhang meant the "debt", if it could be considered such at all, was to social expectations of politeness, rather than to repay any actual favours conferred on him by those who asked him for manuscripts.

15 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 29.

Zhang Henshui is no exception to the general rule that the sincerity of a writer's own pronouncements on his or her writings must be treated as suspect. Conventional modesty on the one hand and self-defence on the other can never be fully discounted when attempting to interpret his autobiographical and auto-critical writings. His prefaces must be treated with caution for these reasons and for an additional one: the possibility that they represent an extension of the narrative voice assumed for the novel itself.

Apart from the various prefaces, the major sources are two autobiographical works in which Zhang supplies a considerable quantity of ostensibly auto-critical assessment of his novels. The first, Memoirs of my writing career (Wode xiezuo shengya huiyi, 1949), is around 50 000 characters long. The second, "My Life and Work" ("Wode shenghuo he chuanguo", ca. 1965), is only about 15 000 words long. Not only is the shorter, later piece far less detailed, as one would expect, it is also extremely poorly written and, according to Rupprecht, less accurate than its precursor,¹⁶ on which it is to a certain extent based. In spite of having been polished by one of Zhang's children prior to publication,¹⁷ it still appears as a series of confused and rambling jottings held together only by chronological arrangement. The poor quality of this document is puzzling, since Zhang Henshui's "old stories retold" of the 1950s, uninspired as they are, show that his cerebral haemorrhage had not impaired his faculties to the extent that he could no longer compose a tight piece of prose. While "My Life and Work" remains useful for certain details, the longer work is undoubtedly the more reliable source. It too must be treated with some caution, however, since it was written between late 1948 and early 1949, no more than a few weeks before the entry of the Communists into Peking. Indeed, the last third of Memoirs was published after the "liberation" of Zhang's adopted home and certain of his statements in it may have been influenced by this turn of events. Zhang may have been trying to show regret for his anti-Communist stance during the late 1940s and to ingratiate himself with the Communist sympathisers who were apparently responsible for his resignation as chief editor of the Peking *Xin Min Bao* in autumn 1948.¹⁸

16 Rupprecht (1987), p.203, Chapter I, n.1.

17 Ibid.

18 For details, or rather hints, of this sequence of events see Rupprecht (1987), pp. 26-27 and Yuan (1988), pp. 304-341. Zhang's mentions, late on in Memoirs, of his association with the Communist front organ *New China Daily* (*Xinhua Ribao*), and of publication of his novels in Yan'an are perhaps indications of a wish to portray himself in the best possible light to his new masters (Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 72, 72, 73. See also p. 117 below.

When Zhang wrote for instance of An Unofficial History of Peking's "lack of revolutionary spirit"¹⁹ he may have had one eye on the current revolution, of which he had surely had no inkling in the mid-1920s.

It appears from his autobiographical, auto-critical and prefatory writings that Zhang Henshui generally accepted the traditional view of fiction as belonging to the "*xiao dao*" or "ignoble arts", defined by Cihai, 1979, as the "Confucianist designation of doctrines and arts other than Ritual, Music, Government and Education". The following extract, from the preface to A Grand Old Family, is fairly typical of Zhang's posture in this regard:

"... but after all where is the need [to make my novel be of benefit to the reader]? It is enough for me if my readers, at the end of a day's work, over a cup of tea or a glass of wine, when very bored or just when the fancy takes them, should pick up my book for a bit of a read to while away a little time, and that the words I have written should not actually lead them onto an unrighteous path. I do not dare talk of ideology, nor dare I talk of literature. If I write a novel and those who read it cannot deny that it is a novel, then its mission has been fulfilled. Now there are those who reproach me for being shallow and vulgar, I am content to be considered shallow and vulgar; there are those who reproach me for being inconsequential, I am content to be considered inconsequential. Actually fiction is popular writing, and one who writes it can scarcely avoid being shallow, vulgar and inconsequential. It is for others to contribute renowned works of great profundity to the literature of China, I do not dare claim any wisdom in this regard. Knowing this, there should be no need to ask whether or not A Grand Old Family is a true story or what its meaning is."²⁰

Other examples include such statements as "having scratched my living for many years from [writing] vulgar books..., I dare not attempt to transmit my ancestors' [martial] legacy through this ignoble art" (Preface to Swords and Dulcimers²¹); and "these, however, are novels of pure literature, not something an unstudied person such as I could aspire to" (Preface to Fate in Tears and Laughter²²). While such self-dismissive statements are common, not only in the world of traditional Chinese fiction, but also in that of the new May Fourth writing and even in some Western writing, and there is no reason to take them at face value, the traditionalist emphasis of Zhang's statements of this sort is striking. Another way in which he frequently damns fiction is to say that it "is not fit to enter the hall of Great Refinement" (*bu deng Daya zhi tang*)²³. This may be linked to indications in Zhang's writings that he was devoted to certain classical genres which he would presumably have considered to have a place of their

19 See below, p. 21.

20 A Grand Old Family (1985), pp. 1327-1328. See also the 1944 preface to I Alone (see n. 13 above and the translated extract on pp. 24-25 below).

21 "Jian-dan Qin-xin Zixu" in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 238.

22 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 240.

23 e.g. Eighty-one Dreams (1946), p. 2.

own in this literary hall of fame. At least until his early days in Peking in 1919 Zhang was more interested in *ci* poetry than any other literary genre²⁴ and the pride he professed to taking in one of the most overtly poetic elements in his fiction, namely the chapter-title couplets,²⁵ also reflects this.

In this context it appears that Zhang Henshui's expressions of diffidence about his fiction may contain at least an element of genuine feeling that this was not the most worthy of literary pursuits. He gives the impression of having been a frustrated classical literatus, writing fiction for a variety of reasons among which a serious sense of artistic mission was not necessarily paramount.

The literary Chinese, and particularly the poetry which appears in Zhang's novels, have been highly praised,²⁶ and his non-fictional classical prose has also been highly regarded in some quarters.²⁷ All this tends to support the notion that Zhang Henshui was more interested in classical literature than in fiction and that his classical writings may even be superior in quality though much less significant in quantity than his fiction. Yet Zhang was at times just as dismissive of his poetry and prose²⁸ as of his fiction, which leads one to the conclusion that his self-denigratory statements must all be treated with great caution, since there are obviously complex and conflicting forces at work here.

Outright positive statements about fiction and his contribution to it are rare in Zhang Henshui's writings, but one does find indications of a more positive attitude than that suggested by some of those writings which may be partly influenced by modesty. In 1931 Zhang wrote of plans to compile an Outline History of Chinese Fiction.²⁹ He also regularly wrote research articles on the classic novel The Water Margin and even published a collection

24 See Memoirs, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 30.

25 See below.

26 See Dong and Xu (1987), p. 136 (quoted below, p. 29) and pp. 195-202, esp. p. 198; also Yuan (1988), pp. 93-94; see also pp. 41-45 below for my analysis of some of the *shi* verses which appear in An Unofficial History of Peking, showing Zhang's mastery of the form.

27 See Zhang Mingming (1984), pp.77-80, and King-fai Tam, "The Significance of the Zhang Henshui Revival", p. 41. Both writers, and also Sima Xiao, whom Zhang Mingming quotes on p. 80 of her book, also claim that Zhang Henshui himself had a far higher opinion of his prose than he admitted in the passage cited below (note 28).

28 See "An open letter of thanks" in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 278-279 (but see note 27 above).

29 "My Career in Fiction", in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p.276.

of these as a book.³⁰ Although Zhang never finished his history of fiction and the quality of his writings on The Water Margin is not of the first order, the mere fact of his engagement in such projects is evidence of a serious interest in fiction and a further indication that his dismissive pronouncements when talking of his own novels may largely have been made out of modesty or self-defence.³¹

Zhang Henshui wrote that he developed an interest in fiction from an early age and justifies this by pointing to the contrast that was evident to him as a child between the fictional approach and the staple classics of his elementary education. In Memoirs Zhang writes that in the midst of the mindless rote-learning of the classics to which he was subjected from the age of seven, when he happened to overhear a passage from Mencius being taught to two somewhat older pupils, he was struck by the realisation that there was actually a story to it. Zhang describes this incident, occurring when he was about eight years old, as giving him his first "handhold" on the hitherto steep and slippery cliff-face of book-learning.³²

This is not purely an indictment of the traditional Chinese education system as providing precious little to stimulate the minds of young students. It is also an affirmation of the intrinsic value, or at least appeal, of fiction.

In Memoirs, which has been identified above as the most authoritative of Zhang Henshui's autobiographical writings, while the author admits that certain novels are inferior, there are few outright statements in which he downgrades the quality or worth of his fiction in general. The few affirmations of quality which appear in this essay are even more low key, as for instance where Zhang Henshui writes of An Unofficial History of Peking that "this book is, of course, one of my finest. But in my view it cannot be considered among my essential works."³³ There are some important implications of this statement. Firstly, Zhang has not shied away from using the word "fine" in a way which implies not only that he considers An Unofficial History of Peking a fine piece of writing but also that it is not the only fine work he has written. Furthermore, in talking of "essential works" ("*daibiaozuo*")³⁴ the author implies

30 Zhang, Shuihu Renwu Lunzan, Chongqing, 1944.

31 See also Yuan (1988), pp. 156-157 for a perhaps over-generous view of Zhang's contribution to early attempts by modern scholarship at a reassessment of traditional Chinese fiction.

32 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 11.

33 Ibid., p. 38.

34 I choose "essential" here to translate *daibiao* since the English "representative" is a far more neutral term than *daibiao* is in such a context.

that Zhang Henshui is to be considered a serious writer, since this term would normally only be used of writing accepted as true literature. Another important aspect to this statement is that it is the introduction to a list of specific ways in which the author felt dissatisfied with An Unofficial History of Peking.³⁵ Although this has the obvious effect of qualifying the mildly affirmatory tone of the sentence quoted, the context as a whole indicates a serious attitude to fiction itself.

Similarly, in the preface to Shoot Arrows at the Sun (Wan Gong Ji), Zhang's 1932 collection of anti-Japanese writings, he wrote some lines which are typical of the way he would self-defensively denigrate the worth of fiction before going on to justify it:

As to fiction, it is a literature of idle amusement and a vulgar literature. Its style is base and devoid of lofty ideas, having no bearing on affairs of national importance. Yet there are things which portentous words of great significance cannot encompass, while novels, because they describe actual things and portray real objects, not shirking petty detail, can touch on anything and everything. Other literary genres do not have this capacity.³⁶

In addition to the evidence above showing that at least to a certain extent Zhang Henshui considered himself to have a serious artistic mission as a novelist, there are some other indications of this. In Memoirs, Zhang writes for instance that a turning point in his attitude to fiction came at the age of fifteen with his first reading the literary criticism of Jin Shengtian, who above any other of the "ancients" affirmed the value of fiction.³⁷ Zhang does not make much here of any direct influence this may have had on his attitude to fiction, merely mentioning that, having read Jin's commentary to The Water Margin, he read Zhuangzi and The Western Chamber next because of Jin's appreciation of them. In the following paragraph, however, he writes that "by this time my reading of fiction had drawn away from [mere] amusement with stories and had become literary appreciation".³⁸ One may at least assume that the young Zhang Henshui's reading of Jin's literary criticism gave him more confidence in the worth of the time he was spending reading fiction in spite of the disapproval of his elders.³⁹ Yuan Jin quotes a passage from Zhang's early novella A Fiction Fan in the

35 See below, p. 21.

36 "Wan Gong Ji Zixu" in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 260.

37 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 16.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

39 Zhang mentions his father's disapproval in "My Life and Work", Ming Bao Yuekan, 132, pp. 74-75.

Underworld (Xiaoshuomi Hunyou Difu Ji, 1919) which confirms that the budding novelist looked on Jin Shengtan as a kind of patron saint of fiction and other "xiaodao" writing and called him as an irreproachable witness to its value.⁴⁰

On the other hand, in addition to the indications mentioned above, there are further instances of a less serious attitude. In Zhang's discussion of the process of writing his first three major novels, the general impression conveyed is one of a serious commitment to write as well as possible and to learn from experience. He writes for instance that because of the length of time over which An Unofficial History of Peking was written and serialised, he experienced difficulties keeping track of his characters and storylines, and that therefore, starting with A Grand Old Family, he began a practice of drawing up an outline plot before commencing a novel and keeping a record of the names, characteristics and relationships of its characters.⁴¹ When he comes to talk about a fundamental difference, that of length, between Fate in Tears and Laughter and the first two novels, however, far from dwelling on the virtues of eliminating extraneous material, Zhang writes that he was embarrassed by the positive critical reaction to the tighter structure of Fate in Tears and Laughter since his motive for making it shorter had been only to save himself work.⁴²

In the end it is not possible, on the basis of Zhang Henshui's autobiographical, auto-critical and prefatory writings, to say with any certainty just how profound his commitment to fiction as art was. In quantitative terms, the sheer amount of evidence indicating the lack of such a commitment certainly appears to be greater than the contraindicative evidence. Indeed such evidence of a more positive attitude to the role of fiction as one can find frequently tends to justify its social and moral function more than its intrinsic artistic worth. Yet the fact that there is any affirmation at all of the latter represents one way in which Zhang Henshui differs from the Saturday School in which he is frequently included. Yuan Jin points out that the Saturday School, while not advocating utter escapism, separated fiction out as a realm of pure "entertainment":

40 Yuan (1988), p. 53.

41 See Memoirs in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 40-41 and "My Life and Work", Ming Bao Yuekan, 133, p. 30. Though Zhang does not in fact specifically and unequivocally link the beginning, with A Grand Old Family, of his practice of mapping out characters and plot before starting a novel to the problem of inconsistency he encountered in the writing of An Unofficial History of Peking, a reading of these two autobiographical sources leads one to make the connection.

42 "My Life and Work", in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 275.

For them, journalism and editorial writing were the only weapons with which to fight; novels were for entertainment and the gulf between the social functions of these two was unbridgable.⁴³

Whilst here again it is the social function of fiction which is in focus, the charge of "entertainmentism" (*quweizhuyi*) is one with which the Saturday School is frequently damned as non-serious.

"Third Generation Disciple of the Saturday School"

Zhang Henshui is often regarded not only as a member of the "Saturday School" or "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School" of the early twentieth century but as its chief exponent in the post-May 4th era. I shall discuss the general characteristics of this school below. Zhang himself contributed very little to debate on this school and to the question of whether or not he should be considered as belonging to it. In one of his very few references to the question he writes:

People nowadays are ignorant of the facts and believe that the "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School" is the same as the "Saturday School": this is in fact a huge mistake. The latter was ideologically much more progressive than the former and "Saturday School" writing was at the very least ten times more consummately formed than that of its precursor. In saying this, however, I am not at all claiming that I am a member of the "Saturday School" and therefore far superior to the "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School". In fact, when I first sold a novel...even the "Saturday School"...had already been swamped by the great waves of the May 4th Movement. Even if I can count as a member of the school, I'm not a second generation disciple like Mencius but third or fourth generation like Xunzi.⁴⁴

It is regrettable that Zhang Henshui does not elaborate on his somewhat eccentric view of the difference between the "Saturday School" and the (less fortunately named, for the purposes of English translation) "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School"⁴⁵ and an even greater pity that he doesn't describe specific ways in which he considered "Saturday School" writing - and

43 Yuan (1988), p. 43.

44 "An open letter of thanks" (May, 1944), Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), *Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao*, p. 279.

45 One of the names comes from a major popular journal, *Libailiu* (*Saturday*), while the other is a derogatory tag referring to the conventional sentimental-romantic images said to characterise the work of the school. Most commentators regard the terms as synonymous. The best discussion of the relative merits of the two terms (and also the little used one "Old-style Republican Fiction", an attempt to apply a non-evaluative label) is by Fan Boqun, who prefers the term "Saturday School" but concludes that the "broader definition" of "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies" (See Link (1981), pp. 7-8) should be used because it alone has achieved widespread acceptance (Fan, "A further discussion on the Saturday School", *Xin Wenxue Luncong*, 5 (1982), pp. 157-158). I choose the term Saturday School not only for its manageability in English, but also because I agree with Fan that it is less misleading and because the paucity of writing in English on the school allows me to use "Saturday School" regardless of the greater currency of the other term in Chinese.

presumably also, in spite of his denial, his own work - to be superior to that of the "Mandarin Duck and Butterflies School", but these questions are best considered within a discussion of Zhang's fiction itself, and so we turn without further delay to his first novel.

An Unofficial History of Peking

In Memoirs, Zhang Henshui lists among faults he finds himself in An Unofficial History of Peking (a) its lack of revolutionary spirit due to the continuing influence of the "talents and beauties" tradition; (b) the tendency, in spite of the author's considerable efforts, for the major characters to be lost sight of amidst the vagaries of the complex plot; and (c) the time-bound nature of the novel.⁴⁶ The first and the last are indicative of ways in which this novel is not entirely successful in "taking the path of The Scholars and Exposures of the Official World",⁴⁷ let alone imitating The Story of the Stone, while the second is the direct result of Zhang's novel inheriting the major weakness of these earlier satirical works, in spite of his determination to overcome them and give his novel a stronger continuity by emphasising the role of the central characters and plot.⁴⁸

Let us begin our discussion of An Unofficial History of Peking by dealing in turn with these three areas in which the author himself found fault with his first major novel, while exercising a proper caution over his motivation in pointing them out.

The "time-bound nature of the novel" and "the vagaries of the plot"

An Unofficial History of Peking was serialised over a period of almost five years in the literary section of Peking's *Evening World* newspaper. Revised for book publication, the first complete edition of the novel (World Book Co.: Shanghai, 1930) consists of eighty-six chapters and nearly 900,000 Chinese characters.

46 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 38.

47 Ibid., pp. 33-34. "Exposures of the Official World" refers to Li Baojia's Guanchang Xianxing Ji (1903).

48 Ibid., p. 34.

The central character of the novel is Yang Xingyuan, a young journalist from Anhui living in the capital of China during the troubled period of warlord rule, the mid-1920s. There are two successive central plots: two doomed love affairs involving Yang Xingyuan, first with the virgin prostitute (*qing guanren*) Li Yun, who dies in Chapter 22, and then with the poet and private tutor Li Dongqing⁴⁹, who refuses to marry him and for whom he pines to death by the end of the novel. Although this pivotal storyline is maintained throughout the book, and is told with a high degree of internal consistency⁵⁰, there are major digressions and it occupies a relatively small fraction of the whole novel. The digressions take the form of satirical anecdotes, pointing up the decadent lifestyle of characters Yang Xingyuan (or one of the other major characters) encounters or is told about by other characters, or portraying the corruption and turmoil of the times in general terms. In the case of third-hand accounts, the narrative may depart completely from the central characters for a chapter or more at a time,⁵¹ and even when Yang Xingyuan is an eyewitness he is usually in the role of the type of linking character found in the late-Qing satirical novels of the Scholars tradition in that he is not fully involved, merely providing the link whereby the anecdotes are brought into the novel. There is, however, rarely a reverse process of the anecdotes informing the central plot let alone advancing it. The anecdotes generally exist for their own sake. It might even be said that the central plot exists merely for the sake of the anecdotal satire, to provide a continuous link which is not obtrusive because it has its own intrinsic interest and "naturally" carries the reader from one anecdote to the next.

In Wu Woyao's Strange Things Eyewitnessed over Twenty Years (*Ershi Nian Mudu zhi Guai Xianzhuang*, 1909), one of the representative works of the group of "novels of exposure"⁵² of the late Qing dynasty, the linking character, "The Man With Nine Lives" (*Jiu-si-yi-sheng*), who is also the narrator, is more often an observer of the events described than a participator. This technique of using a single linking character to lend cohesion to wide-ranging satire was an advance on the loose structure of Wu Jingzi's The Scholars. Zhang Henshui further refined the technique by making Yang Xingyuan a true protagonist with a storyline of his own in An

49 Since the quite distinct surnames of the novel's two heroines are not apparent in *pinyin* transcription without diacritics I shall henceforth refer to Li Dongqing only by her given name.

50 There are some inconsistencies: e.g. on p. 251 of the 1985 Peking edition the prostitute Huajun, a colleague of Yang Xingyuan's beloved Li Yun and well known to him, suddenly appears as the wife of Yang's own close intimate and colleague He Jianchen, without there having been any reference to their getting married: it is as if this must have happened while Zhang was preoccupied with relating some tangential plotline or other; an example of more basic, minor errors may be seen on p. 254 when a character known hitherto as Zhang Xuemeng becomes Zhang Ximeng.

51 See note 12 above.

52 See Lu Hsun, A Brief History of Chinese Fiction, Chapter 28.

Unofficial History of Peking. Yet the reader today can find little interest in the profusion of satirical anecdotes which have almost entirely lost the topical relevance they originally possessed. The central plot retains interest for today's reader but is seriously obscured by the overabundance of tenuously linked satirical anecdotes. It is these anecdotes which are responsible for what Zhang Henshui termed the "time-bound nature" and the "vagaries of the plot" of An Unofficial History of Peking.

Liu Ts'un-yan writes that "for a perceptive understanding of the social surroundings of the old capital in the twenties, there is no work which will stand comparison with the graphic and lively style of Zhang's An Unofficial History of Peking".⁵³ Liu is heaping his praise on precisely the aspect of Unofficial History of Peking in which the author himself saw the limitation that it did not wear well.

Similarly, in his preface to the 1985 Peking reprint of An Unofficial History of Peking, Zuo Xiaohong does his old friend, Zhang Henshui, no favours in this regard by confirming suspicions that the author had real-life incidents and people in mind when relating the anecdotes which abound in the novel. Zuo entitles his article "It was a wild history" ("*Shi yeshi*")⁵⁴ and writes that even he and others of his and Zhang's generation no longer remember the details of the real-life models.⁵⁵ Although the sum total of the anecdotal satire contained in the work gives the reader a general picture of Peking society and politics of the time, and there are even a few which relate to identifiable and enduringly interesting historical events on which the fiction sheds an unusual light, so many of these subplots are in themselves of such little importance to the overall message of the book that their inclusion is not worth the violence which is done to the plot.

53 Liu Ts'un-yan ed., Chinese Middlebrow Fiction, p. 36.

54 The word *yeshi* denotes an "unofficial" history less official still than the *waishi* of An Unofficial History of Peking. It implies a mischievous, devil-may-care exposé, perhaps even a certain delight in exposing the sordid side of the events it chronicles.

55 Dong and Xu (Talking about Zhang Henshui, 1987) disagree, asserting that "even readers today only need to do a very little comparison [between An Unofficial History of Peking and] historical facts to be able still with little difficulty to distinguish the originals of the characters in the book...; it is quite possible to read An Unofficial History of Peking as a wild history of the early Republic" (p. 132.). Yet, though they cite a few examples of recognisable caricatures, and although Yuan Jin has provided a "key" to the novel, identifying 27 real life figures who appear under disguised names in the novel (Yuan [1988], pp. 107-108), I would maintain that the majority of "factional" anecdotes in the vastness of this novel must long since have lost their topical relevance.

As Rupprecht has shown, Zhang used bipolar unity to weave subplots and anecdotes more tightly into the narrative whole.⁵⁶ This structural principle would have been more effective if Zhang had left out such extraneous material and concentrated more on his main plot and chief protagonists. The fact that it has taken careful analysis to discover evidence of this structural principle at work in An Unofficial History of Peking seems to indicate that Zhang did not employ it with unqualified success. It may be that Zhang's use of bipolar unity helped his novel to achieve an aesthetically pleasing feeling of cohesion through the alternation, juxtaposition and interweaving of contrasting and complementary moods and emotions, but this level of appreciation would only have been available to the most educated of his readers (and the most classically educated at that), and not to the "ordinary people" he wrote in 1944 of wanting to work for.⁵⁷ Another important aspect to the popularity of the novel must have been the topicality of the satire. Even the reader least in tune with the classical aesthetic at work would have been able to enjoy the fun being poked at the high and mighty. This topical aspect to An Unofficial History of Peking is, however, almost entirely lost to today's reader and Zhang Henshui had acknowledged this danger as early as 1949 when he wrote of its "time-bound nature".

Much fiction is based on some factual element and remains good fiction long after the general relevance, if any, of the original material has been forgotten. The problem with much of Zhang Henshui's early writing is that the topical relevance of the anecdotes it contains in such abundance seems to have been at least as important to the author as the question of how to make these stories into good fiction. Zhang reveals this in his 1944 "Author's Preface to I Alone".⁵⁸

I Alone was begun straight after the completion of my first million character long novel An Unofficial History of Peking. At that time, I was an editor on the Peking *Daily World*, in charge of the literary sections of this and its sister paper *The Evening World* and writing for them as well. One could hardly call my contributions "writing" at all, since they were really no more than an editor's only means of filling column inches. Since I was just filling space on the page, I opted to drive a light carriage on a familiar road, choosing ready to hand material from society at large. Having drawn up a rough sketch outline of the whole novel, I could write my daily instalments as the mood took me, without any great effort. When I wrote in my original preface [to this novel that I] "described social trivia to give my friends something to laugh at", that was neither more nor less than the truth. Actually I should add more frankly that this was simple laziness. This ['literary' mode,] the chapter-titled social novel must count The Scholars as its earliest progenitor. It came into vogue in the last years of the Manchu Qing dynasty [i.e. ca. 1900-1912], and remained so until round about the time of the May Fourth Movement. I must admit that I was influenced by it and adopted its

56 See above, pp. 11-12 and Rupprecht (1987), Chapter 2, esp. pp. 34-40.

57 See my introduction, above p. 3.

58 I Alone (Si Ren Ji) was originally serialised in 1929-30. It was not published as a book until 1944.

style. The loftiest realm of this style was the exposure of darkness. Its significance was negative and if viewed from the aspect of modern-day literary values can in no way approach such goals as national construction or revolution. My An Unofficial History of Peking, this novel I Alone, and also A New History of Peking [Chunming Xinshi, 1932], A New Tale of the Demon-devouring General [Xin Zhan Gui Zhuan, 1926] and other novels, even including my very recent Goblin Market [Wangliang Shijie, 1941-45] all followed this pattern. It is not at all that I have followed this road out of an indefatigable fondness for it, but rather a case of the aforementioned [propensity for] cheap tricks and laziness. Why resort to cheap tricks and laziness? Because most editors who wrote fiction [for their journals] (in those days; nowadays things are a bit different) received no payment for it; they did not therefore find time outside work for writing novels, but included it in their other editorial work. Thus they would only aim for their fiction to be barely passable and put it in like that.

Although some of my novels took this path, however, the style would vary somewhat from one to another, social circumstances allowing. In An Unofficial History of Peking, for instance I was after all able to put down in writing something of the grotesqueness of the Peking [warlord] government [of the time]. This is not the case with I Alone, however. The society I described at that time was still that of the black era of the Northern [warlord] Government. Journalists lived under constant threat [of censorship or worse]. [In I Alone] I could only write stories about friends and friends of friends, in order that everyone who read it would have "something to laugh at", no more than that.

"Lack of revolutionary spirit": "Third Generation Disciple of the Saturday School" (reprise)

As noted above, Zhang may have been motivated by political self-preservation in referring to "revolutionary spirit" in his novels at all. He did not, however, pluck this concept entirely from thin air and apply it without any basis to his fiction. The preface to I Alone shows that he had begun to consider it in some way important by 1944 at any rate. It may not have been justified to imply that while An Unofficial History of Peking "lacks revolutionary spirit" later novels were subsequently imbued with more of this, but there was clearly a process of change in the social content, if not the political standpoint, of his novels from Fate in Tears and Laughter on. Later, Zhang referred to this process as "catching up with the times" and it amounts to little more than a generally more "modern" content and tone in his novels⁶⁰ and to a departure from the "Saturday School" formula which he recognised as a major influence on his early writing.

Much ink has been spent on the question of whether or not Zhang Henshui belongs to the "Saturday School". This is the name given to a trend in fiction of the early part of the twentieth century, especially the second and third decades. The trend was not only, in the nineteen-twenties at least, by far the most popular in terms of gross readership of any literary

59 I Alone (1948), p. 1.

60 There is a section in "My Life and Work" entitled "My determination to catch up with the times starting with Fate in Tears and Laughter" (Ming Bao Yuekan, 133, p. 31); compare this to Zhang's remarks on the importance of modern content in "An open letter of thanks" (see my introduction, p. 3 above).

vogue in China's history.⁶¹ It had actually begun, in the second decade of this century, as a relatively highbrow form carrying on what C.T. Hsia calls the "sentimental erotic tradition" of Chinese literature⁶² which had encompassed such universally acclaimed works as The Western Chamber (Xixiang, in its various incarnations), The Peony Pavilion (Mudan Ting) and The Story of the Stone. Though opinions vary, there is a general consensus that the "Saturday School" represented a decadent, commercialised form of that tradition, amounting to a kind of Chinese "Mills and Boon" or "Harlequin" phenomenon.⁶³ If it is possible to summarise the school's characteristics in one sentence then it may be said that its fiction tends to be written in "old-style" indigenous modes more or less unaffected by the new foreign-influenced vogues of the May Fourth Movement and that its themes tend to revolve around love and scandal.

As to the dubious honour of admittance to this club for Zhang Henshui, the simplistic argument which held sway for several decades went roughly: "he wrote *zhanghui* novels and/or he didn't belong to the May 4th tradition therefore he must belong to the Saturday School". The main approaches taken by those participating in the renewed debate of the last decade or so are the following:

he wasn't (exactly) a "Saturday School" writer because the social content of his works is more serious and less decadent;⁶⁴

he was a "Saturday School" writer to start with, but then he reformed;⁶⁵

61 See Link (1981), esp. the "Introduction".

62 C.T. Hsia, "Hsi Chen-ya's Yu-Li Hun: an essay in literary history and criticism", in Liu (ed.), Middlebrow Fiction, pp. 199-212.

63 The major exception is C.T. Hsia who has proclaimed the flagship work of Saturday School fiction, Xu Zhenya's Jade Pear Spirit, to be "the culminating work of [the sentimental-erotic tradition in Chinese literature] without which the tradition itself would have been found wanting" (page 201 of the article cited in the previous note).

64 See for example Wu Taichang, "Serious treatment and appropriate solutions", Dushu, 8 (1981), pp. 54-55; also, for a possibly partial example of this view from one of Zhang's oldest friends, but in one of the first articles of this period of reassessment to appear in a "heavyweight" literary journal (Xin Wenxue Shiliao [Historical Materials on New Literature]), see Zhang Youluan, "The great linked-chapter novelist Zhang Henshui", reprinted in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 141-143.

65 Yuan Jin is the prime example of this view: see "Progressing from 'entertainmentism' to 'realism'", Jianghuai Luntan, 6 (1982), p. 115 and "A preliminary exploration of Zhang Henshui - Part One", Xin Wenxue Luncong, 3 (1982), p. 126 and "Part Two", Ibid., 4 (1982), pp. 171-172. Yuan states this position most clearly and unequivocally in the concluding chapter of his Critical Biography (1988), saying: "Put simply, when Zhang Henshui began writing fiction he definitely was a member of the Saturday School, but during the anti-Japanese war he definitely was not." (p. 383)

he was a "Saturday School" writer because in spite of increasing influence from the May 4th mode his writing retained (at least some of) the fundamental characteristics of the "Saturday School".⁶⁶

As to what these "Saturday School" characteristics were, few commentators are more precisely explicit than the single sentence I have supplied above. Link and Borthwick are the most conscientious on this score. Link sees the distinguishing features of this type of writing as being romantic content and popular style, and provides us with a useful paradigm of the genre, which he terms "the Romantic Route".⁶⁷ With regard to the functions of Saturday School fiction, Link's contribution is even more valuable. His analysis of the importance of the "idle amusement" factor, and his introduction of the concept of "fiction for comfort" into the discussion are particularly important. To summarise Link's analysis, Saturday School novels are largely composed of romantic content, such as stories of love, scandal or knight errantry, told in the traditionally popular Chinese style of weird and wonderful plot, black-and-white/Good-versus-Evil characterisation and simplicity of narrative (they tend to be long on action and short on description). The romance typically follows a stereotyped formula in the telling, it is not intended to be too demanding, let alone disturbing, and in fact its "greatest service...was, in several ways, to make people feel better".⁶⁸

Borthwick emphasises the "emotionalism" of Saturday School fiction, its indebtedness to the "talents and beauties" tradition and to the classical tradition in general.⁶⁹ Her most significant insight is that in her view "romantic pessimism...is the hallmark of the Saturday School".⁷⁰

In my view, and in the light of Link and Borthwick's insights, when Zhang Henshui wrote that Unofficial History of Peking lacked revolutionary spirit, he meant it avoided being disturbing and was designed instead "to make people feel better"; when he became determined to "catch

66 See for example Fan Boqun, "A discussion of some of Zhang Henshui's representative works", *Literary Criticism (Wenxue Pinglun)*, 1 (1983), pp. 97-98. Fan states firmly that Zhang is generally to be considered a Saturday School writer, but concedes that certain of his later works "were clearly making the transition towards healthy popular literature" and says in summary that he considers Zhang "a representative writer of the transition between Saturday School and New Fiction".

67 Link (1981), p. 9 and pp. 64-78.

68 Ibid., pp. 140-149 and p. 235.

69 Borthwick, "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies", *Papers on Far Eastern History*, 10, pp. 31, 34, 36.

70 Ibid. pp. 44-45. To split hairs, it seems to me that the term "emotionalism", by which Borthwick translates *shangganzhuyi* ought to be replaced by this "romantic pessimism", while "emotionalism" would be a good translation of *duoqing*, with which it is closely associated. I shall, however, stick with Link's rendering of *duoqing* as "supersensitivity" (see below).

up with the times" he was attempting to leave behind the anachronistic aspects of Saturday School fiction, in particular its reliance on the "talents and beauties" formula and its "romantic pessimism".

Bearing in mind the major current arguments, mentioned above, on Zhang Henshui's membership of the Saturday School, I shall be applying Link and Borthwick's criteria to An Unofficial History of Peking, with the intention of showing to what extent Zhang Henshui was a Saturday School writer at the start of his career. I shall then briefly consider A Grand Old Family and Fate in Tears and Laughter, to see in what areas Zhang showed signs of attempting to "catch up with the times" as he later claimed to have attempted, beginning with his most famous novel.⁷¹

Another important consideration, which we will also be looking at below, is the extent to which Zhang Henshui's writing was in the mould of the earlier, classic tradition of Chinese fiction of which Saturday School fiction was a descendent - an unworthy descendent, most have said.⁷²

From the plot summary and discussion of the anecdotal satire of An Unofficial History of Peking above it may be seen already that the novel conforms to two of Link's criteria for Saturday School fiction in its content, combining scandal stories with love stories. The plot structure of Yang Xingyuan's two tragic love affairs also closely fits Link's description of "the Romantic Route". Link writes that "the Route may be analyzed in six stages: (1) Extraordinary Inborn Gifts, (2) Supersensitivity, (3) Falling in Love, (4) Cruel Fate, (5) Worry and Disease, and (6) Destruction."⁷³ In An Unofficial History of Peking, Yang Xingyuan is identified at the start of the novel as a man of extraordinary literary feeling and his talent in this direction is progressively confirmed. Also in Chapter 1 his propensity to "Supersensitivity" (*duoqing*)⁷⁴ is shown by his poetic reaction to natural phenomena and the seeds of his love affair with Li Yun are sown.⁷⁵ "Cruel Fate" eventually intervenes when it becomes clear

71 See note 60 above.

72 See however notes 62 and 63 above.

73 Link (1981), p. 65.

74 This important concept is discussed in Link (1981), pp. 68-70. Its centrality to the Romantic Route is neatly summarised on p. 68: "It follows naturally from extraordinary genius and beauty (stage 1); its sentimentality leads one to fall in love (stage 3); its fickleness contributes to tragedy (stage 4); its parallel relationship with sickness and worry (stage 5) is at the heart of the true lover's character; and the destruction (stage 6) of the supersensitive is always super-poignant."

75 See pp. 47-49 below for my discussion of these opening passages.

that Yang has not the financial means to redeem Li Yun from her life as a prostitute. Li Yun and he promptly fall into "Worry and Disease"; she falling further into "Destruction", while he also very nearly perishes. His recovery provides the pivot whereby he takes the Route all over again, this time with Dongqing: her "Extraordinary Inborn Gifts" match his; they fall in love; "Cruel Fate" intervenes in the form of the "secret disease" which prevents her marrying him,⁷⁶ and this disease brings about a recurrence of Yang's, finally resulting in his "Destruction" and the end of the story.

Clearly this also fits most of Borthwick's criteria, though since in setting them she seems to be using the narrower definition of Saturday School fiction which excludes writing without love affairs as its central theme,⁷⁷ they generally apply only to the central plot of An Unofficial History of Peking.

The style of An Unofficial History of Peking also falls neatly between the typically popular and the "important exceptions" to which Link refers.⁷⁸ Dong and Xu state that "the language of the novel may be considered a pure vernacular (*baihua*) of a comparatively high calibre for the 1920s, devoid of the jarring and opaque archaisms of classical Chinese... but drawing not inappropriately on some literary classicisms which have not lost their vividness, and blending expressive Peking and Anhui dialect in with this to achieve a pleasing combination of the refined with the popular." Of the many poems, letters and other literary pieces in classical Chinese in the novel, Dong and Xu add that although they "belong to the old literature, they still feel in harmony with the rest of the novel, the crucial point being that they are intrinsically connected to the characters, the situations and the plot. They are not superfluous verbosity, but...are not only not too difficult to understand but even beautiful, clear and readable, and this too is one of the reasons for the popularity of the novel."⁷⁹

76 See below, pp. 75-76.

77 See Link (1981), pp. 7-8.

78 Ibid., p. 9.

79 Dong and Xu, p. 136. See also Dong and Xu pp. 195-202, esp. p.198 for their general assessment of Zhang's poetry (and classical prose).

It is this aspect of Zhang Henshui's writing, the stylistic, which has earned him lavish praise from such as Liu Bannong⁸⁰, as well as C.T. Hsia⁸¹ and T.A. Hsia⁸² and more grudging acknowledgement from Zheng Zhenduo and Mao Dun⁸³. Though the tendency of An Unofficial History of Peking to fall into the same structural pitfalls as Wu Jingzi's The Scholars does a great disservice to Zhang's stylistic talent, in that the satirical anecdotes exert a similarly distracting effect on the language of the novel to that which disrupts the narrative force of the central plot, there is still much to remind one of the power and vividness of the language of The Story of the Stone. Ironically, A Grand Old Family falls short of An Unofficial History of Peking in this regard, in spite of the former, contrary to the author's protestations⁸⁴, "resembling The Story of the Stone so much that it may be considered a parody."⁸⁵ In telling the stories of Yang Xingyuan, Li Yun and Li Dongqing at least, Zhang Henshui does "achieve a pleasing combination of the refined with the popular" in his use of a vivid and natural *baihua* interspersed with "beautiful, clear and vivid" classical elements such as poetry, letters and the chapter-title couplets on which he so prided himself⁸⁶.

80 Cited in Yuan (1988), pp. 221-222: "Liu Bannong's evaluation of Zhang Henshui is extremely favourable; ...he called [him] 'a great novelist of today, whose novels have surpassed [those of] [such great late Qing novelists as] Li Boyuan, Wu Jianren and Zeng Mengpu'." The testimony of Liu, the only writer to have 'made it' as both Saturday School writer and later member of the May Fourth vanguard is particularly interesting. Although, as Yuan points out, Liu was an old friend of Zhang's from their days in "civilised drama" pioneering days together, Yuan is also right to say that the fact that in his speech Liu compared Zhang to old-style novelists and not to the new tradition shows that his words were not merely a case of old friends sticking together.

81 Hsia (1974), A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, p. 25 and note.

82 C.T. Hsia, Aiqing, Shehui, Xiaoshuo, p. 226, quoted in my chapter two, p. 88 below.

83 "Messrs Mao Dun and Zheng Zhenduo have both, with reservations, positively affirmed Zhang Henshui's efforts in the reform of linked-chapter novels, at the same time pointing out the symptoms of the low level of his [political] thinking" (Yuan Jin, "A Preliminary Investigation of Zhang Henshui (Part Two)", Xin Wenxue Luncong, 1982, 4, p.169). Unfortunately the footnote in which Yuan would presumably have cited examples of such damning faint praise from these new-school critics has been omitted from the published version of his article); see also Zhang Henshui, "Memory of a Journey" ("Yiduan Litu Huiyi"), Xinhua Ribao, 24.6.1945 collected in Wei Shaochang (ed.), Yuanyang-Hudie Pai Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 163-164. In this article written on the occasion of Mao Dun's 50th birthday, Zhang tells how in a conversation with Zheng Zhenduo on a train he learnt that Mao Dun's attitude to his attempts to reform the traditional novel was not as negative as that of most new-school critics.

84 Zhang, Memoirs, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 40.

85 Rupprecht (1987), p. 77.

86 See below.

An Unofficial History of Peking, Chapter 20.

Chapter 20 of An Unofficial History of Peking is a good example of the novel's style at its best. What's more, the "warp and weft" of satire and romance⁸⁷ are woven together quite tightly and evenly in and around this chapter. Although development of the Yang Xingyuan and Li Yun storyline occupies approximately two-thirds of the chapter, leaving one-third to satirical anecdote, this is balanced by the fact that the previous two chapters have been given over almost entirely to subplots only tenuously linked to the central story. Yet within Chapters 18 and 19 for once the reader has not lost sight of our hero's preoccupation with Li Yun, especially since one of the chief subplots, that which deals with the *wenmingxi* actor Huang Mengxuan's courtship of a colleague of Li Yun's, complements and invites comparison with the Yang-Li affair and is only incidentally to do with social satire.⁸⁸

The *guanzi*

Chapter 19 ends with Yang Xingyuan going to the Weiyang Club to keep a rendezvous with Hong Junsheng (a former classmate, now a bank employee), but hesitating outside the door. Yang's hesitation at this point, not explained until the start of Chapter 20, is typical of Zhang Henshui's utilisation of the *guanzi*, a moment of suspense between one instalment (*hui*) and the next, which was a conventional narrative device of traditional Chinese fiction. The origin of this convention lies in the market-place storyteller tradition, in which an element of suspense would be desirable to encourage the audience to return for the next storytelling session. This was not irrelevant in the case of fiction serialised in a journal, as An Unofficial History of Peking was, although this novel, like most if not all Zhang's serialised fiction, appeared in instalments much shorter than a chapter's length.⁸⁹

In his utilisation of the *guanzi*, even in his early (less "reformed") novels, Zhang rarely contrives true cliffhangers for the ends of his chapters, seeming rather to go through the motions, finishing the chapter by keeping the reader guessing, but not really building the

87 Zhang Henshui wrote in 1944 that most of his novels "took society as the warp and romance as the weft" in "An open letter of thanks" (Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 280).

88 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), pp. 271-289.

89 "Lesser" *guanzi* may be discerned within chapters of the book edition (presumably coinciding with the divisions between daily instalments of the original newspaper serialisation) much as U.S. television programmes, such as Star Trek, scripted for the commercial-intensive home network, are punctuated by more *guanzi* than would be appropriate for British commercial television, let alone the BBC.

suspense up to a great extent. Usually, as here, the reader is unlikely to be desperately anxious to find out what immediately follows. Yang Xingyuan's hesitation at the end of Chapter 19 is not dramatised as the result of some very surprising or alarming turn of events and is explained, at the start of the next chapter, as being due simply to the fact that when he arrives outside the club he sees a great many cabs, cars and rickshaws parked outside it. Knowing Yang's character by now, the reader realises that his hesitation was the result of a reluctance to come into contact with the worldliness that the presence of these vehicles indicates.

Even where Zhang Henshui does build up to something more than such a "soft" or "empty" *guanzi*, the start of the next chapter rarely lives up to the suspense which has been created. At the end of Chapter 8 for instance, Yang Xingyuan overhears what sounds like a dubious deal being struck in the pavilion next to the one in which he is sitting in a park. When, moved by curiosity, Yang strolls over to have a look, the chapter ends with:

This peek was (originally) no big deal, but what he saw heightened Yang Xingyuan's curiosity even more. If you want to know what he saw, you can hear it explained in a moment in the next chapter.⁹⁰

The reader's curiosity will not be entirely disappointed, for a juicy piece of scandal does eventually unfold, but the riddle is not solved right away. What turns out anticlimactically to be the reason for Yang's heightened interest is merely the fact that he recognises one of the men he has just heard talking as his old classmate, Hong Junsheng.

Zhang Henshui's fans will no doubt either be prepared for the anticlimax which typically follows the *guanzi* in his novels and take it in their stride, or perhaps will be so much in love with the traditional genre as positively to enjoy their interest being toyed with in this way. In either case they will accept this feature for what it is - a time-honoured literary convention. It is often marked as such in *An Unofficial History of Peking*, though less and less in Zhang's later novels, by stock storyteller phrases such as those in the two sentences quoted above: "This...was no big deal, but..." ("*zhe yi...bu dajin...*"), "If you want to know..., then you can hear it explained in a moment in the next chapter." ("*Yao zhidao..., qie ting xiahui fenjie.*")

Such stock phrases are entirely appropriate to the situation in which a *guanzi* is being used. They are as much a part of the genre as the chapter-title couplets, and like the latter they are among those features of the old-style novel which many, not only Zhang Henshui, believed

90 *An Unofficial History of Peking* (1985), p. 294.

the Chinese readership "find pleasing to the ear".⁹¹

The chapter-title couplet (*biaoti*)

Biaoti simply means "title" or "caption". There is no special term in Chinese for the style of chapter-title couplets which is one of the most obvious distinguishing features of the traditional Chinese vernacular novel. Zhang Henshui took this convention very seriously, however, priding himself on the poetics of his chapter titles. He tended to talk of the entire set of titles for a novel as a coherent whole and this *huimu* ("list of chapters"⁹²) would often be published as advance publicity for a novel about to commence serialisation as if it were in itself an encapsulation of the story in verse. A passage from Memoirs shows the depth of Zhang's commitment to this "elevated" feature of the tradition:

...since an early age I had been a dabbler in the ornate forms of literature and had never agreed with the cavalier arrangement of the chapter-titles (*huimu*) of so many old novels. Coming now myself to write fiction, I [felt I] certainly must write somewhat more beautifully and carefully [than that]. So each chapter-title (*huimu*) had to pass through quite a process of deliberation. Painstakingly crafting my own precise style, I set down several principles:- (1) each chapter-title couplet must encapsulate the climax of the chapter; (2) the highest degree of ornate and beautiful diction should be employed; (3) the words and phrases and classical allusions chosen must form a perfectly-blended whole, e.g. "The setting sun is boundlessly fine" twinned with "This high place is unsurpassably cold"⁹³, and so on, (4) the number of characters in each chapter-title of the novel must be the same, uniformity being sought⁹⁴, (5) the second line must end on an even-toned word.⁹⁵

Chapter Twenty of An Unofficial History of Peking begins with the chapter-title couplet:

91 I am thinking of the phrase "*xi wen le jian*" which Mao Zedong used in a somewhat different context, see Mao Zedong Xuanji (1964), Vol. 2, p. 523.

92 It will be seen from the passage below that Zhang also used this word in the singular as an equivalent for *biaoti*.

93 These parallel phrases are from the title of Chapter 44 of An Unofficial History of Peking.

94 This principle is the least rigorous of the five, yet Zhang Henshui's universal adherence to it has provided one of the major reasons for adjudging the novel Liangge Kuning Nulang (Two Ill-fated Young Women), published under Zhang's name, to be a forgery since its *huimu* is characterised by couplets of different lengths. Very few of Zhang's antecedents in vernacular fiction kept the lines of the chapter-title couplets regular. It must be significant, however, that among these are two of the most influential on our author, namely The Story of the Stone (Cao Xueqin) and The Flowers and the Moon (Wei Xiuren aka Wei Zian). While lines of couplets tend to be eight or nine, sometimes seven characters long, an extreme example, from Zhang Henshui's own time, of the type of irregularity he abhorred is seen in Liu Yunruo's Xiao Yangzhou Zhi, the eight chapters of which have couplets of 15, 12, 13, 13, 9, 9, 9 and 9 characters per line.

95 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 34-35.

*Money madness, lust for gold; sinful shadows stalk a sumptuous hall,
Flowing water and withered flowers; a song of a returning raft on the sea of emotions*⁹⁶

The couplet adheres to Zhang Henshui's five principles of chapter-title composition: (1) The first line covers the episode at the Weiyang Club which opens the chapter, the second line neatly encapsulates the importance of the tale of misunderstandings between Yang Xingyuan and Li Yun, which takes up most of the rest of the chapter, by quoting key phrases from the former's poems written in reaction to the events. (2) The couplet is elegant and refined, though in this particular example this does not result in too much difficulty for comprehension (the chapter-titles are one area in which Zhang did not go out of his way to make his writing accessible). (3) The two lines are in perfect antithetical parallelism, each being composed in Chinese of noun-verb-noun-verb (caesura) adjective-noun-verb-adjective-noun. This parallelism aids the contrast being drawn between the concrete, dark and oppressive images of the first line, which describe a discreditable involvement in the material world, and the bright and ethereal quality of those in the second, which express world-weariness and a tendency towards withdrawal into an ascetic existence. It might even be said that the couplet which heads Chapter Twenty does not merely "encapsulate the climax of the chapter"; it goes a long way towards summing up one of the major themes of the whole novel: the question of whether a good person should withdraw from society, given the wickedness of the world and the elusiveness of personal happiness sought through love. Zhang's fourth and fifth principles are also adhered to, the couplet being composed of lines of nine characters, the rule for the *huimu* of this novel, and ending in the even-toned words *tang* (hall) and *cha* (raft).

The language of the main body of the chapter

Though the first word of Chapter 20 is *yuanlai*, the word used traditionally in Chinese fiction to reopen the narrative after a *guanzi*, the chapter is told almost entirely in a modern colloquial vernacular. There are still examples of storyteller stock phrases here and there, and such conventional usages will be discussed below. The archaic word *dao* (approximately, "quoth"), as throughout this novel and indeed all Zhang's fiction, is almost universally employed to introduce direct speech. The author attempts to vary this usage by occasionally using another form, *shuodao*, and by adding descriptive prefixes: in this chapter we have *wendao* ("asked"), *xiaodao* ("smiled and said"), and once even *dandan-de dadao* ("answered offhandedly"). Nevertheless, most readers nowadays will find this convention dull and anachronistic. To the average reader at the time of the first publication of An Unofficial History of Peking in the

96 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), p. 295.

late 1920s, however, it was a familiar formula from traditional Chinese fiction, and was probably accepted by most as "the done thing". In spite of the conventional use of storyteller stock phrases and of *dao*, the chapter under discussion is a good showcase for the natural flow of Zhang's *baihua* writing.

The first five pages of this twenty-page chapter vividly describe what Yang Xingyuan sees and hears in the Weiyang Club. First comes the shocking revelation that although what Yang obviously regards as obscene amounts of money change hands at the gaming tables this is not exclusively an upper-class club and its members come from all walks of life. Amidst the lively depiction of the gambling room itself, we discover that one of the biggest gamblers is in fact a carpenter.

So Hong Junsheng led him [Yang Xingyuan] into a courtyard, within the main apartment of which electric light was shining brightly and there was a great confusion of noisy voices. When they lifted up the door curtain and had a look, what did they see but [*zhi jian*] two large dining tables pulled together in the middle of the room, fully ten yards long or more. On each side of the table sat a row of people and behind those was another layer of people standing. At the head of the table was a man who gave the dice cup a shake then put it down and folded his arms, smoking a cigarette. The people around the table now all took out silver dollars and banknotes, some placing their money on one side of the table, others placing theirs on the other side. Yang Xingyuan saw that some people shook their heads as they took out their money. Some people took out their money and threw it down hard on the table and said, "To hell with it! I *will* stick to the same bet!" Some people took out their money and counted it over and over again, talking over their shoulders to those behind them. Some people put their money down in front of them and smoked cigarettes and sat there thinking to themselves. In a little while the man lifted the cup up from over the dice and then there was a great clamour of voices: there were those who cursed abandonedly, but also those who sighed, some smiled wryly, some gave joyful guffaws, some laughed as they talked to people beside them and some were blaming others. All this noise mingled in great confusion. Opposite the croupier was another man who left the notes and coins on one side of the table where they were, pulling all the money on the other side of the table together and sweeping it all up into his arms. Then he took out some money and matched each of the piles of money remaining on the table with an equivalent amount. In a trice the whole table was covered in peoples' hands and arms, even several rich old gents in long gowns and mandarin jackets acted no differently.

While all this confused activity was going on in the middle of the room, lo and behold [*zhi jian*] a man came in sporting a leather hat cocked to one side and dressed in an immaculately laundered fur-lined gown, over which he wore a dark green satin waistcoat with a gold chain hanging from its pocket. He walked in with a greatcoat over his left arm and a cane, which he swung about extravagantly, in his right, a half-smoked cigar in his mouth and his chest stuck out. The croupiers over there, seeing him come in, went over one after another to greet him and in a trice someone had taken his hat and coat. Those people standing around watching also cleared a path for him and someone gave up a seat for him and bade him sit down. Rolling up his sleeves, he leant one hand on the table and had a look, then said with a smile, "It's not such a big game tonight. I'll have a rest first before I play." Seeing the airs this man put on, it seemed to Yang Xingyuan that he must really be somebody, so he softly said to Hong Junsheng, "What sort of person is that?" Hong Junsheng said, "He's a carpenter." Yang Xingyuan said, "Nonsense, how could there ever be a carpenter like that?"⁹⁷

97 *An Unofficial History of Peking* (1985), pp.297-298.

Hong Junsheng points out others whose backgrounds seem to Yang Xingyuan to be equally surprising given their appearance and forces him to concede inwardly to a charge of snobbishness. Then Hong leads Yang into the opium-smoking room in search of the man he brought him here to meet. Here Yang Xingyuan's snobbishness turns to an understandable disgust, as the scene which he beholds is described in all its sordid detail:

...as soon as Hong Junsheng lifted the door curtain, all one felt was a blast of hot air pouring right out of the room carrying with it the stench of sweat, an oily smell and the fragrance of opium. As this hot blast suddenly washed over him, Yang Xingyuan felt a bout of nausea and couldn't help feeling like vomiting.... All around the room against the walls there were twenty or more little couches, with just a grey-white rug covering them and two greasy blue cotton cushions. In the very middle was placed an enamel tray on which a small opium lamp had been placed, with an opium pipe placed alongside. Most of these couches had people lying on them head to toe. Some of them were smoking, but some of them had fallen asleep in front of the opium lamps which glowed no bigger than a mung bean. The place was really quite lively with the sounds of pipes being dragged on, people snoring, coughing, vigorously blowing snot from their noses or murmuring quietly to one another. No sooner had Yang Xingyuan stepped in than he felt the floor beneath his feet both wet and sticky, a most uncomfortable feeling under his shoes. When he looked down it turned out the whole floor was covered with snot and thick phlegm, with lots of melon seed shells, cigarette ends and puddles of water besides, so that there simply wasn't anywhere one could safely tread.⁹⁸

Yang Xingyuan promptly turns on his heel (in the circumstances a tricky manoeuvre which I wouldn't have tried myself without great care) and marches out, his disgust having totally overcome his interest in the Song woodblock editions he was to have been shown. We never learn whether he eventually saw the books, nor even if he ever meets his old classmate again.

Notwithstanding a few places where Zhang's descriptive technique has inherited a dullness of usage which often characterises traditional Chinese fiction, for instance where Zhang uses the same verb, "placed" (*fang*), three times in the same sentence, the above extracts illustrate the vividness of Zhang Henshui's vernacular style, and the anecdote related here is a colourful fictional documentary of a slice of 1920s Peking life. It could also be said to fit into the structure by complementary bipolarity which Rupprecht describes,⁹⁹ providing the joy (here, merrymaking) and restlessness to balance the sadness and calmness of Yang Xingyuan's thoughts of and visit to Li Yun in the ensuing scenes (other qualities in complementary juxtaposition include corruption and purity). It is equally clear, however, that the Weiyang Club episode has been inserted here as much as a filler, as a piece of journalism, as for truly literary purposes. Like many other similar episodes in An Unofficial History of Peking, its inclusion makes no direct contribution to the central narrative. It strikes one as likely that the

98 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), pp. 299-300.

99 Rupprecht (1987), pp. 34-40.

writing of this passage was a response to a novel experience the author had recently had and with which he wanted to entertain his readers, simultaneously satirising those who were sunk in such decadence, particularly the members of parliament whom Yang Xingyuan recognises in the club. Entertaining and informative, the passage may not have seemed out of place in the original serialisation. On the other hand, one wonders how anyone could keep track of the main storyline from reading the daily instalments of An Unofficial History of Peking in the newspaper, which must often have been lost for perhaps weeks on end, whereas in the revised book-form version it is rare for the central plot to be neglected for more than a chapter or two at a time.¹⁰⁰

As noted above, however, the particular journalistic episode described above is not as much of a distraction as most, since the narrative has not strayed too far from the main storyline in the preceding couple of chapters. Apart from the echoes of Yang's love affair with Li Yun which are to be discerned in the tale of Huang Mengxuan and Xiaohong, there are also appearances by Li Yun in each of the preceding chapters: in Chapter 18, when Yang Xingyuan visits her brothel with Shu Jiucheng on the Winter Solstice¹⁰¹, and in Wu Bibo's letter to Yang in Chapter 19¹⁰². Now, as soon as Yang Xingyuan has slept off the effects of his visit to the Weiyang Club, no time is wasted before we get right back to the main story. Wu Bibo follows up his letter of the previous day by visiting Yang to find out what is wrong between him and Li Yun and to try to persuade him to make things up with her if at all possible. In a quite touching scene between these close friends, Xingyuan, for the first time in the novel, is wholly candid about his feelings for Li Yun. He explains how her madam has been making herself increasingly tiresome, rarely letting the lovers be alone together for long and making plain her contempt for Xingyuan's modest means and her preference for her "daughter"'s time to be spent with more generous "guests". What the two bosom friends seem to forget in the midst of this bout of male bonding is that the poor young woman is powerless to resist her "mother"'s wishes. It is scarcely fair of Xingyuan to blame her for failing to receive him with fullest courtesy when he turned up at her brothel unexpectedly. It being a feast-day, it was to be expected that she would be entertaining a rich customer such as her madam preferred. Nor is it fair (or even logical) for Bibo to agree sympathetically with his friend that Li Yun was "considerably in the wrong", when Xingyuan has just finished telling him that the most serious grievance he has against the unfortunate girl is that hearsay has it that her "mother" Wuxi

100 See, however, note 12 above.

101 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), pp. 267-269.

102 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), pp. 293-294.

Laosan has told her that Yang is "an impoverished customer, whom it would be no great loss to be rid of, and since then she would never be friendly towards him, for otherwise she'd have to be forever on her guard, in trepidation [at what Wuxi Laosan might say]"¹⁰³.

A series of coincidences, involving Yang chancing upon a forgotten photograph of Li Yun and Wu Bibo noticing it under his friend's pillow the next morning, give Bibo a strong hand with which he eventually manages to trump Xingyuan into agreeing to go and see Li Yun. The account of this visit to the brothel is told once again in a racy popular style. There is a certain awkwardness between Yang Xingyuan and Li Yun at first, but Wu Bibo helps to break the ice with some risqué remarks and after some good-humoured teasing between Yang and Li, the atmosphere has improved, when suddenly Yang sees something that makes him seethe with bitter jealousy:

In a short while, when Li Yun had finished doing her braid and had changed her clothes and the maid had tidied up the table, everyone was sitting chatting. Yang Xingyuan was stretched out on a settee. When he looked round he saw behind the chair a coat stand on which hung a red floral patterned camel-hair mandarin jacket which gave off a strong smell of eau-de-cologne. He rolled his eyes, realisation coming to him in a flash, and despite himself gave a wry laugh and felt his face suddenly burning, scarcely knowing whence came this feeling of resentment which he felt desperate to let out by stamping and shouting.

Li Yun had poured a good cupful of tea and came over to present it to Yang Xingyuan, who didn't take it at once however, first taking a look at Li Yun's face. Li Yun said: "What is it? Don't you recognise me?" Taking the teacup, Yang Xingyuan said with a smile: "Congratulations! Congratulations!" Her face flushing, Li Yun said: "Congratulations for what?" Yang Xingyuan said with a smile: "As if you didn't know." Li Yun said: "I don't know. You haven't felt like coming here recently, Master Yang, but today you've come on purpose to find fault." Yang Xingyuan simply could not stomach this retort, his very face went purple with rage as he stood up, put on his hat and made to go. Meanwhile Li Yun stood to one side feeling it wouldn't be right to go over and stop him but that nor was it right not to stop him, so she turned to face the wall, took out a handkerchief from her bosom and just wiped her tears. At first Amao [Li Yun's maid] had thought they were joking, but now it looked more and more like it was for real, so she barred Yang Xingyuan's way, saying: "Hey! She's just a bad-tempered child, surely you know that by now? How ridiculous to get angry over a bit of joking!" Wu Bibo also laughed and stopped him, saying: "Come on, sit down. You two young lovers miss one another when you don't see one another, then as soon as you see one another you have a fight: where's the sense in that?"¹⁰⁴

Storyteller stock phrases

It will be noted that in this extract, as in those quoted above, there is no small number of stock storyteller phrases. I have attempted to retain something of their flavour in the translation, by translating *zhi jian* for instance by such tired phrases as "what did they see but" (even with a

103 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), p. 303.

104 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), p. 307-8.

"lo and behold" in one of the earlier extracts), and by trying to reflect the rather hackneyed quality of the original of "realisation came to him in a flash" (*xin-li huangran da wu*) and "scarcely knowing whence came this feeling of resentment" (*ye bu zhidao nali lai de yizhen bu ping zhi qi*). Again, the monotonous use of *dao* jars on the modern ear. Yet this remains an extremely lively piece of writing for the reader who finds such usages natural. As with the traditional technical features, the *guanzi* and *biaoti*, these stylistic features inherited from the old Chinese novel would be well-loved by the Chinese audience of the time. They are part and parcel of traditional Chinese fiction, and were not found tiresome by the readership as long as the language of the narrative was for the most part lively and natural. The fact that An Unofficial History of Peking has these qualities, as I hope the above translated extracts show, seems to be evident from the continued popularity of the novel even today, with a readership by now long weaned from the, in certain ways, monotonous diet of traditional Chinese fiction.

Although Yang Xingyuan has been persuaded for the moment not to storm out, the situation seems unlikely to improve when Wuxi Laosan promptly bustles in and starts prattling away. Her ill-intentioned revelation that Li Yun has been upset at hearing that Yang Xingyuan had given Xiaohong a piece of expensive jewellery does however present some hope for a rapprochement, since Wu Bibo is able to say quite truthfully, in Yang's defence, that he was in fact returning the bauble to Xiaohong on behalf of his friend Huang Mengxuan. Li Yun brightens up a bit, but Xingyuan is still very upset at what he takes as evidence of her having lost her virgin-prostitute status:

Only after a while, when she looked round and saw that Wuxi Laosan had gone, did she raise her head and take a look at Yang Xingyuan, smiling despite herself. Whereas usually whenever Yang Xingyuan saw a smile of Li Yun's, he would be unutterably happy, today seeing this smile of hers, he felt that it was an extremely forced one, and so he just gave a wan smile in return. Then, turning his head and seeing the floral camel-hair mandarin jacket, he threw back his head and gave a hollow laugh. Li Yun, seeing that Amao was also out of the room, said in a low voice, scuffing the rug with her feet: "I know why you're in a temper with me today. And all I can say is that Heaven is my witness."¹⁰⁵

The deft description of Yang Xingyuan's hollow laugh of heartbreak makes quite chilling reading, an effect unhindered by the presence of stock narrative devices such as "looked round and saw" ("*hui tou yi kan*") and "turning his head and seeing" ("*hui-guo tou kan-jian*"). Indeed, although these phrases are essentially the same, the latter case is an example of how Zhang Henshui was perfectly capable of modernising the old idiom, at least in a small way. We shall see in his later novels that he attempted increasingly to carry this sort of "reform" of the old-style fiction much further.

105 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), p. 309.

The atmosphere worsens still further when Li Yun is called away by a customer:

In a little while, when Li Yun came back...Wu Bibo...asked: "Li Yun, you seem to be troubled again, why is that?" Li Yun said: "Someone has called for me. I'll have to go out for a bit." Wu Bibo said: "That's something which happens all the time, is it worth pouting up your little face over?" Li Yun said: "This customer is really a nuisance, I don't want to go with him but he will keep at me, I'm really sick of it." Yang Xingyuan said with a smile: "Surely he's no more of a nuisance than us?" Li Yun said: "What is it with you? Always teasing like that." Yang Xingyuan said with a smile: "What I said is the truth, what makes you say I'm teasing? Think about it, you want to go out, but we keep on sitting here and won't go. You're embarrassed to abandon us, but if you let us stay it'll be bad for business, isn't that a nuisance?"

As he spoke he put on his hat and made to leave again. Amao stopped him, saying: "What's your hurry?" Yang Xingyuan said: "If we don't go, are you asking us to look after Li Yun's place while she's away?" Amao had nothing to say to this. So Yang Xingyuan and Wu Bibo walked out. When they reached the gate, what did they see but a grey saloon motor car parked there.... Laughing and talking, the two men just went on their way, but no sooner had they come out of the mouth of Shaanxi Lane than what did they see but that grey motor car pass close by them, and who do you think was sitting in it but Li Yun and a man besides, a man of forty-odd with a sloping moustache, the very picture of a fashionable politician, sitting there in the car laughing and talking with Li Yun.... Yang Xingyuan said: "What thinkst thou now of my words? I'd say that proves it now, wouldn't you say?" Wu Bibo said: "You really can't keep a distance, can you? If you want to play with a balloon you shouldn't jab a pin at it. It's no fun any more when it's burst." Yang Xingyuan said nothing, just heaved a sigh, bade Wu Bibo farewell and went home."¹⁰⁶

Archaisms in the dialogue

Again, at the risk of incongruity, I have translated stock phrases with archaisms and stilted language to draw attention to their presence. In Yang Xingyuan's final speech there is even an example of oral *ban wen bu bai* (classical usage creeping into modern Chinese). I particularly wanted not to gloss over this because I disagree with Rupprecht's assertion that Zhang Henshui's tendency to put *ban wen bu bai* into the mouths of his characters makes them sound "more like opera singers on stage than real people in life",¹⁰⁷ thus damaging the characterisation. The novel Rupprecht is discussing when she makes this claim is set in the 4th. century A.D., and compared to English there is much less danger of writing in "period" Chinese assuming a quality of pish-tushery, due to the continued vibrancy of the classical language into recent times. Aside from this, however, it seems to me that *ban wen bu bai* usage, even in a novel set in modern times and even in speech, is not *necessarily* incompatible with naturalism, since even today Chinese people still delight in using the classical language, often jocularly, in their speech. A friend of mine in Peking, not a particularly verbose or pretentious man at all, will almost always, in a spirit of fun, say something like "Pray tell, how feel you?"

106 *An Unofficial History of Peking* (1985), pp. 309-310.

107 Rupprecht (1987), p. 192.

("Ganjue ruhe?"), rather than just "How do you feel?" ("Ni jue-de zenmeyang?"). Other examples are commonplace. How much more would it be absolutely natural for a young fogey like Yang Xingyuan in the 1920s to intersperse his speech occasionally (and it is only occasionally) with archaisms? I feel this part of Rupprecht's argument of the weaknesses in Zhang's stylistic technique to be an uncharacteristically thin one. She goes on to chide him for employing *wenyan* for the (non-*huimu*) titles of chapters (*zhang*). Yet the classical language retains absolute legitimacy for such uses to this day. In the People's Daily (Overseas Edition) of 23rd. January, 1991, for instance, there are at least three headlines written in *ban wen bu bai*.¹⁰⁸

Although Chapter 20 ends, as it had begun, with a satirical anecdote of no relevance to the story of Yang Xingyuan and Li Yun, the main storyline content of the chapter has closed with a supremely un-modern feature which is also unequivocally in the Story of the Stone/Saturday School tradition.

Poetry in the novel

Three days after their ill-fated visit to Li Yun's brothel, Wu Bibo goes to call on Yang Xingyuan. He finds him not at home, but entering the courtyard hears someone reading poetry aloud in Yang's rooms. This turns out to be Yang's other great friend, his journalist colleague He Jianchen, who has also come to visit Yang and discovered some poetry manuscripts lying unattended on Yang's desk. Both men are as moved and saddened by the content as they are impressed by the virtuosity of Yang's composition of a lengthy verse suite to the same rhyme pattern as "Plum Blossom" by the Qing master Zhang Wentao (1764-1814). What sets the tone more than the reference to Zhang Wentao is the fact that the inspiration for following Zhang's rhyme scheme has not come to Yang Xingyuan directly, but rather from reading some verse in Wei Zian's The Flower and the Moon (*Hua Yue Hen*, ca. 1858) composed to Zhang Wentao's rhyme. The Flower and the Moon was one of the 19th. century's most important precursors of and influences on the Saturday School, and on Zhang Henshui in particular.¹⁰⁹ Zhang greatly admired the virtuosity of the poetry and the *biaoti* in Wei Zian's novel, even copying his style in his earliest attempts at fiction. Yang Xingyuan's poem cycle in Chapter

108 "*Chukouye reng ke leguan*" ["The export industry still gives grounds for optimism"]; "*Nongyong chanpin jichu yuanliao wei fazhan zhongdian*" ["Basic raw materials for agricultural produce are the crux of development"]; "*Ci di shi yipian retu*" ["This place is a hotbed"].

109 See Lu Hsun, A Brief History of Chinese Fiction, pp. 322-326 and Zhang, Memoirs in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 17 and p. 23.

20 of An Unofficial History of Peking, inspired by The Flower and the Moon, is certainly a whole-hearted tribute to this *locus classicus* of Saturday School fiction. It also deserves to be considered a "culminating work", in miniature, of "the sentimental-erotic tradition", although perhaps it would be going too far to say that without these sixty-four lines (eight *lüshi* stanzas) of seven-character verse "the tradition itself would have been found wanting"¹¹⁰.

The pivotal fifth stanza of the cycle, which has been quoted in the second line of the *biaoti* of this chapter, is the following:

Water flowed into the ocean, flowers withered to the ground, fated to shed salt tears,
Another year passes, and my raft on Love's ocean once more makes for the shore.
Bitter, cold; singing of my sorrow, my sickly bones are pierced,
As I wake from a spring dream, e'en mischievous Cupid by my plight must be moved.
'Tis utterly without avail, to nurse my wrath with a vengeance,
For she is as charmingly pitiful as a defenceless, trusting child or a little bird.
We parted in sorrow, yet not a word of leavetaking was spoken,
Her fine eyebrows now gathered into a frown, bitterly do I regret ever bidding them unfurl.¹¹¹

Though the first two lines of the verse are not in conventional *dui'ou* antithetical parallelism, the last three characters of the first line, "*lei zhu yuan*" ("pearl-tear fatedness"), presage the metaphor of the ocean which makes its first unveiled appearance in the first four characters of the second line. Pearl tears are the tears of the "shark-people" (*jiaoren*), mermaid-like dwellers of the depths whose tears form pearls, a poetic and hyperbolic symbol of grief. The first four characters of the first line, meanwhile, have more personal connotations, also of melancholy. Those in the know, few though they may have been up until very recently, would recognise the images of water flowing to the sea and flowers withering as an autobiographical reference, since their source is the same as that of Zhang Henshui's pen-name.¹¹² This autobiographical element assumes added poignancy when one reads in Zhang's autobiographical article "My Life and Work" his words: "I must admit that such a thing did happen to me, though of course that girl's name was not necessarily Li Yun".¹¹³

110 See note 63 to this chapter.

111 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), p. 312.

112 See my introduction, p. 5 and note 8 above.

113 Zhang, "My Life and Work", *Ming Bao yuekan*, 133, p. 29.

The next line of the poem requires little explanation, echoing as it does the common saying "the bitter sea [of the snares and pitfalls of mortal desire] has no end, but one need only turn round to reach the shore" (*kuhai wu bian, hui tou shi an*), the Buddhist origins and implications of which reflect Yang Xingyuan's spiritual leanings.

In line three, the comma inserted in the above translation between "bitter" (*ku*) and "cold" (*han*) is intended to suggest something of the extra layer of meaning in the original. The word "*han*" calls to mind its homonym meaning "harbouring", wherein lies the clue that this line is not simply about an invalid complaining of how the winter's cold penetrates his bones. Explanation in English makes this appear trite, but in Chinese the wordplay is effortless and unobtrusive, and the choice of the word *han*, which also means "winter" has the virtue of forming an antithetical contrast with "spring" in the next line. The reference to "sickly bones" is the clearest indication up to now in the poetry, and perhaps even in the novel, that the poet is truly a classically "supersensitive" traveller along the Romantic Route.¹¹⁴ Yang Xingyuan's physical frailty has already been indicated in Chapter 8 when he took some considerable time to recover from a chill. At the time, Yang's relationship with Li Yun was just approaching its happiest, and the illness seemed far from ominous, but now the association of illness with melancholy and heartbreak makes it much more sinister. Seasoned readers of Saturday School fiction might well guess already from these three lines of poetry what may be told here with hindsight: that Yang Xingyuan will fall dangerously ill when his love affair with Li Yun finally ends tragically, and that he will eventually die of heartbreak. They could scarcely guess, however, that it will actually be for another woman that Yang will finally pine away, even though there may have been a hint of that in the second line of poetry above, which shows that Li Yun is not the young man's first disappointment, and therefore might not be his last.

From only hinting at parallelism in the first pair of lines, the second pair achieves a kind of slant parallelism, "spring dream" mirroring "winter bitterness", but not being precisely juxtaposed beneath it. The only fully antithetical pair of lines is the next one.

The first four characters of line five form the finest piece of classical reference in these eight lines. With "*jingqin tian shi*", which I have rendered by "nurse wrath with a vengeance", Zhang has adapted the phrase "*jingwei tian hai*" to fit the tonal pattern of his poem. This phrase is expressive of indefatigable dedication to a cause, however hopeless, especially one

114 See above, p. 28 and Link (1981), pp. 67-68.

inspired by anger or the desire for revenge. It originates in the ancient Classic of Mountains and Seas and refers to the story of Nüwa (daughter of Yandi, the legendary emperor who taught farming to the ancestors of the Chinese), the legendary princess whose spirit metamorphosed after her death into a *jingwei* bird and devoted its entire existence to carrying stones and twigs in its beak to drop into the sea which had drowned her, with the aim of filling the sea. This is a common enough classicism, but Zhang has deftly fitted it to the ocean metaphor he has been building, using it to express Yang Xingyuan's anger and despair without it jarring against the lines before and after. It has to be said, however, that in spite of this, and for all that the perfect antithesis of these two lines brings the structural excellence of the stanza to its apex, the pedestrian quality of the diction of the rest of lines five and six detracts greatly from the effect of this, the pivotal fifth of the eight *lüshi* in Yang Xingyuan's poem cycle. There is nothing actually *wrong* with the concluding three characters of each of these two lines, but "*hun wu nai*" ("Tis utterly without avail") and "*ju ke lian*" ("terribly pitiful") are hackneyed phrases, which appear all the more pedestrian for their juxtaposition with the freshness of the *jingwei* image. As for "*xiao niao yi ren*" ("charmingly trusting little bird"), if ever Zhang Henshui left himself open to the charge of being a Saturday School writer, it was in his frequent use of this phrase to describe Li Yun's appeal. Few of Zhang Henshui's major female characters in other novels conform as closely as Li Yun to the image which this cliché conjures up of a child- or canary-like, wholly submissive, little woman, innocent and trusting and therefore lovable because of her very innocence and defencelessness. No doubt this type of imagery was popular with the bottom end of the Saturday School readership, but it can scarcely have been so with the many highbrow readers who enjoyed Zhang's fiction for the extent to which it satisfied their pop-romantic sensibilities without stooping to this kind of cheap vulgarity.

The verse ends much more satisfactorily with a well-balanced pair of lines, which do not attempt exact antithetical parallelism, but achieve a pleasing approximation at symmetry. Line seven's elegant but light and straightforward diction is complemented by the denser, more sonorous quality of the final line of the stanza. The most pleasing thing about these two lines is that what we have here is no longer Yang Xingyuan "moaning without being sick" ("*wu bing shenyin*"). That their novels did precisely this was a charge often levelled against Saturday School writers for their excessive melancholic sentimentality. Here, however, such a charge could not be admitted, as these concluding lines convey a real scene and realistically tragic emotions. Line seven is essentially a narrative of the scene we have just been described in Zhang's prose of the awkward meeting between Yang Xingyuan and Li Yun, in which indeed they do not properly exchange any words of farewell, a poignant thought for Yang now as he prepares to resolve never to see Li Yun again. In the final line, the description of Li Yun

frowning with her "fine eyebrows" is so much more human a picture than the doll-like caricature in line six. Finally, the choice of the final character "*chuan*" in "*yuan xian chuan*" is very good. As well as recalling "*mei mu chuan qing*" ("making affectionate eyes"), which is not unsubtle, Li Yun's profession makes it possible to apply the meaning "to summon" to *chuan*, in which case "*yuan*" becomes "blame" and the last line may be read as "Her fine eyebrows are now gathered in a frown, I blame myself for calling her to me." Suddenly it seems that Yang Xingyuan can entertain the notion that he himself might be to blame, that he might have done something wrong. If Link is right to say that for "supersensitive" people "the feelings of other people...are paramount"¹¹⁵, then Yang Xingyuan is not altogether typical, since his brand of supersensitivity is usually a rather egotistical one.

Although only one of the eight stanzas attributed to Yang Xingyuan in Chapter 20 of An Unofficial History of Peking has been translated above, and its shortcomings have not been glossed over, it should still be clear that in the context of the genre, it is a powerful piece of writing. The average reader of the novel at the time of its first publication can be assumed to have had the same favourable aesthetic and emotional response expressed by Wu Bibo and He Jianchen.

It has been shown from the above analysis of Chapter 20 of An Unofficial History of Peking that this novel fits Link's definition of Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies fiction as being popular in style "with important exceptions". I'd say that the classical element in An Unofficial History of Peking is precisely such an important exception. This also ties in with Borthwick's remarks on the classical references which abound in the genre, remarks which also apply to Zhang Henshui's fondness for the traditional diction of the mediæval market place.

The crucial question is to what extent the novel provides "idle amusement" and "comfort" and to what extent it is invested with "romantic pessimism", Link and Borthwick's criteria for Saturday School fiction. Clearly many of the satirical anecdotes which abound in An Unofficial History of Peking provided plenty of "idle amusement" for its contemporary readers. They also provided "comfort" in that the rich and the powerful and the fashionably modern and westernised are made fun of or exposed as less well off, morally at least, than they appear. This was comforting to Zhang Henshui's average reader, who was highly insecure amidst the rapidly changing economic and philosophical trends of modern urban

115 Link (1981), p. 68.

China. There is comfort to be found also in the story of Yang Xingyuan and his love affairs. Not only does Yang provide a "comforting" example of an upstanding man who clings firmly to old virtues and has no truck with suspect modern ideas, he and his successive lovers are also "beautiful people suffering great pain and injustice, thereby reminding the reader that suffering is an affliction of the virtuous, and furthermore that, among the virtuous, some are in an even worse condition than ourselves."¹¹⁶ Clearly this last aspect of the "comforting" function of An Unofficial History of Peking also represents the way in which it fits Borthwick's description of "romantic pessimism".

The "dreamlike" quality of *An Unofficial History of Peking*

Below I shall further examine An Unofficial History of Peking in the light of Link and Borthwick's criteria for Saturday School fiction, but the focus will be on a concept of my own, that of the "dreamlike" quality of Zhang Henshui's fiction. While less easy to define than the Romantic Road or "romantic pessimism", this dreamlike quality is the major facet of Zhang's writing linking it to the old tradition of Chinese fiction and to the "Saturday School" novelists. Unlike the Romantic Road or "romantic pessimism", however, this "dreamlike" quality cannot be demonstrated by archetype and example. It cannot be shown in concrete terms, but may only be perceived by more or less subjective observation. The term "dreamlike" itself is an arbitrary characterisation of the pervading atmosphere of Zhang Henshui's fiction, and more particularly his earlier novels. Nevertheless this quality is a highly significant facet of Zhang Henshui's fiction, one that any reader would immediately recognise, though different readers might have different subjective impressions of it.

The "dreamlike" mode is not merely characterised by lack of adherence to everyday reality, although that is its most identifiable feature. Nor is it necessarily linked to the presence of fantastical content. The pre-twentieth century old-style Chinese novels all possess this quality, but many of them make it explicit as allegory. This allegorical use of "dreamlikeness" is not what I am concerned with. Allegory legitimises "dreamlikeness" as a literary device of which the reader is fully aware. Just as the reader of The Water Margin need not accept the supernatural elements in the novel, such as Dai Zong's superhuman ability to walk 800 *li* in a day, as anything other than a literary conceit, so too in The Story of the Stone, the interventions of mysterious scabby-headed monks are accepted as reminders from the author

116 Link (1981), pp. 20-21.

of the allegorical level on which the book is to be read. Unlike The Journey to the West¹¹⁷ and The Flowers in the Mirror¹¹⁸, however, neither of these classic novels is pure allegory. Both have justly been acclaimed as masterpieces of realism. Yet even within their realistic narratives they are invested with the air of unreality which I call "dreamlikeness". The Water Margin, as the more "realistic" of the two, provides the best examples of this. The Story of the Stone, as is suggested by its alternative title, The Dream of the Red Chamber, makes its "dreamlikeness" too explicit for it to be significant as an underlying feature. In other words, although The Story of the Stone is not a pure allegory, the oneiric mode is too central to its structure to be a mere "dreamlikeness".

In the fiction of Zhang Henshui, the dreamlike quality is created by a variety of features. Chief among these are certain aspects of setting and characterisation. In An Unofficial History of Peking, as in most of Zhang's novels, especially in the early period, the backdrop to the action is almost entirely colourless. In the first chapter we are introduced to Yang Xingyuan's lodging in a few paragraphs, of which only a few sentences are directly descriptive of his immediate living environment:

The Central Anhui Hostel (*Wanzhong Huiguan*) had many rooms, and was still often terribly crowded, except for a little three-roomed courtyard to the east of the main building which everyone ignored because in the past a scholar living there had gone mad and died, having failed the civil service examinations three times. Afterwards, everyone who had lived in this courtyard had had bad luck. So most residents who had hopes of making their fortunes as officials wouldn't even go into the courtyard, far less go and live there. The year that Yang Xingyuan came to Peking it chanced that the hostel was suffering from overcrowding, so when he saw this little courtyard with its three rooms lying empty except for piles of furniture he asked the janitor to clear it out, clean it and redecorate it, and he moved in.

There were those in the hostel who told him he mustn't live there, but Yang Xingyuan laughed in reply, "I'm unlucky anyway. I doubt whether not moving in will improve my luck, and if I move in at least I'll have peace and quiet in a courtyard of my own." When they heard him say this people just let him do as he liked. In fact this little courtyard really was quiet and elegant. One entered through a round 'moon' gate and the courtyard inside was a good ten or more yards square. The branches of an old locust tree stretched in over the wall, shading more than half the area of the yard. In the other half a pear tree had been planted, spreading over the corner of the roof of the row of three rooms. One of these rooms had no door to the courtyard, opening off one of the others. Yang Xingyuan had arranged it so that one of these rooms was his bedroom, another his study and the third somewhere where he could receive friends and indulge in the pleasures of tea and 'pure' conversation (*qingtan*)....

....Spring comes late in the North and the pear blossom in the courtyard was blooming in abundance, like drifts of snow on the branches. Looking out from his bright and tidy study at the silent courtyard with its piles of bright snow, Yang Xingyuan was struck by this delightfully elegant scene.... [He] picked up a collection of poetry at random and had just turned a few pages...when suddenly someone shouted "Xingyuan! Are you at

117 Wu Cheng'en, Xiyou Ji (16th century).

118 Li Ruzhen, Jing Hua Yuan (1828).

home?".... Yang Xingyuan tossed his book aside and looked outside. Seeing it was his colleague on the *Mirror*, He Jianchen, he immediately called out a greeting: "Come in, have a seat! Come in, have a seat!"¹¹⁹

A little later, after his first meeting with Li Yun, Xingyuan returns home:

As he entered the courtyard he saw that the whole ground was covered in snowy white, all over petals of pear blossom. The wind had already died down now and in the sky light clouds were gently caressing the half moon, only very dim moonlight shining into the yard. In spite of himself, Yang Xingyuan sighed out loud, "What a pity that these flowers should be blown into such a sorry plight after only a few days of blooming!" He found himself pacing up and down the courtyard for some time.... [Having received word of an outing the next day to pay respects to deceased fellow-provincials, and begun a poem inspired by this thought but been unable to finish it], he went out into the courtyard for a stroll. The half moon was shining through the shattered pear blossom onto the whitewashed wall, a touchingly melancholy scene. The petals on the pear branches, one by one, drifted slowly through the deep darkness of the night until they reached the ground. Seeing this night scene, Yang Xingyuan suddenly thought of another two lines of poetry [descriptive of the moon and the 'clouds' of pear blossom].... Wanting to go on to describe the falling petals he went on pacing to and fro, hands behind his back, under the tree. Although the strong wind had already died down, there were still puffs of breeze from time to time. Once, the breeze came a little more stiffly and it blew down some of the petals which had been just clinging on and no more, showering Yang Xingyuan all over with petals. He realised he was really quite cold and went inside for a hot cup of tea.¹²⁰

The first description is a practical enough one, giving the reader a detailed layout of Yang's courtyard. In fact, however this description is merely padding to the words which introduce it, "this little courtyard really was quiet and elegant", to which it adds very little, merely making it more concrete. We are not offered a description and left to make up our own minds. The author has decided that his protagonist's abode should be "quiet and elegant" and has given a few details to back this up, rather like a painter of traditional landscapes who only needs to include a few misty crags, a tree or two and perhaps a human figure to convey the desired mood. Unlike the painter, Zhang Henshui must supply an epithet. The effect of this technique, however, is that readers, having been told the qualities of what is about to be described, scarcely need to read the description itself. Even if they do read it carefully, beyond the basic layout of the courtyard there are few memorable details in the description. The interior of the rooms is not described at all at first, and in the whole of the first chapter the only description is the terse cliché *chuang ming ji jing* (bright windows and clean tables) which I have rendered above, not very satisfactorily, as "bright and tidy". By the end of the chapter the pear tree has achieved vividness in the mind of the reader, but chiefly because of its importance as a symbol for the girl who bears its name (Li Yun = Pear Cloud).

119 *An Unofficial History of Peking* (1985), pp. 1-2.

120 *An Unofficial History of Peking* (1985), pp. 8-9.

After the functional description of the courtyard layout, all of the snatches of description in the above examples are overtly metaphorical. They exist merely to introduce the emotional sensibility of Yang Xingyuan being expressed. 'Atmosphere' is conveyed not through concrete descriptions of surroundings, but through authorial signposting of the intended mood reinforced by indications of Yang Xingyuan's emotional reaction to the scene. The above example provides a paradigm of the form such reactions typically take, in words (both spoken and in poetry), actions and sensations. First Xingyuan, "in spite of himself" (*bu jue*) sighs out loud in lamentation for the fallen blooms, then he "finds himself" (*bu mian*)¹²¹ pacing up and down. The reader infers that he is pondering the melancholy scene further and is invited to do likewise. When he produces a couplet in which the blossom is described as "clouds", the reader immediately recognises that the metaphor arises from Xingyuan's subconscious preoccupation with Li Yun. Finally, Xingyuan is physically affected by the situation, in feeling cold.

The style of this evocation of both general mood and the protagonist's emotions is classically traditional. There is no interior monologue, Yang's reactions being expressed directly in words, actions and sensations. Furthermore, the exposition employs the basic "four-stage" technique of classical composition: *qi-cheng-zhuan-he*, "introduction-elucidation-transition-closure". The theme is introduced, as is traditional in the application of the pattern in poetry, with natural description; it is "elucidated" in the words Yang sighs out loud; the "transition", which typically introduces a new aspect to the theme, comes with the reference to Li Yun in the two lines of poetry. Finally, "closure" is effected by the description of Yang feeling cold and going inside. This "closure", as with all excellent examples of the application of the pattern, is not merely a device to bring the exposition to an end but contains the "punch-line": the intrusion of a physical sensation into the exposition reveals that Yang's preoccupation with Li Yun will not be confined to the cerebral plane. In the first few pages his status as a *duoqing* individual have been indicated to the reader in several ways, chiefly his own assertion of his ill luck, his sympathy for the fallen flowers (a classic "romantic pessimist" reference to Daiyu's flower-burying in The Story of the Stone) and his poetic inclinations. Even this early in the novel, the description of Yang's feeling cold gives the reader a hint of his possession of an important characteristic of the *duoqing* hero: the tendency to ill health, exacerbated by nocturnal and/or alfresco poetic musings.

121 The two phrases are translated as was appropriate in the context of the passage translated. In isolation, one would normally give "in spite of oneself" as a definition for "*bu mian*" and "to find oneself" approximates more closely to the usual definition of "*bu jue*".

In another example of the traditional descriptive technique characteristic of this novel, we again see metaphorical natural description taking precedence over "atmospheric" depiction of physical surroundings. In Chapter 29 Yang Xingyuan goes alone to see peach blossoms in the orchards beside Peking Zoo. In two pages of description we are given little indication of the general lie of the land. We are told that Yang "finds himself wandering onto a little path" (*wuyi-zhong zou, bujue ta-shang xiao dao*) leading away from the zoo itself and towards the orchards. We are then told that there are orchards and fields here and some people walking or working in the fields. To the north there is a line of willows forming an "emerald mist" in the early spring sunlight. Yang finds that the peach blossom is not yet out but sees an apricot tree in full bloom. The tree overhangs a body of water (which has appeared somehow or other but is not identified as running water until the sentence quoted below), its blossom being reflected in the water. The wind picks up, however, and apricot petals fall onto the water's surface. Yang remembers seeing the same tree, then much shorter, a few years before and is moved to reflect on the rapid passage of time.

Yang's personal name Xingyuan means Apricot Orchard, so his musings on the state of the tree relative to when he last saw it assume an extra poignancy and he is moved to compose some extempore lines of *ci* poetry and to do some sighing out loud. One of the sentences he sighs out loud will suffice to summarise the emotional effect of the scene on him:

"Although this apricot tree is growing alone by this lonely bridge over a stream, at least it has me to visit it. But what about me?"¹²²

Directly after this the scene closes with Yang heaving another sigh, sitting down on a stone and sinking into a reverie from which he is woken by Dongqing and her little brother, who just happen to be walking in the orchards as well.

Apart from one mention of a compass direction, our only other landmarks in this passage are the names of buildings which presumably form part of the zoo complex. In other words, unless one already knew the layout of Peking Zoo and the names of its buildings, one could only guess at the relative distances and directions involved. The contemporary reader of the Peking newspaper which carried An Unofficial History of Peking might be expected to have a rough idea of the situation of the zoo and its surroundings.¹²³ One suspects that even to

122 An Unofficial History of Peking (1985), vol. 2, p.457.

123 Today's Peking Zoo has been developed around the same site as the one it occupied at the time An Unofficial History of Peking was written. Unfortunately, however, it appears that if any of the original buildings are still in use at all, they are not known by the names Zhang Henshui referred to in this passage. These names,

contemporary local readers, however, the lack of physical description would tend to convey an impression not much more vivid than that gained by the temporally and spatially removed reader: Yang Xingyuan seems to be wandering through a curiously insubstantial, "dreamlike" landscape. This impression is reinforced by the adverbial expressions which so often appear in Zhang Henshui's descriptive passages. It is frequently "in spite of themselves" or "without knowing why" that his characters "find themselves" doing things which would appear quite unexceptional without such phrases. Examples have also been seen in the passage quoted from Chapter 1.

"Dreamlikeness" for comfort

The "dreamlike" nostalgic mood of the novel postulates an ancient organic society associated with the Chinese countryside. This world is more familiar, more Chinese, less alien and less disturbing than the one taking shape in the new metropolises of twentieth century China. The descriptions of the little courtyard of which Yang Xingyuan is sole occupant have been shown above to provide what is essentially a bare stage, similar to that of the traditional Chinese theatre. The few "props" such as the pear tree and the stereotypically depicted rooms are stylised. This setting is to be taken no more literally than an audience would take the classical Chinese stage. The courtyard is a colourless backdrop against which metaphorical dramas of our hero's soul may be enacted. That the rest of the hostel is never once described in the whole of the novel renders these descriptions of Yang's corner of it even less real. Yang seems to inhabit an "island of dreams" outside the normal world. Significantly, Yang is identified from the outset as a journalist from Anhui. As regards the artistic conception of An Unofficial History of Peking, more important than the autobiographical signal in this information¹²⁴ is the fact that it places Yang as an outsider. His place of origin and residence in the hostel already show his status as a provincial in the metropolis. His occupation of the secluded little courtyard further marks him out as a "yaren", a man of (old-fashioned) refinement. Yang's engagement in a modern career is a necessary compromise with his setting, but his spiritual and aesthetic leanings towards the traditional reinforce the sense that

Binfeng Tang (汾風堂) p. 455) and Changguan Lou ("Hall of Unimpeded Prospects", p. 456), were presumably those given to the buildings when this was an imperial garden during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Nowadays it seems that the only names given to the zoo's building are of the "Reptile House" and "Monkey House" variety.

124 The autobiographical status of Yang Xingyuan is most clearly signposted by his personal name being an approximate homophone for the author's real name, (Zhang) Xinyuan.



he adheres to an older set of indigenous values. He maintains a distance from the 'real' modern world represented by the city by confining himself to his "quiet and refined" little courtyard, a rustic idyll in miniature. Or rather, the author confines his protagonist to a stereotypical scholar's abode, as near to a literary hermit's retreat as could be compatible with the apparent realism of the events described in the novel. Here in his oasis untouched by crass, modern, westernised, urban society, Yang Xingyuan seeks peace of mind in reading and writing classical-style Chinese literature. Occasionally, in the company of like-minded friends, he indulges in conversation; not any old conversation, mind you, but "pure conversation" (*qingtan*), which implies elevated, cerebral discourse as an intellectual exercise and would never dwell on sordid facts of real life.

Here too, in his bedroom (which is further secluded by not even having direct egress to the courtyard), he dreams dreams. The first of these, in Chapter 1, is of Li Yun after his first meeting with her. This dream advances the central narrative in that it suggests to both protagonist (who will not, of course, yet admit it to himself) and reader that a romance may develop between Yang and Li Yun. Equally importantly, however, the occurrence of a dream as early as Chapter 1 helps to establish the otherworldly feel to Yang Xingyuan's situation. I am not concerned here with the oneiric mode per se. Zhang Henshui's employment of dreams as a literary device serves several functions, including revelation of a character's subconscious thoughts and plot advancement.¹²⁵ The description of dreams also contributes, however, to the general mood of unreality. This is especially the case because of the way in which dreams appear unannounced. That is to say, the narrative is at pains not to give any signs of when a dream commences. Although the end of a dream is always indicated by the character waking up, the way in which the narrative occasionally slips from the merely "dreamlike" into the outright oneiric is not only facilitated by the air of unreality already present in the descriptions of waking moments; it also contributes in turn to the general mood.

When friends come to visit Yang in his cultural oasis, their arrival seems as unexpected as if they had beamed in from another planet. As above in the first quotation from Chapter 1, they typically interrupt a poetic reverie with a noisy and jolly entrance. Zhang Henshui is no science fiction writer, however. He does not enter boldly into description of the outside world in an attempt to come to terms with it. His world and that of his protagonist is an inner, spiritual one dealing with a general philosophy of life which does not need to be made specific

125 See Yuan (1988), p. 95, for a favourable assessment of Zhang Henshui's use of the dream mode to "successfully depict contradictory psychology and confused thoughts....; in the old-style novel only Daiyu's dreams in The Story of the Stone can stand comparison, and only just at that."

by the use of vulgar concrete imagery. It can be conveyed by a few strokes of the artist's brush, just enough to establish the common ground of adherence to traditional values or, more bluntly, nostalgia.

The author's reasons for eschewing detailed description of the background scenery for his action differ according to what he wishes to convey: whether the mood of nostalgia for the old, rustic virtues or that of disgust for present-day urban decadence. Yet in both cases, and thus in the novel overall, the effect is to create an unreal, "dreamlike" atmosphere. Even in the realistic descriptions of social phenomena, the fact that they are invariably told through the mediation of our otherworldly protagonist effects a comfortable distance from the realities they represent. Yang Xingyuan is identified as being alienated from modern society, as no doubt many urban Chinese readers in the twenties often felt.¹²⁶ His response is to compromise with it - by taking a modern profession, by using electric light, by riding on trains - but to retain a small retreat from it. Physically, this retreat is represented by his abode, but the author's depiction of this is so unreal as to make it as abstract as the spiritual retreat which takes the form of Yang's consumption and creation of traditional literature.

The manifestations and examples of Yang's literary pursuits in references to his reading and in interpolation of his own writings and those of acquaintances (especially Dongqing) into the narrative contribute significantly to the "dreamlike" quality of An Unofficial History of Peking in a number of ways. The presence of such features develops the reader's sense of the old-fashioned refinement and detachment of the sympathetic characters beyond the extent that could be achieved by description of their deeds and spoken words. In such descriptions, the characters rarely stray so far into romantic melodrama as to become ridiculously unbelievable to a modern reader. Exceptions, such as when Dongqing cuts her finger and writes her avowal of lifelong devotion to Yang in blood on a handkerchief,¹²⁷ come at junctures where the emotional tension has been heightened by realistic means to pitches at which they become credible responses. The fact that Dongqing's oath is written and not spoken, even if it is in her blood and written in Yang's presence at that, is indicative of the fact that the romanticism of the discourse between the two is manifested almost entirely on the page. Unable to confront the real modern world on its own, concrete, participatory terms, Yang Xingyuan and Li

126 See Link (1981), *passim* and especially 196-235, on the idealisation of the countryside as "comfort" for citizens of the modern cities who felt alienated (Link prefers merely "insecure") by them. Yuan Jin states that "during the 1930s, Zhang Henshui was quite possibly one of the writers most sensitive to the 'alienation' which urban material culture had brought to China of the day." (Yuan [1988], p. 161.)

127 An Unofficial History of Peking, p. 832.

Dongqing seek not only retreat but also expression in literary forms and styles which, like them, are out of step with twentieth century society. The main characters of An Unofficial History of Peking are forced by new economic patterns to participate in modern society, but their withdrawal into a spiritual retreat of strangely secluded contemplation and comfortingly (traditional) literary expression creates a dreamworld within the realism of the narrative. The novel's popularity throughout the twentieth century's continual socioeconomic ferment may reflect the readership's wish to find such a haven from the uncertainties of daily existence.

The contemporary reader looking for "comfort" in fiction would have found it in the nostalgic, pastoral dreamlikeness of Yang Xingyuan's surroundings. The traditional, Chinese, familiar and comforting values of Yang's epitome of rural living are posited as an escape, if only in a "dreamlike" unreality, from the anomie of the modern, Europeanised, strange and unsettling city. That Yang makes compromises with the modern urban lifestyle which formed the reality of daily existence of the majority of the contemporary readership of An Unofficial History of Peking only makes him even more into a character with whom they could readily identify, or whom they could idealise as a representative of the values they cherished.

When Yang Xingyuan ventures outside his oasis the backdrop is usually at least as colourless as that provided for the poetic, metaphorical scenes in which aspects of his character are revealed. On his several visits to the fellow-provincials' cemetery or to the neglected temple of Taoranting, again only a brief allusion to the desolate melancholy of these places is necessary to set the mood. As we have seen, Zhang Henshui injects considerable vividness into his descriptions of sordid society goings-on, but there is little attempt to give an overall impression of multifaceted Peking existence. Like the Peking journalist he was, Zhang assumes his readership's knowledge of the milieu and gets on with the job of exposing the dirty underbelly of life in the old capital.

As stated above, I consider the colourlessness of the backdrop to Zhang Henshui's fiction and the poetic quality (both in the style of the narrative and in the interpolation of literary self-expression by characters) of much of the character revelation (which also contributes to the way in which the Romantic Road is plotted and the air of "romantic pessimism" created) to be the chief elements of the "dreamlikeness" which I see in An Unofficial History of Peking. Employment of the dream mode proper has already been mentioned. A final "dreamlike" element to be mentioned here is that of coincidence, the chance meeting between Yang Xingyuan and Li Dongqing in Chapter 29, just after the passage described last, providing an example. As Zhang Henshui began to reduce the element of "dreamlikeness" in his novels after An Unofficial History of Peking, these latter, less significant elements continued to

appear, while more vivid descriptive technique and less traditional modes of character portrayal were experimented with. I will now briefly consider a few ways in which Zhang's two other major novels of this early period showed such experimentation, before going on in chapter two to consider the transitional stage of the 1930s.

A Grand Old Family

The action of A Grand Old Family may be dated no more precisely than "early republican" since the indications are extremely contradictory. The general impression conveyed is that of the 1920s. The Prologue (*Xiezi*), however, makes it explicit, by reference to Leng Qingqiu's age, that the action took place more than ten years before the writing. One passage in the novel, where Daozhi remarks on the irony of Qingqiu, as a Chinese, feeling pity for Daozhi's husband's Japanese concubine,¹²⁸ indicates that the action is no earlier than 1919, which would place the writing of the novel in the future relative to its commencement in 1926. The reference to China's being much put upon by Japanese imperialism could not have credibly been put in Qingqiu's words without the date being no earlier than the upsurge of anti-Japanese feeling in the build up to the Treaty of Versailles. It is much more likely to have been taken by the reader of its original serialisation in the *Evening World* in late 1931 or early 1932, shortly after Japan's annexation of Manchuria, as confirmation of the generally contemporaneous feel of the novel's timespan.

I mention this temporal fluidity because, along with an, if anything, even less colourful backdrop to the action, it is an important contributing factor in the continuing "dreamlike" quality to this novel. As we shall see below, however, there are several ways in which A Grand Old Family marks progress in Zhang Henshui's reform of the old-style novel.

A Grand Old Family is the story of the decline of the Jin family. At the start of the novel this is one of the foremost dynasties in early republican China. By the end not only has the death of the head of the family, Jin Quan, a former Premier of the Republic, brought about the fall of its fortunes in the absence of a worthy successor among his sons, but the whole family has been split up into small nuclear units instead of the three generations and eighteen or so members originally living within the one very substantial traditional compound. The story focuses on the youngest and most profligate of the four sons, Yanxi, and his courtship,

128 A Grand Old Family (1985), p. 1175.

marriage and betrayal of Leng Qingqiu. Qingqiu is a young woman from a much humbler old-style family which has fallen on hard times after the death of its head. Qingqiu is moved less by Yanxi's open-handedness in his courtship of her than by the sincerity she believes to be behind it. Once within his family she maintains a traditional ethical code such as that preached by Jin Quan but not practised enough to provide a persuasive example for his sons. The latter prefer to follow their father's actual practices, such as taking concubines, and surpass him in disposing of the family's income. Once Yanxi has ensnared Qingqiu, by getting her pregnant while she still believes in him, he soon loses patience with her moralistic attitude and resumes his drinking, gambling and womanising. Eventually the two become so estranged that Qingqiu swallows her pride and moves into a separate apartment upstairs from her connubial rooms. Not long afterwards, a fire destroys this building and in the confusion Qingqiu and her child escape and go into hiding with her family. This disaster precipitates the final break up of the family and the novel closes, after Yanxi has departed for study in Europe with two of his sisters, with the youngest and most blameless Jin, Meili, taking first steps towards a romance with a young man who had been an attendant at Yanxi's wedding. The Prologue (*Xiezi*) which opens the novel had already made it plain that Qingqiu ends up supporting herself and her son by taking private classes and providing an exclusive calligraphy service. The Epilogue (*Weisheng*) further reveals that Yanxi eventually becomes a famous film actor, who tends to appear in films which recall the circumstances of his marriage to Qingqiu and its failure but which portray his role in a rather positive light.

Yuan Jin writes that "A Grand Old Family's most outstanding contribution lies in having extensively introduced internal monologue into the chapter-linked novel". He goes on to say that "the pre-modern Chinese linked-chapter novel...seldom contains extended interior monologue" and that this "is clearly derived from the inspiration of Western and May Fourth fiction [and] undoubtedly greatly enriches the expressiveness of the linked-chapter novel, reflecting the author's development of its formal techniques."¹²⁹

Yuan gives an example of such a passage of extended internal monologue, namely Leng Qingqiu's thoughts building up to her decision to seek a divorce from Jin Yanxi in Chapter 90 of the novel. In order to compare Zhang Henshui's utilisation of this technique to the examples of character revelation typical of An Unofficial History of Peking shown above, it is natural to choose a passage describing Qingqiu's thoughts here also. Not only are hers the thoughts conveyed via interior monologue most often and most convincingly; she is also the

129 Yuan (1988), pp. 128-129.

only character in this novel who is truly comparable to Yang Xingyuan, as an intellectual of traditional leanings and as a poetic, if not entirely "supersensitive", type. She is also the only sympathetic major character in *A Grand Old Family*. My example comes from Chapter 50 and, with Yanxi and Qingqiu married less than a week, represents the opposite end of the process of Qingqiu's disillusionment with Yanxi to that shown in the passage quoted by Yuan:

The clock had struck two o'clock and all the theatres and cinemas would be closed. Even if he were playing mahjong at a friend's he should surely have been back by now, during their so-called honeymoon.... So why had he gone? Surely he couldn't know that Third Sister-in-law was making things difficult for me today and was keeping out of the way on purpose? That would be even more wrong of you, I'm your beloved, you should protect me and comfort me, not keep yourself out of harm's way. Over and over she thought to herself while the small gold clock on the table tick-ticked away, and swung its little hand round to three o'clock. No matter what, he wouldn't be coming back now it was as late as this.

She had wanted to wait for Yanxi and go to bed together, otherwise the intimacy of this honeymoon period would be missing. Having waited as long as this, however, there was no point in waiting any longer and so she pulled back the bedspread, undressed and went to bed alone. But how could she sleep? Her head on the pillow, she thought that her marriage was a *mésalliance* (*Qi da fei ou*) after all, and was thus rather strained. What's more their wedding had been too rushed, so that there had been no room for thinking things through properly. As to this Third Sister-in-law, she seems a tricky character and will be a formidable adversary in future.

Lying in bed thinking such thoughts, Qingqiu couldn't help feeling her future seemed very unsure and the days ahead would be very difficult.¹³⁰

I have quoted only about one third of the extended internal monologue the author presents us with here. Its method of revelation of Qingqiu's thoughts and feelings contrasts strongly with that employed at similarly poignant junctures in Yang Xingyuan's life, such as have been analysed above. Although there is inconsistency in the voice used ("I" frequently slipping in for "she"), it is clearly recognisable as sustained internal monologue beyond anything used in the earlier novel. Through it we are told precisely and fully the thoughts going through Qingqiu's mind, not merely a general suggestive mood. The one concrete object which serves as a "prop" in the scene is the significantly modern and also tangible and solidly visual (the hands) one of a ticking clock, which concretises the feeling of the passage of time which so pains her. Not for Qingqiu a 'mist of flowers' to bring forth a sigh and a poem. Though much is made of her literary talent, this is almost exclusively done indirectly; we do not have to rely on her poetry itself, which would no doubt be just as recondite as Yang Xingyuan's, to gain tantalising clues to her feelings.

130 *A Grand Old Family* (1985), pp. 614-615.

Qingqiu's position in A Grand Old Family will be discussed in chapter two below in the context of a general discussion of the major female characters in Zhang Henshui's fiction. It should be mentioned here, however, that in spite of her central role in this novel she is not its true protagonist. It has been stated above that the fact that An Unofficial History of Peking has a protagonist at all in Yang Xingyuan represents a technical advance on the traditional Chinese satirical novel, which was typically characterised by an extremely loose anecdotal structure linked tenuously, if at all, by the presence of a central character running through it.¹³¹ In only his second major novel Zhang Henshui took a giant leap beyond that modest "reform" of the old-style novel by providing a multiple protagonist for A Grand Old Family in the form of the whole Jin family. The central theme is the family's decline and subsidiary themes of decadence in society at large are encompassed within the family. Thus, unlike An Unofficial History of Peking, there are no anecdotes which do not involve the protagonist. This makes for a much tighter structure, but it has its limitations. The family, of three generations and more than twenty members¹³², is still too big, while the sons' philandering outwith the family structure occupies almost as great a proportion of the narrative as do the extraneous anecdotes of An Unofficial History of Peking. The fact that most of these subplots involve Yanxi links them in more closely to the central storyline of his relationship with Qingqiu. On the other hand it hampers the obvious attempt to place this within the general schema of the prodigal sons of the family and is indicative of the anonymity of Yanxi's elder brothers. Zhang Henshui was to make another attempt, with modifications, at employment of a multiple protagonist much later in his career with the novel closest to his first two in length, Goblin Market (Wangliang Shijie, 1941-45), which will be discussed in chapter four. It may well, however, have been in recognition of the fact that, in spite of its advantages over An Unofficial History of Peking, A Grand Old Family had still not achieved the structural success he sought, that in his next major novel, Fate in Tears and Laughter, Zhang chose a single protagonist and a single, concentrated storyline.

Fate in Tears and Laughter

Serialised and published in book form within the year 1930, Fate in Tears and Laughter, at around 240 000 characters, is only a quarter of the length of its two major forerunners. More importantly, it is by far Zhang Henshui's most famous and most popular novel. The author

131 See pp. 22-23 above.

132 Here we must count Jin Quan's eldest daughter Daozhi, her child, her husband and his Japanese concubine and perhaps also the eldest son Fengju's concubine Wanxiang, none of whom live within the family compound.

wrote in Memoirs in 1949 that it had gone through "over twenty" editions.¹³³ There were three editions within the first year alone¹³⁴ and Zhang writes in the same place that after the first two editions of the and fifteen thousand copies each subsequent editions averaged print runs of three or four thousand. Since then, to my knowledge at least a further nine editions have been published. Fate in Tears and Laughter was one of the few of Zhang's novels to be re-published in mainland China during the 1950s¹³⁵ and was the first to reappear, in 1980, as the Zhang Henshui revival got under way. During the eighties, at least four editions from three different publishers have appeared in mainland China and scarcely a copy is ever to be found on a bookshop shelf. In short, this is the best selling Chinese novel of the twentieth century, possibly of all time. Moreover, from the very first it was a multi-media sensation, with cinema companies going to court over the film rights and comic book adaptations, plays and versions for the various Chinese performance arts being rapidly produced. In recent decades, apart from more film and stage versions, there have been at least two television serial adaptations, in Hong Kong and the mainland.

The novel was the target of much May Fourth vitriol at the time, perhaps partly because of fears by New Literature critics that its success represented the ugly head of the Saturday School rearing up again just when it seemed that the good fight had been won.¹³⁶ In Yuan Jin's opinion, however, it "reached the artistic pinnacle of the linked-chapter novel of the time" and "is an extremely important work in the history of the development of the linked-chapter novel and of popular fiction and its function and influence should in no way be underestimated".¹³⁷

133 Zhang, Memoirs, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 44.

134 A 1931 "third edition" is listed in the catalogue of the National Library of China.

135 Three in all, I believe, the others being Heavy is the Night (see chapter two) and Eighty-one Dreams (see chapter three), not counting the "old stories retold" (see my introduction) and two novels published in book form for the first time during this period, namely Goblin Market and Five Things No Self-respecting Official Should be Without (Wu-zi Deng Ke).

136 See for example Xia Zhengnong, "Reading Fate in Tears and Laughter" (1935), reprinted in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 301-307.

137 Yuan (1988), p. 149.

Many have praised the tighter structure of Fate in Tears and Laughter relative to Zhang's earlier novels. It also builds on the greater use of internal monologue which the author began in A Grand Old Family. A brief plot summary will suffice to show ways in which Zhang Henshui's most famous novel retained something of the original mode.

The protagonist of Fate in Tears and Laughter is Fan Jiashu, a young man who at the start of the novel has recently arrived in Peking from his home in Hangzhou. He will spend this summer of 1924 with relatives studying for entrance examinations to a university in the capital. Fan takes to spending time in the lively street performance area of Peking around Tianqiao and meets a pretty young drumsinger. He falls in love with this girl, Shen Fengxi, and helps her to enter school and in other material ways. Meanwhile he meets another young woman named He Lina (Helena)¹³⁸, an acquaintance of his relatives and his social equal or superior. Helena is a thoroughly modern woman who could not be more different from Fengxi's traditionally bashful Chinese girlish ways, except in one thing: the two young women are physically indistinguishable, a fact which causes great confusion to everyone except Jiashu, who seems oblivious to it.

Helena is as keen on Jiashu as his relatives are on her, but he feels little for her and compares her brash, modern, westernised ways unfavourably with Fengxi's endearing docility and childish charm. Disaster strikes, however, for while Jiashu is away on a visit home to his sick mother, Fengxi is trapped into a liaison with a cruel warlord. At Tianqiao, Jiashu had also befriended an old man named Guan Shoufeng who has extraordinary skill in the traditional martial arts and is a thoroughly upright man of traditional ethical sensibility. This ethical code requires Guan to do his best to help his friend and he attempts to free Fengxi from the clutches of the evil General Liu. Yet the same ethical code is so strong that at the mere glimpse through a window of what appears to him to be evidence that Fengxi has succumbed to the lure of the general's money, Guan gives up this quest in order to save his friend from the wickedness of womankind.

On his return, Jiashu is heartbroken at this turn of events. Guan Shoufeng's daughter Xiugu, a pleasant young woman who admires her father's young friend but has the misfortune to be less physically striking than her doppelgänger rivals, tries to do her bit to help Jiashu by infiltrating the warlord's home posing as a maid and persuades Fengxi to meet Jiashu secretly in a park. Fengxi is beyond redemption by this time and reconciliation proves impossible. Seeing how

138 Perry Link does not explain why he adopts this translation, but "He Lina" does appear to be designed as a fashionable approximation of a Western name and thus Helena suits the character in question.

cold her heart has turned, Jiashu hardens his. He also finds considerable comfort in the lively and increasingly tender company of Helena. Unfortunately their hands are forced too soon by a repercussion of the extraordinary similarity in appearance between Helena and Fengxi. While Jiashu was visiting his mother, she somehow saw a photograph of Fengxi and he candidly told her it was of his fiancée. The offending likeness finds its way into the hands of Jiashu's relatives in Tianjin, who assume that it is Helena whom they recognise in it. This is all the more natural since when they teasingly confront her with it she is a little puzzled at the hairstyle and other details but also has to conclude it must be a photograph of herself that Jiashu has somehow got hold of. Up to now Helena and Jiashu's family have known nothing about Fengxi, but when he hears that Helena now believes that he has told his mother that she (Helena) is his fiancée he is mortally chagrined at the disrespect to her and tells her the truth. Helena is devastated and shows it by flirting with an army officer on the train back to Peking and then hosting a huge party at which she performs a grass-skirted hula dance and immediately disappears - abroad, so people think.

Meanwhile General Liu has given Fengxi such a severe beating on discovering her meeting with Jiashu that she has been driven insane. The general has taken a fancy to his new maid, however, and agrees to take her to a temple in the Western Hills just outside the city. This is Xiugu's ruse, like father like daughter, to carry out a chivalrous vengeance on this "scourge on the nation and on society". When Jiashu reads of the general's murder in the newspaper he rushes off to Tianjin for fear of getting involved. This is where he tells Helena, who has followed him there, about Fengxi. Jiashu returns to Peking when he judges the heat following the murder should have died down and is dismayed to learn that Helena has gone abroad. Soon it is time for Jiashu to enter university and he moves onto campus in the northern suburbs of the city. One day, on his way to visit the nearby Western Hills, he is kidnapped by bandits. The Guans eventually turn up, free Jiashu by means of superhuman martial feats and deliver him to Helena, who has not gone abroad at all but has been in retreat all this time in her father's summer house in the Western Hills. Here Helena, with Jiashu at her side, closes the curtains on the cold autumn night and on the novel.

Apart from the general preposterousness of this plot, the reliance on fantastic coincidence is a particularly striking way in which Fate in Tears and Laughter retains a "dreamlike" quality. It might be thought that the supernatural aspect introduced by Guan Shoufeng and Xiugu also contributes to this. As I have said above, however, as in the classic Chinese novels, fantastical content is not necessarily incompatible with realism and I will show in chapter two how this, and particularly the role of Xiugu in the story, represent important ways in which Fate in Tears and Laughter contains examples of greater realism than that seen in Zhang's first two novels and marks the beginning of the 1930s phase of his writing.

CHAPTER TWO

Novels of the 1930s: "Catching up with the times"

Zhang Henshui's Return of the Swallow (Yan Guilai, 1934-36, 1st. ed. 1942) is a typical example of the author's mid-1930s writing. It retains many features, both formal and stylistic, of his early period while also showing a marked progression towards a more modern, realistic mode. As in all Zhang's novels of this period, chapter-title couplets are still employed, though they are less opaque than those in his early fiction. Other traditional narrative conventions are less obtrusive in Return of the Swallow, although *dao* is monotonously retained, but the novel begins in a very classical way indeed in that Chapter 1 is essentially a prologue. Beginning the chapter with a poem, the author reveals himself as a traditional storyteller. Immediately after the thirty-two lines of verse (which vividly describe the horrors of famine) comes confirmation of this stance:

These few verses are unspeakably vulgar, one couldn't call them poetry; what is talked of in them, however, are the true circumstances of the two provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu in 1928 and 1929. To use such material as this for poetry is really something new. Although we scribblers and hacks are adept at making something out of nothing, even we couldn't make up scenes like these from our armchairs. As for these few verses of poetry, I must say that they really do have some firm basis; and if you ask what basis that is, I dare to say that I have not only the evidence, but also a witness. The evidence, naturally, is the history of the years 1928 and 1929; as for the witness, actually she is a most modern young woman, and a sports-star to boot, Miss Song [Yang] Yanqiu. Nineteen years old, she is a pupil at a secondary school affiliated to one of the universities in Nanking. Not only do her fair, rosy complexion and dark eyes call forth exclamations at her beauty wherever she goes, but with her sturdy physique, there's no hint about her of the sickly aspect of the old-style beauty. Apart from being captain of her school's girls' basketball team, she is also the South China two hundred metres sprint champion. Not only is she thus the object of admiration of all her schoolmates: which of those society youths so enamoured of modern shapely women would not consider it an honour just to catch a glimpse of her?¹

The hand of the traditional storyteller may be clearly perceived in this introduction of the novel's protagonist. Although her true place of origin is not disclosed until later (this being one of the first twists of the plot), her name and background are filled in in the traditional way, before a word or an action of hers is described. There is an admixture of traditional and modern styles in the introduction of Yanqiu, the description of her eyes and complexion following a classical pattern, while a modern colloquial register is employed more generally and seems appropriate to the modern activities mentioned. Although the remainder of Chapter

1 Return of the Swallow (Hefei, 1986), pp. 1-2.

1 goes on to commence the story itself, without obvious storyteller intrusion, the technique employed is a traditional one: that of introducing the other main characters one by one and bringing them together before the story gets fully under way. Yet from now on the bulk of the narrative of Return of the Swallow has a natural, realistic flow and the author-storyteller remains unobtrusive. Zhang's new realism, his efforts to "catch up with the times", are most clearly seen in the plot structure, the characterisation and the choice of subject matter.

Plot structure in *Return of the Swallow*

The plot is a very simple one and thereby much tighter than those of Zhang's first two novels and more believable than that of Fate in Tears and Laughter. The heroine is Yang Yanqiu, a young woman originally from Gansu who had fled the great famine of 1928-29 with her family, selling herself into service when they reached Xi'an in hopes of saving her starving parents with the money. Taken back to Nanjing by her new master, she is soon thrown out on the streets again because of the jealousy of his wife. A wealthy civil servant named Song adopts her but when he dies six years later, where the novel begins, she is disowned by the rest of the family. She re-assumes her original surname and determines to return to the Northwest to try to find any surviving members of her natural family. Failing that, she intends to devote her life to voluntary work aimed at the material development of her benighted homeland. Because of her beauty and intelligence (and her "sturdy", "shapely", "modern" sportswoman's physique), Yang Yanqiu has been much sought after by her male schoolmates and now she invites the four of whom she has the highest opinion to accompany her on this arduous journey. Her first choice is enticed away by her best friend, but the other three suitors embark on the trek northwest, anxious to pass this test and to win Yanqiu's hand. When they get to the really bleak regions of the Northwest, however, their resolve gradually weakens and they fall by the wayside one by one, finally leaving only Yanqiu, still determined to do her bit for the prosperity of Gansu. By now she has found a likeminded companion in Cheng Lihang, a young civil engineer, as well as being reunited with one of her two brothers.

Even if we discount, on the grounds that their paths never cross, either Shi Nailao, the football star who never even left Nanjing and therefore didn't last beyond Chapter Six, or Cheng Lihang, who is rather sketchily introduced towards the end of the novel, in Return of the Swallow we have not merely the love-triangle almost obligatory in Zhang's novels, but actually a *love-pentangle*. Apart from that, the plot is essentially uncontrived. There is nothing so improbable as, for instance, the uncanny physical resemblance between He Lina and Shen Fengxi which causes so many coincidences and misunderstandings in Fate in Tears and Laughter. The story of Return of the Swallow is simply concerned with one young

woman and her several admirers, who are generally all in the frame at the same time, with little ambiguity from the reader's point of view as to their respective chances with Yanqiu. These chances soon appear to the reader to be slim in all cases because Yanqiu quickly emerges as a far deeper personality than any of her suitors. The shallowness of the latter allows them to entertain unrealistic hopes for long enough for the story to be enlivened, but at the same time weakened, by their constant attempts to outdo one another in flattering Yanqiu or pandering to what they believe to be her tastes.

The plot begins to lose its shape in the description of the train journey and the places the young people pass through on their way to Gansu. The longest of these occupies Chapters 9 to 11, being concerned with sightseeing, accompanied by jealous rivalries, during the briefest of stopovers in Kaifeng. Even Luoyang, where the travellers agree not to stop, is discussed in the better part of a chapter: first there is a discussion about whether or not to stop there, the conclusion in the negative being reached because of hearsay that the sights of the ancient city are sadly neglected; then when the train stops for half an hour at Luoyang station there is another debate on the wisdom of their decision and finally, as they re-embark, they meet a civil servant who works in Luoyang and extract from him a full description of the city's famous monuments. Throughout all these shenanigans the young men are constantly trying to anticipate Yanqiu's attitude, so as to be seen to be advocating a course of action of which she will approve.² These petty joustings are tedious, but differ only in degree from the usual way in which rivals in love typically compete in Zhang Henshui's novels. A less usual, and even more wearisome feature is the minutely detailed description of the sightseeing en route.

Such descriptions contribute to the narrative in showing the physical progress of the travellers through changing scenery and standards of living, building towards the climax in the desolation of the far Northwest with the effects increasing hardship has on the group, and also providing a backdrop, metaphorical or literal, for the development of relationships between its members. They become distracting, however, because of their number and length relative to the space devoted directly to advancement of the central plot and because of the mode of the descriptions themselves. Narration is discarded in favour of the style of a travelogue or even travel guide. Though it is understandable in the context of the story that these young southerners should wish to take advantage of the fact that their path takes them through such ancient capitals cities as Kaifeng and Luoyang to do tours of the sights (or at least to agonise about

2 *Return of the Swallow*, I, pp. 154-155, 168-175.

whether or not to do so), the author's detailed descriptions of these visits are not essential to convey such truly meaningful developments in the plot as do occur, which are dealt with quite cursorily in comparison.

Zhang states in Memoirs that he was inspired to write Return of the Swallow by his own visit to northwest China in 1934.³ This and the fact that around this time he also published travel essays on most of the places his characters visit in Return of the Swallow⁴ would seem to explain the reason for this shortcoming. Zhang Henshui fails to make a distinction between the kind of researched material necessary and desirable for inclusion in a novel and that which is necessary for travel writing.

As his reason for wanting to write about the Northwest, Zhang cites his shock at the conditions of poverty he witnessed in that region and his wish to describe them. In this he is certainly successful, although readers who resent having to wade through the tedious depiction of tourism and petty jealousies of which Chapters 5 to 14 are largely composed might well give up before ever reaching this part of the contemporary narrative. Luckily one of Zhang Henshui's finest and most sustained pieces of realistic description forms Chapters 2 to 4, in which Yang Yanqiu tells her experience of the famine years to her admirers. This is quite harrowing reading and makes one think it regrettable that Zhang Henshui did not make a habit of writing first-person narrative short stories. In these chapters he demonstrates what could have been great skill in that mode and form. Although there are plenty of cases in Zhang's novels of considerable portions of the narrative being put into the mouth of one of the *dramatis personae*, none are as sustained and consistent as these four chapters told by Yang Yanqiu. Zhang Henshui as author-storyteller retreats completely at the end of Chapter 1 and the narration is given over entirely to Yanqiu. The effect of this distancing of the author from the narrative is to make these chapters highly believable as an eyewitness account of the famine. This would be impressive enough on its own, but it is made even more effective by the scene which has been set by the author (by highly traditional means as I have shown) for the telling of Yanqiu's story. Yanqiu's eager audience of involved youths could be assumed, from what is known about them already, to have as little experience of what she was saying as would the novel's intended readership. This is not merely "comforting", but allows the reader to share fully in the shocked reaction of Yanqiu's admirers to the horrors she describes. The

3 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 63.

4 These eleven travelogues, collectively entitled "Little Records of a Journey to the West" (*Xiyou Xiao Ji*), were published in Shanghai's monthly *Travel* magazine (*Lixing Zazhi*) every month from September 1934 to July 1935 (see Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 514-515). Two of them have been republished in Qiao and Mo eds., Zhongguo Mingsheng Shi-wen Jianshang Cidian.

first five chapters of Return of the Swallow are thus a superb example of the success Zhang Henshui was capable of even in his early efforts to "reform" the traditional novel. Not only has he successfully blended traditional technical features of the old Chinese novel, such as chapter-title couplets and a prologue in verse, with modern content. That was the easy part. More significant is the happy marriage of traditional and modern narrative styles appropriately employed. Just as it is entirely appropriate that the first chapter should adhere to the traditional practice of introducing the novel's major characters, so too is the choice of a first-person narrative mode for Yanqiu's extended continuation of the prologue clearly the most felicitous way of preparing the reader for the main story. By the end of Chapter 5, the reader is eagerly awaiting the further development of the characters and their interpersonal relations against the exciting backdrop of an adventurous journey to barren northwest China.

Characterisation in *Return of the Swallow*

In terms of characterisation, the early part of Return of the Swallow shows a clear progression from Fate in Tears and Laughter, let alone the bulk of Zhang's previous writing. In Fate in Tears and Laughter most of the characters are reasonably well rounded, but they are often not fully developed until long after they have been introduced. Even then they sometimes act contrary to the character which has been portrayed.⁵ In Return of the Swallow, by contrast, by the end of the fifth chapter all four main characters are wholly interesting and believable, possessing clear and distinctive characteristics and idiosyncracies, although some of them have been dealt with in only a few sentences and one or two short speeches. The characterisation is as deft as it is convincing.

Wu Jiansheng is the first character we meet after the introduction of Yanqiu and the announcement that "suddenly, in the spring of that year she was absent from school for...two weeks".⁶ Like her other admirers, Wu is at first worried in case Yanqiu has left school to get married and then greatly relieved to learn that her father has died. By the end of the second week Wu "could bear it no longer. He put on a smart western-style suit, combed his hair until

5 The most spectacular example of this is in Chapter 17 of Fate in Tears and Laughter, when the hitherto sensitive and introverted (frankly, wimpish) Fan Jiashu's response to Fengxi's attempt to pay him back the money he had earlier given her is to immediately burst into manic laughter and exaggeratedly tear up her cheque (Hangzhou, 1980, pp. 251-252).

6 Return of the Swallow, I, p. 2.

it shone, shaved very thoroughly and, screwing up his courage, went off to pay a visit to [Yanqiu's] house."⁷ Wu finds Yanqiu being closely guarded by one of her sisters-in-law and unable to talk frankly with him.

Not until he was out of the front door did he stop sweating. "By the looks of things," he thought to himself, "Yanqiu is being badly oppressed in her own home. Surely her brothers and their wives can't have cut off her finances now that their father is dead?"⁸

As he walks back to school Wu wonders about Yanqiu's legal position and makes straight for the library to do some legal research. His fruitless efforts, as a science student, to make any sense of the legalese of the law textbooks are amusingly described. As he wanders perplexedly back out of the library he is startled by a slap on the shoulder and the words, "Hey, Wu old boy! Planning to go home and file for divorce, are we? How come you're suddenly interested only in books on law?" It turns out that this is Fei Changnian, who is not only a rival for Yanqiu's affections but also a student of law. His dapper but old-fashioned appearance is described in a short sentence made vivid by the information that he is nicknamed "Old Man Handsome" (*piaoliang laofuzi*). These two characters start to come to life in the bantering exchange which follows. Wu makes the mistake of trying subtly to sound out this law student on Yanqiu's legal position. Fei immediately guesses what's really on his mind.

Fei Changnian clapped his hands and jumped up and down.
"Ahah!" he laughed. "It's Miss Song! Has she asked your advice?"
"No, no!" replied Jiansheng, blushing. "I'm not talking about her. There's a relative of mine who finds herself in this situation just now."
Changnian stretched out his right hand and snapped his fingers resoundingly in front of Jiansheng's face.
"You can't fool me," he laughed. "You've shaved and put on a suit today; you must have gone to her house. I bet you were sent away with a flea in your ear."
"How would you know, unless you've been sent away with a flea in yours?"⁹

The conversation turns from adversarial to conspiratorial as Changnian introduces into it the mutual bogeyman of Gao Yihong, a final year student with a literary bent who is rumoured to be about to get engaged to Yanqiu. Indeed, Changnian reveals that he believes Yanqiu's disappearance is due to the fact that she is just about to go off to Shanghai to marry Gao. Jiansheng's reaction to this news is vitriolic: "You mean that decadent fop who writes such disgusting romantic stories? One of these days I swear I'll publish an exposé on him, the

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p. 4.

9 Ibid., p. 5.

morally bankrupt philandering rat!"¹⁰ Thinking about what he has heard about Gao Yihong, and comparing it to what Changnian has just told him, Jiansheng decides he must keep a close watch on Gao from now on. It is not long before the reader is provided with a sight of Gao Yihong through Jiansheng's jaundiced eyes. Further spice is added to this first description of Gao by the fact that Jiansheng has by then received a note from Yanqiu inviting him to meet her in a hotel the following evening. The reader suspects that Gao may well have received a similar note, since we know that Changnian has one identical to Jiansheng's. Following the hilarious scene in which Jiansheng's furtive reading of his note from Yanqiu is interrupted by Changnian's whoop of joy as he reads his just behind the bamboo thicket beside which Jiansheng is standing, Jiansheng looks up from the note to check his watch against the clocktower and sees Gao Yihong doing the same:

Of all the coincidences in the world, just as he was checking his watch, his rival Gao Yihong, whom he was keeping under surveillance, came out from the path that led from the library and stood under the clock tower to check his watch. He was wearing a home-produced light grey serge lined robe with a white silk lining. Beautifully pressed, the cloth of the robe flowed down like a waterfall. His light grey velvet hat sat at a jaunty angle. How hateful! He's dressed so soberly just because Yanqiu has been wearing mourning recently. And just look at that hair of his, combed like black satin: a fly could skate on it! Never mind how fair his complexion is, he still looks a right slippery character. As if the fellow knew Jiansheng was watching him he sidled off with a faint smile on his face.

"You needn't smile like that," thought Jiansheng to himself, "she's already invited me to meet her tomorrow in a hotel. Wouldn't you say that's no mean feat, for a young man to have the opportunity to meet the object of his affections in a hotel? Maybe the rapidity of my success, when it is made public, will make you choke in your tears. You've already lost, so what are you smiling at?"¹¹

Within a few pages we have been introduced to three characters in the most vivid manner. All are fashionable, vain young men and although we are offered no objective description of their physical appearance, there is to me a strong suggestion from other factors that all are good-looking and that the thoroughly unpleasant Jiansheng is probably of medium, wiry build, the jocular Changnian is slightly chubby and Yihong is tall, slim and elegant. Again there is a felicitous blending of traditional and innovative styles here. The description of Gao Yihong follows the traditional formula of concentration on clothing and demeanour, while simultaneously suggesting something not only of his build but also of his character. The fact that this description is given from the hostile perspective of Wu Jiansheng makes it far more vivid and interesting than is usual in traditional fiction.¹²

10 Ibid., p. 6.

11 Ibid., pp. 7-8.

12 The first description of Shi Nailao (*Return of the Swallow*, I, p. 10) is similarly made vivid by being filtered through Jiansheng's jealous eyes.

A significant factor in the description of Gao Yihong is the fact that he is immediately identified as a literary type, and a writer of "disgusting romantic stories" at that. This obvious self-parody, conveyed from a hostile perspective, is something new in Zhang Henshui's fiction and is significant to the message of this novel, as will be discussed below. In the remainder of Chapter 1's "prologue" the tendency of the four male characters to respond stereotypically as befits their role, particularly Fei Changnian the lawyer and Gao Yihong the poet, is advance warning of their ultimate shallowness. Moreover, the travelogue-style meanderings of the main story's plot soon weaken the early success of the introduction of these characters, turning shallowness into bland anonymity.¹³

"Catching up with the times": modern content and female characters

The harrowing description of the famine in Chapters 2 to 4 of Return of the Swallow signals a change in tone. This is part of Zhang's "catching up with the times", and also represents his attempt to shed something of the dreamlike, "comforting" qualities of his fiction. It may be discussed in terms of Borthwick's central definition of the "Saturday School" mode.¹⁴

In Chapter 14 of Return of the Swallow there is an explicit renunciation of something identifiable with Borthwick's "romantic pessimism". The principal characters are overnighing in Tongguan on the way to Gansu. The significance of this railhead on the Yellow River Bend has been highlighted during a conversation between Yanqiu and her three suitors. Tongguan is seen as a place where there is a meeting of such bipolar qualities as sweet and bitter, comfort and discomfort, littoral (developed, affluent) and interior (backward, deprived) China. The metaphor is further emphasised by the dinner which follows this conversation. The meal has all the trappings of the refined cuisine of affluent southern China, including rice, and the travellers are glad to make the most of this, as beyond Tongguan rice will be almost impossible to find. Unfortunately it is also afflicted by such manifestations of the inferior conditions of Northwest China as copious quantities of grit in the rice. The young southerners find this very hard to stomach, and not just in the literal sense.

Gao Yihong, the closest thing to an autobiographical character in this novel, goes out after the meal to enjoy the moonlight and try to forget the bad taste left in his mouth. Contemplating such a scene of historical and contemporary desolation under a wan moon this old-fashioned

13 See below pp. 83-86.

14 See p. 27 above.

literary type is predictably absorbed in melancholy thoughts. When Yanqiu joins him, a discussion on melancholy and optimism, emotionalism and rationality ensues. Although Yanqiu admits to being a creature of emotion and even to a certain proclivity toward melancholy, she stridently avers that she never lets these traits overrule her rationality. Gao Yihong, a firmly pessimistic, *duoqing* romantic, interprets this as a warning not to think of wooing Yanqiu until her ambition of contributing to the welfare of her home region has been completed. Although Gao Yihong, as an autobiographical character, might more normally be expected to be the author's mouthpiece, it has been noted that there is at least an element of self-parody in this character and where self-criticism is concerned it is natural for the autobiographical character to be the target. Yanqiu's words may here be interpreted as a self-critical statement by Zhang Henshui on his changing attitude to fiction.¹⁵ They are an admission of the importance of the emotional element in life, but an even stronger affirmation of the necessity not to allow emotionalism to be exaggerated into unhealthy sentimentalism to the detriment of principled action.

"Listen, said Yihong," pointing to the sky. "Doesn't that add even more to the mood of melancholy?"

When Yanqiu listened she heard the sound of a bugle coming from within the city of Tongguan....

Having listened with head bowed silently for a while she turned round to face Yihong and said, "This would really be very good subject matter for you to write a poem about."

"All along our journey you've been very fond of talking about literature," Yihong said with a smile, "but you are going back to the Northwest for an active purpose and from your point of view one should have no time for such sentimentalism."

"I believe that it is precisely because humankind possesses emotional feeling that our lives are superior to those of animals," replied Yanqiu....

"What you say is very true," agreed Yihong. "But I've been over-endowed with emotional feeling all my life," he continued, looking up at the moon. "Again and again I've allowed my feelings to control me and have made many sacrifices as a result."

"Although people are creatures of emotion," said Yanqiu, "it is wrong to go around doing all kinds of rash things at the unfettered whim of one's emotions. At crucial junctures in life you should use your powers of reason to control yourself."

"But I'm no good at that," said Yihong, ".... Since you admit that humankind is an emotional species, surely there must be times when the reason is incapable of controlling the feelings?"

"No!" replied Yanqiu with a shake of her head. "....although I am a person of emotional feeling, my powers of reason are easily strong enough to keep me in check and not allow me to stray in the very slightest beyond the bounds of personal dignity...."

Although this was a conversation, in fact she was making a kind of declaration.... Obviously [to Gao Yihong] she was saying that she was not ignorant of love, but that she was not at all inclined to involve herself in it with anyone right now."¹⁶

15 Yanqiu's function as authorial mouthpiece will be returned to below.

16 *Return of the Swallow*, I, pp. 201-203.

Although *this* is a dialogue between characters, in fact *Zhang Henshui* is making a kind of declaration. He does not wish to go so far as to rule out emotionalism in literature altogether, but he is affirming his new dedication to realism, represented here by intellectual reason.

It is unclear from Zhang Henshui's own writings to what extent his wish to "catch up with the times" arose from the influence of May Fourth literature and represented an attempt to follow the trends that the new school was setting for fiction. It does however seem safe to assume that this was the case. The conception of "old-style" and "new-style" literature may have been imprecise, but the distinction between them was essentially unambiguous, as was Zhang Henshui's identification with the old school. In the 1920s and 1930s it was clear to all concerned, if only intuitively, what kind of writing was "old" and what "new" and who belonged to which school. This lack of ambiguity explains the fact that Zhang did not feel the need to elaborate on his rather vague statement that he was attempting to "catch up with the times". In the context of the time, clearly this was a statement by an old-style novelist that he wished to get more in tune with the writing of the new school.

Female Characters in the novels of Zhang Henshui

One general point of comparison between May Fourth writers and members of the Saturday School lies in the treatment of women in their writing. As Link has stated, there is very little complex portrayal of women in early Saturday School fiction, and "the most popular stories of the 1910s invite identification with male much more than with female protagonists".¹⁷ One of the ways in which May Fourth writing most clearly signalled its modernity was in the prominence it accorded female characters, and female protagonists are common in the new fiction. A positive attitude to the "new-style" woman, who attempts to a greater or lesser degree to question her traditional role and to assert her individuality, is also generally far more often found in May Fourth writing than in the old-style novels.

Return of the Swallow is one of the very few novels in the work of Zhang Henshui which has a female protagonist. In this way it already represents a significant departure from the "talents and beauties" formula of Saturday School fiction. It might also be expected to contain important evidence of Zhang Henshui's attitude to women, and perhaps also some clues as to possible reasons for the alleged appeal which his fiction had for women readers. In his Memoirs, Zhang Henshui wrote of A Grand Old Family that "the levity, liveliness and melancholy of the story gave members of the petty bourgeois (*xiao shimin*) class who read it a

certain feeling of interesting intimacy. Women in particular are especially fond of this kind of novel. [Since I wrote A Grand Old Family], ladies have often asked me about the story. This has given me added cause for regret. If at the time I had written into the plot a bit more in the nature of [encouragement of] positive struggle, mightn't that have been of some help to those ladies? Things being as they are, however, it must be said that the feeling this novel conveys is largely one of idle amusement."¹⁸

A feminist study of Zhang Henshui's fiction would be a topic for a doctoral dissertation in its own right and is beyond the scope of my thesis, but I shall consider below some aspects of Zhang's treatment of female characters in search of ways in which it may represent part of his efforts to reform the traditional novel in terms of "catching up with the times".

Liu Ts'un-yan is not alone in noting that "[Zhang's] pen-name Henshui implies that the author was a woman-hater, as it is said in The Dream of the Red Chamber that women are made of water."¹⁹ While it is not at all impossible that there may be more than one level of meaning to Zhang Henshui's *nom de plume*, the account of its origin given above in my introduction is the only reliable explanation that we have. The suggestion that misogyny is implied seems to be no more than idle speculation and Zhang specifically denies the charge in his Memoirs.²⁰ Some basis for such speculation could, however, be found in a reading of Zhang's fiction, for although the charge of misogyny might be difficult to prove definitively from the evidence contained in the novels, it would be at least as hard to find firm evidence there of a positive attitude towards women.

Although the intelligent and noble Leng Qingqiu is the most positive character in A Grand Old Family, one of Zhang's first and most successful novels, and although one of his very last creative works was a novella entitled The Equality of the Sexes,²¹ the female characters in his

17 Link (1981), pp. 56-57.

18 Zhang, Memoirs, in Zhang and Wei, Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 41. An interesting and oft-cited individual case of a woman who enjoyed Zhang Henshui's fiction is Lu Xun's mother, who commissioned her son to send novels by Zhang Henshui to her from Shanghai, and who saw little worth in Lu Xun's own stories (see Yuan [1988], p. 228).

19. Chinese Middlebrow Fiction, p. 35 note 43.

20 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 24.

21 The actual content of this work, completed in 1958 (Zhang and Wei, Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao p. 687) or 1963 (Dong and Xu, p. 230), is unknown and it is unclear whether it was ever published.

novels are rarely allowed to develop independently of their male counterparts. Zhang Henshui's women frequently represent little more than a source of temptation contributing to the downfall of a weak male character.

It is a paradox that there are probably more strong-willed characters among the female dramatis personae of Zhang's fiction than amidst the male cast-list, replete as the latter is with a long line of lookalikes for the pitifully effete Yang Xingyuan (An Unofficial History of Peking) and Fan Jiashu (Fate in Tears and Laughter). The "strength" of Zhang's women is, however, usually manifested as cunning, ruthlessness or a wayward modernity of which the author clearly disapproves. Yanxi's sisters-in-law in A Grand Old Family are early examples of the cunning and ruthless type, as is Huang Qingping in Goblin Market (1941-45).²² Wayward "modern misses" abound, and include Bai Xiuzhu, Qingqiu's major rival for Yanxi's attentions in A Grand Old Family, and Helena (He Lina) in Fate in Tears and Laughter. These strong young women recall the Hui types in Mao Dun's early fiction, but characters more reminiscent of Jing are much easier to find in the novels of Zhang Henshui. Leng Qingqiu in A Grand Old Family and Yang Yuerong in Heavy is the Night (1936-39) are as close to Mao Dun's Jing type as the above examples are to his Hui types. Zhang's two distinctive types are, however, less modern than Mao Dun's. Both Hui and Jing types in Mao Dun's fiction are independent, modern-minded, sensual young women. Both are involved in politics and in modern sexual behaviour. They differ only in the degree to which they possess independence, modern thought and sensuality and in the boldness (which depends largely on experience) with which they approach politics and sex, Hui types being the bolder and more experienced.²³

The female characters in Zhang Henshui's fiction are less modern-minded and less overtly sensual, being almost exclusively apolitical and maintaining a traditional coyness towards sexual activity. Thus far we are still talking about differences of degree, and the more modern, aggressive female types in Zhang Henshui's fiction are different from Mao Dun's Jing type by a fairly small degree at that. It is the independence factor which is crucial in distinguishing the typical female character in Zhang's fiction from that of May Fourth writers such as Mao Dun. Almost all Zhang's female characters are tied into traditional social patterns. In this they are no different from their male counterparts, but the consequences are more damaging for the women. While many are in a "modern" situation by virtue of being

22 See chapter four below.

23 The original Hui and Jing are the major characters in Mao Dun's novella Disillusion (Huanmie, 1930). I am indebted to Hilary Chung for discussing her theory of typology in Mao Dun's early fiction with me.

outside traditional family structures, such women are extremely vulnerable in the absence of an alternative structure. Most are reliant on men in some way or another, and on individual men at that, without the backup of established social institutions. They are alienated women in a transitional stage of Chinese society. Here again these female characters recall the alienation of those in Mao Dun's fiction, but in reality the dichotomy is at least as similar to the pear/magnolia dichotomy of Saturday School female characters as it is to Mao Dun's Hui/Jing dialectic.

For Saturday School writers "the magnolia and pear represent two horns of a dilemma which pervaded modern urban life: whether [a woman should] be modern, foreign-influenced, stylish, and aggressive or old-style, purely Chinese, plain, and retiring".²⁴ Link says that this "symbolic opposition of the foreign or "new" style represented by a brilliant, aggressive woman, and the Chinese or "old" style represented by a comely, retiring one was common to a good number of love stories in the 1910s and 1920s, many of which were triangular affairs involving a male protagonist and these two female types". He includes Helena and Fengxi (Fate in Tears and Laughter) as examples of the general dichotomy, which takes its name from the contrasting associations attached to Li Niang and Yunqian in the classic of the Saturday School: Xu Zhenya's Jade Pear Spirit (Yu Li Hun, 1911).²⁵ While most of the female characters in Zhang Henshui's novels are more modern and assertive than Fengxi and less westernised and aggressive than Helena (who must surely be one of the most extreme examples of the magnolia type), this typology is more generally applicable than is Mao Dun's.

In Zhang's first novel, An Unofficial History of Peking, the two major female characters, Li Yun and Dongqing who have successive affairs with the male protagonist, both find themselves excluded from the traditional family structure. They are representatives of the two main groups into which Zhang Henshui's socially alienated female characters fall - prostitutes and performers are one group, modern intellectuals of various types are the other. This dichotomy should not be equated with the deeper structure of magnolia and pear typicality. In Zhang's earlier novels the tendency is for pear types to be found among the first group and magnolia types among the second, but in novels post-dating Fate in Tears and Laughter this tendency is reversed.

24 Link (1981), p. 204.

25 Ibid., p. 41.

Li Yun, whose surname means "pear", is a prostitute and thus at least there is no ambiguity about her role in society. Nor is hers a new problem. The question, as ever, is whether or not she can find a good man to save her from an existence which is unequivocally detestable. This is not the universal pattern for the group to which Li Yun belongs, since most female characters who fall into this group are not prostitutes but actresses and singing girls whose relationships with their "admirers" are more ambiguous, but who share with Li Yun the security of belonging to an established institution which in some ways takes the place of the family system from which they are excluded.

Dongqing is also not entirely typical of her group. She is an intellectual of the old sort, a poetess whose melancholic classical verse is written for a *zhiji*²⁶, not for a modern audience. Her modernity, and thus her tenuous association with the "magnolia" type, comes only from the fact that she has had to enter society, as a teacher, in order to support her family. She is only outside the traditional family structure in that she has had to assume a dominant role within what would otherwise have been a traditional family. She differs from the matriarchs of traditional families, who could assume such a dominant role without upsetting the structure, in that there is no pretence that she is fulfilling a kind of regency in the name of a dead husband or father. She is unequivocally the head of her family, which includes an elderly mother and a young brother. This is a very modern nuclear family structure. Precisely because of the peculiarities of this modern structure, Dongqing's social status is highly uncertain. She has no established institution to fall back on, and indeed the flimsy modern family institution which she heads relies totally on her for its stability. Head of a household, she bears only the burdens and does not enjoy the privileges which would normally accompany this position. There is no wider clan for her to take her place in, nor does her position gain her respectability in society. Although she may win admiration for her filiality towards her mother, she will always be viewed as an oddity, and it will always be regarded a pity that she could not take her proper place in a traditional family structure. Unlike the matriarch temporarily fulfilling a regency role, there is no immediate prospect of Dongqing relinquishing her leadership of the family. By the time her little brother is old enough to assume his manly duties, Dongqing will have sacrificed her youth.²⁷ It is hardly surprising

26 The term *zhiji*, literally meaning "knowing one" denotes a bosom friend who fully appreciates one's worth and is in tune with one's principles and aspirations. Much store was traditionally set by such appreciation.

27 I am discussing Dongqing's position as if she has no wider family at all. Although this appears for most of the novel to be the case, it is revealed in Chapter 75 that she was driven out of her family because of the illness which made her unmarriageable (*An Unofficial History of Peking* (1985), p. 1180). Why her mother and younger brother should have followed her is never explained. One can only assume that her mother was her father's concubine, in which case her mother's leaving the family along with her would have effectively severed all links with the clan.

that Dongqing writes melancholic verse and hopes it may be read by a *zhiji*. What is surprising is that she rejects the *zhiji* she finds in Yang Xingyuan. She does so on the pretext that she has some unmentionable disease which excludes her from such happiness. Here we have a very determined effort by the author to provide a tragic ending to his novel. It would have been much easier and more likely for Xingyuan and Dongqing at least to attempt to live happily ever after. Dongqing's secret illness is a *deus ex machina* the function of which is to allow her to refuse him and thus extend the narrative for thirty-odd more chapters during which the couple's obsessively irrational (*chi*) pure devotion to one another is developed to its extreme, Xingyuan's grief being extended until he dies of it.²⁸ Although this is in keeping with one of the archetypes of Saturday School sentimentalism, as defined by Link²⁹, it would have seemed more in keeping with Rupprecht's structure of bipolar unity to have this affair end happily to offset the tragedy of Xingyuan's loss of Li Yun. Bipolar unity is employed to effect just such a happy ending in Fate in Tears and Laughter, as I shall show. Among other forces dictating against a happy outcome must have been the author's decision to show how a woman like Dongqing was fatally flawed by her lack of social status. The tragedy of her inability to find happiness with Xingyuan is heightened by the lengths to which the author goes to establish their perfect suitedness to one another. Both are extremely traditional-minded young people uncomfortable with the modern lifestyle they find themselves in and resorting to traditional artistic and philosophical (chiefly Buddhist) values for spiritual sustenance and support.

Leng Qingqiu's position in A Grand Old Family is a very different one, although she too adheres to traditional virtues. Daughter of a minor middle-class intellectual family, her position in society is a clear one. Her lack of status is only relative to the upper-class family into which she marries. Within that family her humble origin is a handicap which she largely overcomes by winning over her in-laws by her goodness and by the production of offspring. The one handicap she cannot overcome is the faithlessness of her husband. Yanxi is acknowledged by almost all in the family to be a wastrel as unworthy of Qingqiu as he is of his own family. Qingqiu is described in a lively, sympathetic and believable way. She emerges as one of the most noble and intelligent of all the female characters in Zhang Henshui's fiction. As discussed above, however, Qingqiu is not the protagonist of A Grand Old Family. Her personal tragedy is merely a metonym for the theme of the decline of the

28 Dongqing's *chi* devotion to Xingyuan is manifested in her steadfast refusal to, as she stubbornly sees it, bring him unhappiness by changing her mind and marrying him, and in her attempt to find him a suitable replacement in Shi Kelian.

29 Link (1981), pp. 69-70.

family. Her upholding of traditional familial virtues is, in that it is defeated, a metaphor for the powerlessness of the old values against the forces of corruption which are destroying the family. Qingqiu is the paradox of an outsider from a humble family who displays far greater sense of the importance of family than is the case with any of the other members of this great dynasty.

In contrast to the Western trends followed by the other young people, and none more so than her husband, Qingqiu is a quintessentially Chinese woman. She is the single pear type among many magnolia type characters in the novel. Her escape from the Jin family during the fire which devastates its mansion and sounds the death knell of its fortunes is too late to save her. It frees her from the invidious position of abandoned (and therefore failed) wife of a scion of the family in which she would be expected to remain come what may, but on leaving the family Qingqiu becomes a lone, vulnerable figure outside traditional social structures. Like Dongqing she must now take on the role of breadwinner for a small nuclear family, without the benefit of the system of mutual support inherent in the traditional wider family system. Her escape does not negate the message that her adherence to traditional family values is impotent against the general abandonment of these values in society at large. It does, however, set an important precedent. For the first time in Zhang Henshui's fiction, a character has taken a bold positivist, individualist step to change their role in society. Although she does so only as a last resort, when her humiliation and loss of status within the family have gone to the extreme and the family itself is crumbling, Qingqiu decides that an independent life, however hard, must be preferable to her golden cage, loveless as it has become.

I had thought of naming Zhang Henshui's version of the magnolia/pear dichotomy after Helena and Fengxi from Fate in Tears and Laughter, since these are the characters Link compares to the archetypes Li Niang and Yunqian from Jade Pear Spirit. Not only are Helena and Fengxi atypically (for Zhang Henshui) extreme versions of the types, however, but in fact these two characters are too extraordinarily unreal to qualify as types at all. They are rather caricatures of the type. The author makes little effort to make them credible. The few instances in which the reader is offered a glimpse of Fengxi's thinking serve merely to heighten the impression given by external revelation of her words and actions. She is a bimbo, nay, a shop-window dummy, a two-dimensional picture of the "ideal" demure oriental beauty which Fan Jiashu might just as well have found in a cigarette packet as picked up in the Tianqiao street performance district. Helena is scarcely more believable, not least because of her uncanny resemblance to the little drum-singer. As Fengxi is a caricature of the pathetic,

trusting "charming little bird"³⁰ type of woman favoured in traditional romances, so too is Helena an absurd caricature of the magnolia type, from the coarse beer-slurping which puffed Jiashu finds so off-putting early in their acquaintance to the astonishing hula-dance she performs to shocked family and friends at her "farewell" party near the end of the novel.

The caricaturistic quality of these two representatives of behavioural poles is not the result of shabby technique. Its purpose is to lend a level of credibility to Guan Xiugu which would not otherwise have been possible for a character who possesses the superhuman powers of a female knight-errant. Paradoxically, in spite of the supernatural element, Xiugu is the most believable of the three female characters in Fate in Tears and Laughter precisely because her depiction is realistic, and she represents a happy medium or golden mean between the extremes of the other two.

The title of this novel is the obvious key to the relationship between the male protagonist and the three major female characters. Indeed this is the message of the novel itself, a message perhaps so simple that no commentator has ever bothered to articulate it: our *fate* lies in *tears* and *laughter*. Well, yes it does; life consists of an endless round of opposing states, emotions and sensations. Rupprecht points out Zhang Henshui's preoccupation with this world view and the fact that he even used its principles in the structure of his novels.³¹ But the joke in Fate in Tears and Laughter is that the real meaning of the title is that Fan Jiashu seeks his *love-fate* first in tears (Fengxi), then in laughter (Helena), and finds it in *neither*. This is betrayed firstly by a pun on the word translated as "fate". *Yinyuan* (姻缘) means one's predestined love match as opposed to the more general destiny denoted by *yinyuan* (因緣), the word actually appearing in the title. As well as having similar reference, the words are pronounced identically and even written so similarly that most people will often confuse them. If they do not know otherwise, most Chinese literates will assume, from the content of the novel, or even just from awareness of Zhang Henshui's identification with the Saturday School, that the title of this novel is written with the word which denotes predestined love. Several later editions of this novel have actually been printed with the wrong word appearing in the title, proving that at least for some people this "wrong" word does not seem inappropriate to the content. Secondly, the title of the novel, "*Tixiao Yinyuan*" instantly recalls the common phrase "*tixiao jie fei*" which is used similarly to the English "not knowing whether to laugh or cry" but literally means "*neither laughing nor crying (is appropriate)*". If

30 cf. the reference to Li Yun in Chapter 20 of An Unofficial History of Peking discussed in chapter one, p. 44 above.

22 See Rupprecht (1987), Chapter 2, esp. pp. 34-40; see also chapter one of this dissertation above.

this association were not obvious enough, even the least thoughtful reader would make the connection on finding the phrase "*tixiao jie fei*" itself in the title-couplet of the final chapter of the novel.

Most readers will assume, however, that the significance of the second level of meaning in the title provided by these associations is only that Fan Jiashu's first quest for his love-match ends in tears, while the second ends happily. If they pursue it a little further they may appreciate something of the bipolar unity in the novel. But they still have only half the story. Jiashu first seeks love with Fengxi, who arouses his pity and thus represents tears, even if no actual tears of pity are shed. The end of this phase is signalled by the meeting in the park after Fengxi has given herself to General Liu: when Jiashu tears up the cheque she gives him to repay his former kindness, she bursts into tears and he into peals of unnatural laughter. From now on Jiashu, albeit still in spite of himself, is destined to end up with Helena, who represents the bright, joyful side of the dichotomy. Sure enough, at the end of the novel they are united and seem very happy about it. Yet by this time Jiashu has actually contrived to "miss" his love-match.

True to the yin-yang principle inherent in bipolar unity that there is "presence within absence" and "absence within presence" (*cun-zhong que; que-zhong cun*),³² there is often laughter amongst the tears of the Jiashu-Fengxi storyline (as in the happy times of their early courtship) and tears within the laughter of the Jiashu-Helena affair (most spectacularly in Helena's floods of tears on learning the truth about Fengxi). In addition, however, Xiugu provides a persistent moderation of the two extremes which underpins the whole. Neither magnolia nor pear type, Xiugu is thoroughly old-style and quintessentially Chinese, but achieves the firmness of purpose usually associated only with the westernised magnolia-types. Unfortunately this assertiveness does not extend to the most sensitive area of all, and the crucial one here, that of romantic love. Jiashu is too superficial to prefer her deepness to the more obvious charms of the two extremes represented by Fengxi and Helena. By the time he comes to appreciate her worth, evidenced in her repeated selfless help for him and his friends, it is too late. His fate has been decided: he must go with the laughter of Helena.

Helena has lately turned towards a more spiritual world view, such as was previously represented in the novel only by Xiugu. This has been, however, a sudden development as a direct result of her disappointment at what she believes to be rejection by Jiashu. The fact that

32 See Rupprecht (1987), p. 41.

the place to which she has retreated to spend her time in Buddhist contemplation is her wealthy father's country house strongly suggests that she is not necessarily all that likely to continue to develop into a truly deeper and more spiritual individual. Another indication of the likelihood that she remains the same old Helena is the symmetry between her and Fengxi's respective affairs with Jiashu. Fengxi is courted by Jiashu in laughter, leaves him for the happiness she sees in the general's wealth and breaks off irrevocably from him in tears. Helena courts Jiashu in sadness (in that, though she doesn't know it, he is determined not to reciprocate because of his preference for Fengxi), leaves him in tears and is reunited with him in laughter.

In the scene of aborted reconciliation in the park in Chapter 17 the extreme of sadness represented by Fengxi's tears is offset by Jiashu's laughter. In a similar fulfillment of the bipolar unity feature of "presence within absence", at the same time as Jiashu and Helena are re-united once and for all at the end of the novel Xiugu and her father take leave of their friends to depart Peking once and for all.³³ This is a poignant evocation of the "sadness and joy, partings and joinings" (*bei-huan li-he*) which the author evidently saw as crucial to the pattern of existence.³⁴ Like Qingqiu's escape from the Jin family in *A Grand Old Family*, Xiugu's parting with the man toward whom she bore an unrequited love is a final acceptance of the inevitable. Also like Qingqiu, however, it is a positive step towards independence, indeed an even more positive step. Whereas Qingqiu, having been married and effectively abandoned by Yanxi, really has no alternative but to cut completely free from an intolerably humiliating existence, Xiugu might conceivably have chosen other paths. She could, for instance, have made it her mission to continue performing selfless services out of pathetic devotion to Jiashu (apart from her chivalrous actions in killing the general and rescuing Jiashu from bandits, it was also Xiugu who arranged first for Fengxi to meet Jiashu in the park in a last vain attempt at reconciliation and now for his reunion with Helena) or her Buddhist leanings might have led her out of the secular world altogether. The author's resistance of the temptation to assign her this most obvious and most time-honoured of escapes represents an adherence to realism in spite of his willingness to endow her and her father with superhuman martial skills and strength. Zhang Henshui employs the realism of the traditional Chinese

33 The particular configuration of the principle in the first instance is the enantiomorphic one of the extreme of sadness giving rise to happiness (*bei ji sheng xi*). At the end of the novel the reverse enantiomorphism of the extreme of happiness giving rise to sadness (*xi ji er bei*) is not employed. We have only the presence of Xiugu's sadness in the happiness of Jiashu and Helena.

34 The phrase is very frequently used by Zhang Henshui in the sense of "the ups and downs of life", e.g. *Return of the Swallow*, I, p. 58).

novel, with which such behaviour is not incompatible.³⁵

It is precisely because of the realism of her depiction that Xiugu achieves greater believability than Helena or Fengxi, in spite of the supernatural elements in her makeup. The overt behaviour of Helena and Fengxi may be more naturalistic than that of Xiugu and her father Guan Shoufeng, but this is only in so far as none of their actions are actually implausible. They remain caricatures, because Zhang Henshui has chosen this method to make them metaphors for extreme romantic notions of how to live and has made no attempt to integrate their behaviour into a "life" as human as that of the Guans. In the case of Xiugu and her father the romantic is limited to their deeds, while their world view is thoroughly down-to-earth. Helena and Fengxi seem to say to the reader, "Look at me! I'm magnolia/pear, and here are some more clues to what I mean. Think what your life might be like with me as a role model." The Guans, if they could be persuaded of the usefulness of communicating directly with the reader, beyond simply getting on with the story, might say something like: "Here we are. This is how we live. Come along, if you're one of us." For a while it had seemed that Jiashu, modern enough to have egalitarian ideas but traditional-minded enough to appreciate something of the old values, might turn out to be "one of us". Instead he is shown to be so shallow as to be attracted to the superficially old-fashioned Fengxi and the thoroughly superficial Helena. In leaving, though they remain loyal to Jiashu, the Guans have decided that he is not someone who could give them the kind of appreciation which would be worth laying down their lives for,³⁶ and they leave him to his dreams of love and egalitarianism. In spite of their improbable feats of strength and martial skill, the Guans' departure, like most of the atmosphere which surrounds them, seems far more real than the dreamlike atmosphere which Jiashu and Helena have scarcely left throughout the whole novel, and in which the Guans leave them.

During the 1930s Zhang Henshui built on the advance represented by the characterisation of Xiugu to provide less stereotypical and more positive roles for some of his female characters. Yang Yanqiu in *Return of the Swallow*, to whom we will return, is one of the clearest examples. Yet the fact that retrogressive examples frequently appear not only in some of the novels of this middle period but also in his later novels would appear to indicate that this

35 See chapter one, pp. 46-47.

36 Though the phrase, typical of the ethical code of the outlaws in *The Water Margin (Shuihu)*, "a good man will lay down his life for him that appreciates his worth" (*shi wei zhi ji zhe si*) does not actually appear in *Fate in Tears and Laughter*, there is an echo of it in one of the many Shuihu-esque scenes in the novel (indeed *the* most Shuihu-esque) in Chapter 13 when Guan Shoufeng and his fellow braves are preparing to make their attempt to rescue Fengxi from Gen. Liu and Shoufeng asks rhetorically, "Who in all this great city of Peking...knows our names?" (Hangzhou 1980 ed. p.194).

feature of his steps towards modernity was not necessarily a matter of deep commitment. A fascinating example is Jufen in Modern Youth (Xiandai Qingnian, 1933-34), who actually commits suicide in the manner of a traditional *lienü*, to preserve her honour and uphold traditional values. As an exceptional case and as a minor character, she will not be discussed here but left to the discussion of Modern Youth below.

There is a very interesting example of the magnolia-pear dichotomy in Zhang's later novel Night Rain in Sichuan (Ba Shan Ye Yu, 1946), in the relationship between the autobiographical protagonist, Li Nanquan, and his wife, Shuangyun, on the one hand and the actress Yang Yanhua on the other. Li Nanquan resembles a more mature Fan Jiashu, grown stronger in character with the years. He seems however to be able to utilise this greater personal presence only in his worldly dealings (in his protection of the weak and opposition to the exploitation of the rich and powerful, for instance), while his character weaknesses show up in his relationship with his wife. Shuangyun is less well-educated than her husband but is as intelligent as she is hardworking. She is very much the Leng Qingqiu pear type, with all her docility and willingness to please Li with little services and comforts. He responds to these but seems not to realise that his gratitude could be better expressed by giving his wife more tangible support in her daily drudgery with their hordes of children and their difficult neighbours. The obvious pop-psychological/amateur marriage guidance counselling response to the couple's problems would be to advise Li Nanquan to learn how to talk to his wife as an equal instead of constantly patronising her, for instance with praise of her efforts at self-improvement. Proper communication between the couple would go a long way towards dispelling the silly misunderstandings between them over Li's relationship with Yanhua.

Li Nanquan is not unfaithful to his wife, but nor is his attitude towards Yang Yanhua absolutely pure. Her feminine charms are not entirely out of the reckoning in his decision to save her from the wicked clutches of Adjutant Liu. The damsel-in-distress motif is revealing in itself as far as Zhang Henshui's fundamental attitude to women is concerned. Li Nanquan's wife seems closely to resemble Zhang's third wife Zhou Nan, who was with him during the Chongqing years. Zhou Nan's personal name (before Zhang Henshui gave her the name Nan after their marriage) was originally Shuyun, which seems more than likely to have been the basis of Li Nanquan's wife's name in this novel.³⁷ According to Dong and Xu, Zhang did

37 The autobiographical status of Li Nanquan is signalled not only by the general resemblance between his lifestyle and that of Zhang Henshui's during his wartime sojourn in Chongqing, the setting of this novel, but also by his name. Li is the second-most common surname in China after Zhang, so that the two names are like Smith and Jones writ large, their interchangeability being epitomised in the phrase "Zhang San, Li Si", equivalent to the English "Tom, Dick or Harry". Nanquan, "South Springs" is short for Nanwenquan, "South Warm Springs", the village near Chongqing where Zhang Henshui spent the war years.

marry Zhou Nan, his third wife, for love.³⁸ However, the second of his three polygamous marriages, to Hu Qiuxia, was entered into out of pity for Hu, who had taken refuge in a women's poorhouse after running away from a family whose service she had been sold into.³⁹ His redemption of her from the home is romanticised in the novel Rose-coloured Clouds (Luoxia Gu Wu, 1931). Zhang's sympathy for women who have fallen into unfortunate situations in society is apparent in many of his novels. Examples include the prostitute Li Yun in An Unofficial History of Peking, the singing girls Fengxi (Fate in Tears and Laughter), Li Meifen (Sunset on the Yangtse [Man Jiang Hong, 1931]) and the whole family of singing girls and their colleagues in Singsong Girls of Nanking (Qinhuai Shijia, 1940).

In Night Rain in Sichuan, the wife and the actress have their lack of education in common, and for all Zhang's oozing sympathy for the plight of actresses (here considered equivalent to prostitutes by powerful scoundrels like Adjutant Liu), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he rather enjoys the thought of there being damsels in distress for people like Li (and who more like Li than his creator?) to rescue. At the very least one must say that it seems Zhang Henshui was more at ease writing about relationships in which the women played the dependent role. There is much in the novels to indicate that Zhang was willing to admit that the attitude of men to the opposite sex left much to be desired, but he seems unable to correct this in his male heroes. The result is that there is scarcely a single truly strong *and* positive female character in his writings.

Yang Yanqiu in Return of the Swallow is the one possible exception, differing from most of the heroines in Zhang's previous fiction in that she is not assigned the pitiful status of a social outcast. Yanqiu is not only beautiful, intelligent and well-educated, but has also, since her adoption by the late Mr. Song, led a life of privilege. At the start of the novel she is disowned by her surviving adoptive family and thus might be expected to assume something of the quality of a more typical "pitiful creature" (*kelian chong*), becoming effectively an orphan. For reasons which remain unexplained, however, she does not seem to have returned to her former indigent state. She decides to embark independently on a journey across China and in the meantime moves into a hotel. It is therefore only her sad former history and her recent unjust treatment which give any cause for pity. The robust way in which she has coped with these circumstances and the strength of her resolve now to take bold and positive action to

38 Dong and Xu, Xianhua Zhang Henshui, p. 18.

39 *Ibid.* p. 17.

give her life new meaning are such that the admiration one must feel for her far outweighs any such pity. She thus comes the closest of any of Zhang Henshui's female characters to Mao Dun's Hui type.

Realism in Return of the Swallow

Somewhat unfortunately, Yanqiu is not, once the main story gets under way, a very believable character, which rather detracts from her potential as a positive female role model. Like Helena and Fengxi in Fate in Tears and Laughter her behaviour is eminently plausible. Also like them, however (though not to the same caricaturistic extremes), she is more of a literary device than a realistic character. The passage of dialogue between Yanqiu and Gao Yihong quoted above⁴⁰ is a good example of the function of narrative persona which she frequently fulfills. While Helena and Fengxi are too caricaturistic to have been intended as realistic characters, it seems likely that Zhang Henshui meant Yanqiu to be accepted as such. She starts off resembling a glamorised but, if anything, more realistic version of Guan Xiugu.⁴¹ Her semi-divine status as the basketball queen of Nanking and the supra-normal aspects of her life story (including not only the high drama of her escape from the famine with her virtue intact but also the strange circumstance of her continued economic independence after being cut off by her adopted family) nowhere approach the superhuman qualities ascribed to Xiugu and so are even easier to reconcile with the criteria of traditional Chinese realism.⁴² Moreover, Yanqiu emerges from her own naturalistic, warts-and-all relation of her famine-time experiences with enhanced realistic credibility.

The progression thereafter to naturalistic narration of Yanqiu's journey to the Northwest would be expected to reaffirm her status in realism. It is here, however, that Yanqiu begins to assume the quality of a voice of consciousness in a dream. In Fate in Tears and Laughter, the Guans maintain their function as realistic moderators of the major characters' "dreaming" perhaps mostly by virtue of their marginality to the romantic core of the narrative. In Return of the Swallow, Yang Yanqiu is at the very heart of the narrative, which I have characterised as "naturalistic". One would therefore expect her realistic attributes to be a major feature. The quality of the realism in the central plot of the novel is mixed, however. Fundamentally naturalistic, it assumes a degree of "dreamlikeness" as a result of the author's technique of

40 p. 70.

41 See pp. 78-82 above.

42 See chapter one, pp. 46-47.

character revelation on the one hand and the travelogue style of so much of the description on the other. The contribution of self-consciously literary features in Zhang Henshui's fiction to its "dreamlike" quality has been commented on above.⁴³ The travelogue quality of much of the description in Return of the Swallow also falls into the category of such authorial self-indulgence.

Once their journey commences, the characterisation of Yanqiu's suitors never again approaches even the degree of traditional realism employed in the early chapters. Though not as caricaturistic as Helena and Fengxi in Fate in Tears and Laughter, the young men fail to consolidate any typicality or humanity beyond their collective role as elements in the narrative device of the love tangle which has Yanqiu at its centre. Ironically, for once it is a female character who is merely dreamlike, and not downright unreal. The justification of the male characters in this novel is not only entirely dependent on their relationship to a female character; they are scarcely even accorded any potential relevance, in their own right, to any aspect of real life. The rather stereotypical assignment of roles to them in the early chapters is not developed. Paradoxically, Shi Nailao - the football star Yanqiu fancies most at the start of the novel, but who disappears from the narrative as Yanqiu is just embarking on her trek northwest, having been poached by her best friend Li Canying - comes closest to achieving this kind of broader relevance. By the very fact of his being lured away by Canying he becomes an interesting character in his own right, highlighting the universal problem of faithfulness, or the lack of it, in love.

At the other extreme we have Cheng Lihang, the engineer whom the others meet once they have already travelled deep into the Northwest and who seems set fair by the end of the novel to become Yanqiu's eventual soul mate. Bumping into Yanqiu and her coterie again and again along the way as he goes about importantly building the New Northwest, Cheng drifts in and out of the narrative like a ghost within the dream. There is no attempt to make him a true character in his own right. When he appears towards the end of the novel the reader accepts him, more or less on the basis of the information that he has chosen to use his engineering training to help in the development of the region, as the ideal nation-building patriot Yanqiu has been anticipating for several hundred pages.

43 Chapter one, pp. 53-54.

By this time we have long since despaired of getting any idea of what makes the other three guys tick, in spite of the lively way in which their basic characteristics were introduced in the first few chapters. The "middle" one, Fei Changnian, is made scarcely more real to the reader than is Cheng Lihang. Not only is his character, like those of his rivals, predicated solely on his suit for Yanqiu, it is further diminished by taking up the middle ground between the pompous self-consciousness (a parody of super-sensitivity) of Gao Yihong and the prosaic facility of Wu Jiansheng. Up until the point half way through the book when Gao Yihong decides to cut his losses and return home, leaving Fei and Wu to carry on the patently doomed struggle to win Yanqiu's favour, at least Gao and Wu provide a certain amount of comic relief (from the petty tedium, not from any tragedy) by constantly sparring against one another. The competition Fei Changnian provides for Wu thereafter is as bland as his own persona has been since the journey to the Northwest began. When Fei does finally surprise us, the manner of his doing so is so out of character that the development merely serves to re-emphasise his peripherality. The penultimate chapter opens with a reminder of what Fei Changnian has been to the narrative all along:

Among this group of people, Fei Changnian had been a most tolerant friend; all along the way he had taken a laid-back (*dandan-de*) attitude in dealing with Yanqiu, thinking that with someone as unconventional as her one had to avoid overt love-making if one hoped to appeal to her tastes. To his surprise, ever since they had met Cheng Lihang in Pingliang her attitude had completely changed.... [Now, when] Wu Jiansheng [as always] went about outrageously flattering her at every turn, she was always praising him.⁴⁴

The surprise comes at the end of the chapter, when Wu Jiansheng sees the first sign that Fei has left their merry band:

When Jiansheng got up next morning at six-thirty there was no sign of Changnian..., [but since] it was quite common for Changnian to get up early to go shopping, Jiansheng didn't think anything of it.... But later on [while thoughtfully drinking morning tea] he [suddenly] noticed a pencil drawing on the whitewashed wall. It showed a swallow in full flight with four swallows behind, each of which had, one by one, fallen behind and turned to fly away; only one swallow⁴⁵, coming to meet the first swallow from in front, seemed about to join in double-winged flight with it.

Written beneath the picture is a classical-metred poem amplifying the message that the first swallow represents Yanqiu, whose name means Swallow Autumn; the four swallows falling by the wayside are her suitors from Nanking and the one coming to join her "in pair-winged

44 *Return of the Swallow*, III, p. 609.

45 *Return of the Swallow*, III, p. 625.

flight" (*bi yi tong fei* - a traditional metaphor for married bliss) is Cheng Lihang. The fact that the poem would not have come up to the standards of the pedantic Gao Yihong is made with delightful humour:

Jiansheng read the poem once through, and although he didn't have much of a grasp of poetics, luckily this poem wasn't all that profound in its diction. Another look at the drawing and he understood perfectly well.⁴⁶

Despite the fact that even a dolt such as science student Wu Jiansheng can understand his poem, for Fei Changnian to make such a dramatic and romantic exit is spectacularly out of character. Although Gao Yihong threatened to spout poetry at every turn in the first half of the novel, this is in fact the only poem in the book, apart from the narrator's prologue in verse. Strikingly, unlike the verse prologue, and indeed unlike poetry generally in Zhang Henshui's fiction, the poem here is fully integrated into the plot. If ever there were an appropriate time to compose such a poem, this was it. The fact that it comes from Fei Changnian, however, who has not uttered an original word or taken an unequivocal action since Chapter Six, lends the whole episode an air of unreality which could only have been surpassed had the author introduced the absurdity of Wu Jiansheng himself being the rhymester.

Add to these "dreamlike" features the tendency of Yanqiu to function as the author's ventriloquist's dummy and we have a central cohort of major characters who ring so untrue when they ring at all that the overall effect is very far indeed from realism.

In spite of the flaws highlighted in the above analysis of the content and realism of Return of the Swallow, it will still be apparent that the novel could stand comparison on criteria which would be acceptable to the new-style writers and critics of the May Fourth generation, namely on such grounds as realism and natural justice.⁴⁷ This represents progress in itself. The truth is that, in spite of the power of its opening chapters, Return of the Swallow is not overall a very good novel. It is however an extremely interesting one in the context of Zhang Henshui's development as a novelist. It may not be overstating its significance to call it a metaphor for Zhang's attempts to reform the old-style novel by retaining what he saw as its fine features, while assimilating appropriate excellent techniques from May Fourth writing and including modern content and ideas.

46 Ibid.

47 I use the term "natural justice" as an approximation for *zhengyigan*, "sense of righteousness", one often used by Zhang in his own defence, and in preference to the word "ideology".

The travelogue style sections and the endless petty love-story shenanigans are frequently as banal and tedious as they are trivial. Such tiresome passages abounded also in Zhang Henshui's earlier novels, but these were frequently enlivened by expertly turned gems of old-style belles-lettres such as poetry and letters. For all its faults, the technique of inserting tenuously integrated and "time-bound" satirical anecdotes as in An Unofficial History of Peking also enlivens Zhang's earlier fiction. The travelogue element of Return of the Swallow is too long-winded and pedestrian to fulfill this traditional function and seems to have been a misguided part of the author's attempt to "catch up with the times" by injecting realism and contemporary relevance into his narrative. Yet, in addition to the powerful realism of Yanqiu's account of the famine year in Chapters 2 to 4, as the major characters later make their way through the desperately poor northwestern regions, there are some earnest, honest, realistic descriptions of scenes such as had so shocked the author himself on his own short trip to the Northwest in 1934.⁴⁸

In such descriptions we may find evidence to support T. A. Hsia's assessment, in rating Zhang Henshui "a genius", that "he can bring a scene to life in his writing". While the overall failure of Return of the Swallow as a novel of power is proof that "his limitations and deficiencies are very obvious, he has ears, eyes and imagination."⁴⁹ In a recent television polemic against Jane Austen, Fay Weldon said that "thousands adore [her], if you ask me, because she ignored what they hoped to forget. That is to say the poverty, ugliness and violence of the time.... If novels are meant to change your life, I doubt Jane Austen is a great writer.... She's not Dostoevsky for sure."⁵⁰ No-one has ever claimed Zhang Henshui was Dostoevsky, nor that he is the kind of writer who changes lives, least of all women's lives⁵¹. Yet Zhang claimed his own life had been changed by what he saw of the 'poverty, ugliness and violence' of northwest China in 1934. In Memoirs, he wrote that "as long as I live, nothing will ever erase my impressions of

48 Zhang, Memoirs in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 60-64.

49 C.T. Hsia, "T. A. Hsia's views on Chinese popular fiction" ("Hsia Ji'an dui Zhongguo Su Wenxue de Kanfa") in Hsia (1970), p. 226.

50 Weldon, "J'accuse: Jane Austen". Without Walls. Channel Four. U.K. 19 Nov 1991. On the face of it Weldon's attack resembles the sort frequently levelled at writers, and particularly women writers, of popular fiction. Such criticism will be discussed below. Weldon, however, is cocking a snook at the one woman writer of romantic fiction to have been consistently exempted from such criticism. The grounds for the polemic are that the reasons for the canonisation of Austen are as dubious as the usual arguments against popular fiction and writing for and by women. Austen, though at least as worthy as the writing which has been marginalised (though much is made in the television programme of the greater "passion" of Charlotte Brontë as against Austen's "ladylike gentility"), has, by her very deification, provided the exception which patriarchal critics can always deny proves the rule.

51 There is presumably here a more or less conscious reference to Marilyn French's The Womens's Room, editions of which usually carry on their cover Weldon's quote: "this novel changes lives".

the Northwest"⁵², and:

The suffering of the people of Shaanxi and Gansu is beyond the imagination of the inhabitants of the Southeast, beyond the imagination even of northern and northeastern Chinese. Probably you have never heard of a whole family having not so much as a stick of furniture; of the ashes from the bed-stove being used for bedding; of eighteen-year-old girls with no trousers to wear; of people who have had only three baths in their entire life; of people being dissuaded from giving scraps of food to the starving in the street because that little bit of food would only briefly prolong a life and thereby increase the suffering of one about to die.... These facts [of life] brought about an enormous change in my thinking. Writing is a reflection of life and thought, so after my journey to the Northwest I freely admit that since it had completely changed my thinking my writing also naturally changed.... In order to describe the miserable conditions of the [famine-struck] Northwest..., I wrote...Return of the Swallow.

In spite of the shortcomings of this novel, the author's considerable descriptive powers must have given his large readership in the more prosperous regions of China (particularly the cities) a vivid picture of the hardships endured by their compatriots of the Northwest (as indeed the novel still affords today's reader, Chinese or not). If Zhang Henshui was correct in his assertion that such people could not themselves have imagined such things, then perhaps we may say that his novel must have changed their lives, if only in a very limited way, in that it supplied this vivid picture of conditions of which they could otherwise have had no conception. In this way perhaps Zhang Henshui, in novels such as Return of the Swallow, might be seen by Weldon to satisfy her alternative criterion for great writers, that "the novelist is meant to civilise, push societies on just a little into self-awareness".⁵⁴

At any rate, these passages in the novel, and particularly the sustained narrative of Chapters 2 to 4 (in which instances of all the specific examples of poverty and starvation mentioned in the above quotation are fictionalised), represent an earnest attempt by the author to reflect an experience which had changed his own life. Though he has failed to exorcise completely the dream spirit which always tended to haunt the realism of his fiction, from time to time, in Return of the Swallow, both author and reader awake from their dreaming and come back to reality.

In discussing different types of subject matter in Zhang Henshui's novels my intention has been to assess whether in choosing new, non-traditional themes he was acting in accordance with his resolution to "catch up with the times". It is clear that he was dealing with more up-

52 Memoirs, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 64.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

54 *op. cit.*

to-date situations in his novels of the 1930s compared to those of the 1920s. The difference is a fairly subtle one, however. In Zhang's first novel, An Unofficial History of Peking, for instance, the protagonist is a journalist, a member of a modern profession and a man very much involved with contemporary affairs of the world, which play a large part in the novel as a result. More important to the artistic conception of the novel, however, are Yang Xingyuan's intellectual leanings, which are of a solidly traditional character. Yang Xingyuan is an *yilao* (throwback/adherent to a former age), as are, to a greater or lesser extent, almost all Zhang Henshui's protagonists, even those of his later period. Indeed, most of the positive characters in Zhang's fiction are in some way traditionalist in their outlook or makeup and modern society is satirised from their viewpoint. Not only is the central character of An Unofficial History of Peking a relic of the past, but it is almost solely in the satirical anecdotes contained in the novel that the modern content appears. In spite of the author's justification of the anecdotal content of his fiction, the anecdotes are, as shown in chapter one above, peripheral to the main story, which contains the heart of the novel. There is therefore no modern "message" in An Unofficial History of Peking, although it contains subsidiary themes which are modern.

In this connection, we should look again at Fate in Tears and Laughter, the novel with which Zhang Henshui claims to have begun his process of modernisation. Again we have a protagonist who, although engaged in a twentieth-century occupation (modern-style student), is traditionalist in outlook, or manages at least to convey the impression of being a relic from a former age: in Fan Jiashu's case, he is an anachronistic "handsome young scholar" (*bai mian shusheng*) who feels an instinctive dislike for such trappings of modern westernised urban society as plush hotels, beer-drinking (especially by women) and dancing.⁵⁵ He is drawn towards a very traditional girl in a traditional profession, that of drum-singer, and prefers her to her doppelgänger, the thoroughly-modern Helena (the beer drinker). For friends, he seeks true *zhiji* in the Chinese style and finds them in Guan Shoufeng and his daughter, who might have walked out of a Ming-Qing novel with their antiquated code of chivalry and superhuman martial skills. Fan's preference for Fengxi and the Guans over He Lina, his social equal or superior, is attributed in the novel to his "egalitarian thinking" (*pingmin sixiang*), a brand-new term at the time. In the person of Fan Jiashu and in the context of the novel, however, this appears very much like the egalitarianism of The Water Margin, in which wealth is suspect and deeds and bonds of loyalty are all. This is actually a pre-modern ethic which Zhang has merely "translated" into the jargon of his time. It is very different from the Marxist

55 See chapter one, pp. 58-60 and chapter two pp. 79-82 above.

egalitarianism espoused by the May Fourth writers, who with their passion for "isms" soon adopted the even newer and more Western-sounding term *pingdengzhuyi*, which has become the current translation for "egalitarianism".

There is in fact very little that is truly modern in Fan Jiashu's character. Even his status as a modern man, by virtue of entrance to a modern university, is highly tenuous. The fact that it is a modern institution is only hinted at by its situation in the northern suburbs of Peking, location of such universities as the missionary-founded Yanjing and the American-funded Qinghua.⁵⁶ Nor are we ever told what it is he is meant to be studying there, or offered a description of his study routine.

At the end of the novel, however, Jiashu ends up with Helena and not with either of the old-style Chinese maidens. In one reading of the story, this represents the change from the old towards the new, especially as the happy union is brought about by the efforts of the Guans. As shown in the discussion above of the importance to the novel's message of Guan Xiugu as Jiashu's "missed love", there is surely some authorial regret at the inevitability of this trend, yet Zhang was not so stuck in his own *yilao* ways as to refuse to accept it.

Zhang Henshui's (post-Fate in Tears and Laughter) novels of the 1930s do achieve a greater relevance to the times, thus making them more easily comparable to the writings of the May Fourth school in terms of the themes. The debunking of the old-style scholar Gao Yihong and his brand of "romantic pessimism" in Return of the Swallow⁵⁷ is indicative of this trend, as is the fact that the central plot and the protagonist of this novel are firmly modern. Elsewhere during this period, however, it is more difficult to find central characters and themes which are truly modern. Often it is merely the settings which are contemporary, while the messages seem to be traditional ones.

Other novels of the 1930s

In Modern Youth (Xiandai Qingnian, 1934) for example the title indicates that at least at surface level the theme is concerned with the here and now: a forward-thinking father scrapes together the wherewithal to send his son to the capital to study in the modern fashion. Modern Youth continues the trend set in Fate in Tears and Laughter and the novels in between to

56 The name of Fan's university, Chunming University, mentioned only once (Hangzhou, 1980, p. 322), recalls Yanjing, as both are poetic names for Peking.

57 See pp. 69 - 71 above.

dispense with the profusion of literary dabbling, the indulgence in traditional belles-lettres by author and characters alike which was the norm in his early novels. Modern narrative devices are employed by the author, perhaps under the direct influence of May 4th writing, which was by now firmly established and gaining in popularity. The plot is firmly centred in and on modern urban China and travel by train to the capital is possible even for the aged father of the anti-hero Zhou Jichun.

Yet in this novel the *standpoint* is unequivocally traditional. It is a lament for the loss of traditional values of filial piety and general decency. The author's full sympathy is plainly with Jichun's long-suffering father, the poor maker and vendor of beancurd whose sacrifices for his son's education are repaid by the latter's rapid moral decline under the influence of modern westernised urban society, and particularly the westernised "modern youths" who teach him womanising and spendthrift ways. What's more, in spite of the modern aspects of this novel, Modern Youth is still replete with usages from pre-modern *baihua* and with classical stock phrases.

Traditional and modern language and style

In a random word for word study of pages 277-401 (from near the end of Chapter 19 to the opening passage of Chapter 28) of the Beijing 1985 edition of the novel I have found forty instances of archaic *baihua* usage (AL in the table below), including seven cases where this is part of a piece of pre-modern narrative style (AA), plus one special case (MM/AA). In order to provide a more concrete impression of the way in which modern and traditional linguistic and literary elements combine on the actual pages of Zhang Henshui's novels (in the belief that Modern Youth is a fairly typical example of his fiction in this transitional period), and to suggest some ways in which Zhang's choice of modern and traditional linguistic and stylistic features played a positive role in conveying meaning, I list all these examples below, together with three instances of traditional narrative style which do not involve pre-modern language (AS). I also include in the list four particularly noteworthy examples of the author's assimilation of modern narrative style which occur within the range of my survey (MS). Five of the instances of archaic language occur within two of these "modern" passages. The last of these examples of modern style (occurring on pp. 400-401 of the novel, number 7 in the table below) is further distinguished by its strikingly modern use of language and its stridently modern content, but also by the fact that these occur in combination with both traditional style and language (MM/AA). Finally, aside from this important passage, I have included four further instances of modern colloquial Chinese language (ML) which stand out because of their juxtaposition with archaisms in the text.

Page numbers for the Beijing 1985 edition of the novel are given; where more than one example occurs on a certain page they are listed in order of appearance. In the case of the examples of archaic language, unless the whole occurrence is archaic, I have underlined the particular element which is. A final word on my notation of the list: where archaic usages occur in speech, I have signalled this by placing quotation marks round the shorthand "AL", in order to highlight Zhang Henshui's tendency to put *ban wen bu bai*⁵⁸ in the mouths of his characters, even where it may stretch the reader's credulity (as in the examples on page 287 of the novel, numbers 4, 5 and 6 below). Chapter title couplets and the use of *dao* to introduce speech, both universally employed in this novel, are ignored.

<u>no.</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>page</u>	<u>Example (except where too long to quote)</u>	<u>English translation (with any notes necessary)</u>
1.	AL	277	<u>Bu kan ze yi, yue kan yue chu maobing....</u> 不看则已,越看越出毛病	<u>Had he not looked, that would have been an end to the matter,</u> now the more he looked the more trouble arose....
2.	"AL"	278	" <u>dai-le zheigen biandan heyong</u> " 带了这根扁担何用	" <u>What is the use of carrying this shoulder pole?</u> "
3.	AL	286	Yinwei <u>ruci</u> ,.... 因为如此	Because [it was] <u>like this</u> ,....
4.	"AL"	287	" <u>Zi gu dao</u> :...." 自古道	"It has been said since ancient times:...."
5.	"AL"	287	" <u>...ye wei ke zhi</u> ." 也未可知	"It may well be...."
6.	"AL"	287	" <u>...jiu ci yi yan liao shi</u> ,...." 就此一言了事	"...let the matter end here and now,...." [N.B. this and the preceding two instances are all given as the utterances of an illiterate shoemaker woman]

58 See chapter one above, pp. 40-41. *Wen* on its own may be used adjectivally to mean "[archaic] literary", while *bai* is short for *baihua* meaning "vernacular".

7. AA 287-8 [Ji Chun's letter home is rendered in the *ban wen bu bai* register which came naturally, and to a certain extent still comes naturally, for letter writing, no matter how modern-minded and educated the writer. Although this letter is not particularly *wen* for the genre, its language contrasts with that of the one listed at no.31 below.]
8. AA 293 Ta chuan-le..., wai zhao...."
他穿了..., 外罩.... He wore..., [with a...] worn over it...."
[N.B. this example is typical of the stock mode of description of a character's clothing on the occasion of their first appearance, as seen in traditional Chinese fiction.]
9. AA 299 [Kong Dayou's letter to his daughter is very *wen*, as would be entirely natural to a man of his scholar-gentry background. Compare to no. 7]
10. AA 306-7 [The *ban wen bu bai* of the newspaper article quoted at length here is also an accurate rendering of the register typically employed in such writing.]
11. AL 317 zhan-jiangqilai
站将起来 stood up
[Jiang is an archaic post-verbal directional complement marker, as used in traditional fiction. Though preserved in certain dialects, its use by Zhang Henshui, who adopted the Peking standard for his modern writing, is clearly linked to its prevalence in traditional fiction.]
- (12. error 323 Huayuan Gongyu (for Dale Gongyu)
花园公寓 大乐公寓 [I include this feature, since such inconsistencies were also part of the "old" side of Zhang Henshui's fiction, arising as they did out of the slapdash writing hab-

- its typical of the Saturday School in the context of newspaper serialisation of their long novels.⁵⁹)
13. "AL" 325 "...zhe he zu wei qi?"
这何足为奇
"...what's so surprising about that?"
14. AS 325 Shuo shi,....
说时
So saying,....
[storyteller style]
15. "AL" 325 "...renhe xisheng zai suo bu xi."
任何牺牲在所不惜
"I won't shrink from any sacrifice...."
16. AA 325-6 [This is a classic *zhanghui* chapter division: Chapter 22 closes with Kong Lingyi, who has been invited to dinner by three young men, spilling her tea and the tea dripping through the floorboards into the room below where Zhou Jichun happens to be dining with his latest flame. This *guanzi* is created by the author to arouse curiosity as to whether the two lovers (Jichun and Lingyi) will discover each other in such compromising circumstances. The element of coincidence is a further traditional feature. Yet another is the authorial commentary which appears as the final two sentences of the chapter, which also contain pre-modern language: "Who were these lovers? 正是 They were none other than (*zheng shi*) Yuan Peizhu and Zhou Jichun. You see how the fates can be unkind?" This authorial commentary is, in traditional style, carried over to the start of Chapter 23, which begins: "Kong Lingyi's coming to this Western restaurant for dinner was a case of (*nai shi*) 乃是 meeting some friends by chance and being dragged there against her protestations. But had Yuan Peizhu in the room below also been dragged there against her will by Zhou Jichun? Now there's a question."
17. AA 328 ...bu ming shi he yuangu....
不明是何原故
...not knowing why.... [a traditional tag for introducing precipitate or unexplained actions]

59 See chapter one, note 50 above for examples in *An Unofficial History of Peking*.

18. AL 328 ...renjia nai shi yizhong 'ku rou ji',.... [Nai is a classical particle]
人家乃是一种“苦肉计”
19. "AL" 328 "Women-de jiaqing ye bu zai hu ci."
我们的交情也不在乎此
"Our friendship is not [based] on this."
20. AL 334 ...tiao-jiangchulai.
跳将出来
...jumped out.
[See no. 11 above]
21. ML 337 ...da ku-qilai.
大哭起来
...burst into tears.
22. "AL" 337 "Wulun ruhe,...."
无论如何
"No matter what,...."
23. AL 337 ...ku-jiangqilai le.
哭将起来了
...started to cry.
[See no. 11 above on jiang. The usage here contrasts with the modern rendering of a phrase with similar reference on the same page (no. 21), but its archaism is moderated somewhat by the presence of the modern sentence-final modal particle *le*]
24. AL 337 ...zhe shi fei tong dengxian,....
这事非同等闲
...this was no ordinary matter,....
25. "AL" 338 "Ni you suo bu zhi,...."
你有所不知
"There's something you don't know,...."
26. "AL" 338 "...shi bu liang li."
誓不两立
"...[I] have sworn undying enmity [with her]."
27. "AL" 341 "...qi bu shi wan shi ju xiu."
岂不是万事俱休
"...the whole game will surely be up."
[The phrase *ju xiu* and especially the classical particle *qi* are heavily archaic.]
28. ML 353 ...zenyang-de kepa le.
怎样的可怕了
...how frightening.

29. AL 353 ...ruhe kepa ne.
如何可怕呢
...how frightening.
[As well as the contrast with the modern version, which occurs only two lines before, the use of the modern sentence-final modal particle *ne* alongside *ruhe* is a straight case of *ban wen bu bai*.]
30. MS 353-4 [The abrupt change of scene between Chapters 24 and 25 is unusual both for traditional fiction and for our author, though there is a slight element of authorial intrusion in the beginning of the new chapter: "This was a different place" (see below for more on this chapter division).]
31. ML 369 [This time when Jichun writes home to his father (cf. no. 7 above) he does so in a pure modern vernacular (apart from the phrase listed at no. 32), perhaps signifying his by now irretrievable 'modernisation'. Only an extract from the letter is quoted, so we cannot tell whether its opening and closing conventions were in the traditional style.]
32. AL 369 ...suo wei he lai ne?
所为何来呢
...what was the point?
[Jichun probably chose these classical words carefully, to highlight the indignation they are intended to express. Again, the use of *ne* moderates the archaic tone somewhat.]
33. "AL" 369 "...kewu, kewu!"
可恶, 可恶
"...abomination, abomination!"
34. AL 378 ...zou-jiangjinlai,....
走将进来
...walked in,....
[See no.11 above.]
35. "AL" 379 "Shi dao yu jin,...."
事至于今
"Things having come to this,...."

36. "AL" 379 "...lüe jin ren shi,...."
略尽人事
"...do something by way of fulfilling [my] personal obligations,...."
[N.B. the speaker here is the same as at nos. 4-6.]
37. MS 381 Sunk deep in these thoughts, his eyes turned once more to gaze at the calendar. Thinking deeply, gazing fixedly, he forgot almost
38. AL 若干 everything else for many (*ruogan*) hours. He was still gazing at that
39. AL 乃 calendar, the date on it now, however, was not the 29th., but (*nai*) the first. The place where he was sitting was no longer the back yard of a
40. AL 乃 beancurd shop in the city of Anqing but (*nai*) a small hotel outside Peking's Qianmen Gate. He had made up his mind on the journey that on this visit to Peking he wouldn't stay in the Fellow-Provincials' Society Hostel, because
41. AL 无面目 he was ashamed (*wu mianmu*) to see his fellow-provincials."
[This passage is striking for its use of the modern device of different pages of a calendar being used to advance the setting of the narrative in time and space, a device used elsewhere in this novel.⁶⁰]
42. AA 382 ...yuanlai chu ren bu yi,....
原来出人意料
...it turned out that to everyone's surprise,....
[The use of *yuanlai* to introduce retrospective clarification is a traditional storyteller convention.]
43. AS 383 [Once more the traditional narrative device of unlikely coincidence is employed. Here, however, rather than being used to create suspense (as in the example at no. 16) or to advance the narrative (as with the numerous confusions and complications arising from the extraordinary coincidence of Fengxi and Helena being like unto clones in Fate in Tears and Laughter⁶¹), the coincidence serves another traditional element, namely the principle of bipolar unity. When Jichun, in a motor car, cuddling a dancing girl, happens

60 e.g. Modern Youth (1985), p.453.

61 See above.

to whizz past the very place where his ailing father has just collapsed in the street, neither father nor son noticing the other, the poles of revelry and misery are poignantly juxtaposed.]

44.MS/AS 397 As [Zhou] Shiliang lay [ill] in bed he kept on calling Jichun's name, as before. He was calling out to his son, but his son was also, just like him, lying on a bed and softly calling out. What he was calling out, however, was not "Father" but "Darling! Darling! Come and try some [opium]. As he called, a woman sitting under the red lamp turned and beamed at him. This woman was that Lu Qingmei he was bewitched by.
[A strikingly similar bipolar juxtaposition is effected here, but by means of non-traditional technique such as a May Fourth writer might have used under the influence of Western narrative style. In contrast stands the traditional authorial explanation to the reader of which loose woman is currently in the frame.]

45. AS 397 [As Jichun, in a dance hall, fumbles in his pockets to see whether he has enough money left from recent revelry to embark on another new wheeze, it is clearly the author who reminds us, in storyteller fashion, of where Jichun's money came from (the long-suffering Kong Lingyi) and of how and where he has been frittering it away.]

46. AL 399 Ta kou-li nuci shuo-zhe,.... So saying, he....
他口里如此说着

47.MM/AA 400-1 [In this chapter division between Chapters 27 and 28, traditional and modern techniques are combined to provide the contrast between the revelry Jichun is indulging in and the misery his father is still suffering: "In the dance hall, his eyes saw the bright coloured electric lights, his ears heard the lively music, his mouth tasted intoxicating champagne and his body was touching a beautiful woman. Under such circumstances, even someone with the special ability to use all five senses at once could not possibly have spared a thought for anything else. At this time Jichun had forgotten even his own lodgings and Miss Kong who had given him the money he was spending. How much less could he even have dreamt of that little hotel [where his father was lying ill]. At after three o'clock, as the

dance hall gradually emptied and a waltz was playing in the violet electric light, Jichun, grasping Qingmei's slender waist..., her face against his chest, said softly, 'Let's go home.'

炕

But in a different place, on a big brick stove-bed (*kang*) lay a man with an emaciated face curled up in a thin quilt. On the table at the head of the bed there was a stump of candle, its weak flame flickering and guttering.

48. AL 那人 Beside him on the bed was a cracked bowl of medicine. He (*Na ren*) was stretching an arm some way out from under the quilt and waving it, saying, 'Jichun! I'm in a bad way. I'm homesick! Come on, let's go home.'.... What a miserable sound those three words were. But the person uttering them in a miserable voice was actually someone with a most intimate relationship to those uttering the same words in tones of intoxication. And we know who that was, don't we?"

[The combination of the traditional narrative element with the modern technique of abrupt switching from one scene to another highlights the fundamental juxtaposition being made here. Before the traditional storyteller-style author intrudes at the very end of the chapter to make his *guanzi*, we have been presented with a sustained passage of ultra-modern description of Jichun and Qingmei in the dance hall. The amorality of the modern situation is rendered in very modern language indeed, including such words as "electric light" and "waltz". The traditional ethic of filiality is introduced by way of a contrast which is further signalled by the re-appearance of archaic language as well as the traditional stylistic element of the *guanzi*. Traditional ethics are re-emphasised in the last two examples on this list.]

49. AL 401 Haodai.... For better or worse....

好歹

50. AL 401 ...wulun ruhe,.... ...no matter what,....

无论如何

[It is no coincidence that these two examples of pre-modern *baihua* usage recall the diction of the *haohan* (good fellows) bandit heroes of The Water Margin. Though no hero, at least the innkeeper (who is resolving here to do whatever he can, come what may, to find and remonstrate with this goodly old gentleman's son) shares enough of the code of filiality and

brotherhood of the rough-and-ready men of the greenwood to be prepared to do his bit to see that right is done by an old man whom he considers virtuous.]

Apart from the examples listed above of archaic usage and style, it should be noted that the instances, also listed, of modern-style chapter division are the exceptions rather than the rule, which remains the "soft" *guanzi* described in chapter one.⁶² Also, as already mentioned *dao* is universally employed, although in this novel the author takes considerable pains to add liveliness to his description of the way characters speak by using adverbial expressions with *dao*, so that its use is far less monotonous than in the traditional novel. The list shows the quite considerable extent to which Zhang Henshui still retained features of the traditional Chinese novel two years and more after the completion of Fate in Tears and Laughter, the novel from which he dates the beginning of his "determination to catch up with the times". Equally striking, however, is the amount of modern language and style appearing in this novel. Although I have concentrated on the traditional elements, it should be clear that when one sets aside the fifty-two⁶³ traditional aspects listed above, that still leaves by far the greater portion of the 124 pages studied free of such archaisms.

In the above list I have only included those modern features of style and language which are especially noticeable by way of contrast with the archaic features. Such contrasts fall into three categories. One is that which arises from the close proximity of the traditional features to modern ones with similar reference. These have been listed not because of any intrinsic significance but simply to show how Zhang Henshui mingled modern and traditional elements without there necessarily being any difference in the intended impact. The second type is the striking use of overtly modern technique, such as the calendar device (number 37 above), which contrasts with the traditional narrative mode in general. The third type of contrast is perhaps the most significant. By using non-traditional techniques in places where the classic features of traditional Chinese fiction would be expected, Zhang Henshui has taken a bold step in his "reform" of the old-style novel.

The fact that from soon after Modern Youth the author began to omit chapter-title couplets from many of his novels is part of the same process as where within this novel, although the couplets are retained, the division between some chapters is neither arbitrary (to keep the

62 See pp. 31-33 above.

63 'AA' items in the list must of course be counted as containing two traditional aspects.

chapters the same length and provide two and only two developments each worthy of including in a line of the couplet) nor forced (to form a suspense-filled *guanzi*). The divisions between Chapters 24 and 25 and Chapters 27 and 28 (described at nos. 30 and 47 in my list) are prime examples of this. Both advance the plot in space and time, rather than merely heightening the tensions inherent in the situation being described, as in the case of the *guanzi*, where such heightening is, moreover, frequently artificially contrived.

The division between Chapters 24 and 25 of *Modern Youth* is the more radical departure from the author's usual practice. Chapter 24 ends with Yuan Peizhu plotting with the modern youth Chen Zibu to lead Zhou Jichun into ever deeper depravity in order to take revenge on him for leaving her and going back to Kong Lingyi and, more especially, on Lingyi for luring him back:

"Mine is a temporary regret, but I want theirs to last for all eternity!" Peizhu drew deeply on her cigarette and fell silent. In those silent moments it was plain for all to see just how frightening a woman's mind can be. Chen Zibu was sitting in a chair opposite her, rubbing his hands together, but there was still a kind of smile on his face. And in that smile lay deeply hidden the terror which lies in a man's mind!⁶⁴

There are two traditional aspects to this chapter ending. One is the parallelism used in the descriptions of Peizhu and Zibu to force home the message that male and female members of the modern youth are equally to be feared. The other traditional feature is the slight authorial intrusion demonstrated by the phrases "...it was plain for all to see..." and "And in that smile..." Yet though both these traditional techniques are used to bring the story to climax, no cliffhanger is presented. We may be left in a certain suspense, wondering what will be the outcome for our major characters of this unholy alliance between Peizhu and Zibu, but we are not encouraged to believe that our curiosity will be satisfied in the next chapter. Chapter 25 begins:

This was another place. Chen Zibu was smiling, rubbing his hands and sitting in an armchair as before, but the woman sitting opposite him was not Yuan Peizhu, but had changed into Kong Lingyi.⁶⁵

Again, the narrator makes his presence felt in the first sentence. He is not, however, overly obtrusive and the departure from the traditional mode is more striking here than in the ending of the previous chapter. There is no recap on the events leading to the new development we

64 *Modern Youth* (1985), p. 353.

65 *Modern Youth* (1985), p. 354.

are presented with, only oblique back reference in the words "as before" and in the mention of Yuan Peizhu. Compare this to the classic chapter division between Chapters 22 and 23 described and quoted at number 16 in my list.

The division between Chapters 27 and 28 has been commented on in detail in the table above. It shows that Zhang Henshui was capable of combining traditional and modern style, language and technique to good effect. It is clear that in this example the author is not simply mixing in some old features with the new (or vice versa) for good measure but has carefully considered which is most appropriate and effective. It will be recalled that this was also true of the opening chapters of Return of the Swallow. The author apparently saw nothing wrong, however, with "simply mixing in some old features with the new (or vice versa) for good measure". It certainly appears that generally speaking that was precisely what he was doing. There is no particular pattern to the occurrence of traditional features in his narrative. For instance, although it might be said that Zhang improbably puts literary Chinese into the mouth of an illiterate cobbler to highlight her role in Modern Youth as an upholder of traditional morality,⁶⁶ the fact that the eponymous youths of the novel are just as likely to spout archaisms makes this theory less tenable. Traditional features of style and language are indeed often there "just for good measure", traditional pepper and salt for the average Chinese reader whom Zhang Henshui believed "could not accept" the westernised syntax of the May Fourth's "new literature". Evidently he also believed, however, that there were things to be learnt from the new writing. Though he considered the complete recipe unappealing to Chinese palates, he saw some useful ingredients in it which he included in his own cooking, keeping some, adapting others of his own traditional ingredients and seasoning the whole à la chinoise.

Two further examples in this novel of the mixture of traditional and modern styles are worth noting. Each comes at the end of a chapter, the first being the closing words of Chapter 33, when Zhou Shiliang dies:

...his clenched fists gradually fell, and his eyes closed. This was the father of a son: a father who had borne great suffering, twice selling all he owned for the sake of his son; a father who had travelled the length and breadth of China, coming close to death again and again for the sake of his son. Of the two oil lamps, the wick of one gradually burnt lower until it went out completely - symbolising the life of this father of a son!⁶⁷

66 See examples 4, 5, 6 and 36 in the table above.

67 Modern Youth (1985), p. 488.

Having given a realistic description of the old man's dying moments, the narrator intrudes here with a sentimental recap on all he has endured for his worthless son. To have closed the chapter with the metaphorical image of the candle going out would have been modern because of the absence of the traditional *guanzi*, but the metaphor is not allowed to stand on its own, the narrator revealing himself as a traditional storyteller by being unable to resist the outright statement of what it stands for.

Finally, let us consider the closing scene of *Modern Youth*. Zhou Jichun has finally been convinced of the wickedness of his ways, not only by his father's death but also by the suicide of his long-abandoned original fiancée, Jufen. Furthermore, he has been disowned by Kong Lingyi, to whom he was about to be married, after numerous twists in their relationship (the final one being the revelation that she was in fact the sister of Jufen). Zhou Jichun declines the "tuition money and travel expenses" offered by Lingyi's father in return for staying out of her life, and resolves to turn over a leaf, to "struggle" (*fendou*) for his own livelihood while resuming the studies in which his father had invested so much. Before departing Anqing to return to Peking, he visits his father's grave. On the way there he sees schoolchildren returning home to their doting parents. One little boy in particular is riding on his father's shoulders, naughtily tugging at his hair. On seeing Jichun's disapproving look the man explains that he doesn't care how spoiled his son becomes as long as he gets a good education, and praises Jichun for the words of sympathy for the lot of parents which he utters. Jichun reaches his father's grave and pays the traditional respects. The novel closes thus:

Still Jichun knelt before the gravestone.

"Father!" he cried, "I stand as a criminal before all the world. Forgive me, and let me start anew! My heart is broken!"

The sun in the West had almost set, and had turned a red-brown as it sank towards the great billows of white mist rising from the Yangtse. It was as if it could not bear to look on the world; because on this earth there are countless parents who work like beasts of burden and countless children who rant about eradicating feudal thinking, while mercilessly driving on their beasts of burden in their efforts to become rich misses and masters. The sun was moved⁶⁸ by Jichun's cry of "I stand as a criminal before all the world", and so it paled and darkened in its grief!

Here Zhang Henshui paints a metaphorical backdrop of natural imagery, in the westernised realist style of May Fourth fiction, only to "spoil" it by intruding with the outright statement that the colour of the setting sun is a symbol first of Nature's abhorrence of Jichun's crimes and then of Its sympathy for him now that he has finally admitted his culpability and resolved to turn over a new leaf. Apparently Zhang Henshui still, at least at this time, considered his

68 *Modern Youth* (1985), p. 533.

readership not yet ready for straight metaphor. He adheres to the traditional practice of pointing morals as a part of what he considered makes fiction in the traditional Chinese mode "that which the common people love to hear and are glad to read".⁶⁹

Zhang Henshui wrote several novels during the 1930s which are even less "reformed" than Modern Youth. Heavy is the Night (Ye Shenchen, 1936-39) is one which is almost entirely without any modern content, whether concrete or abstract. Though the action is apparently set in 1920s Peking, it might just as well have been set thirty years earlier for all the evidence of the influence of the twentieth century on the main actors. The hero, Ding Erhe, is a flawless example of working-class virtue (but, like the Guans in Fate in Tears and Laughter, much more in the style of the rugged heroes of The Water Margin than that of the communist role-models which were beginning to be shaped at the time) and most of all of filial piety towards his aging and ailing mother. Ding Erhe is the precise antithesis of Zhou Jichun, and like the latter's father, he lives by an ethical code which, to the chagrin of his creator, is being generally forgotten. All the positive characters in Heavy is the Night are similarly old-fashioned, while those obviously tainted by modern ways are among the villains of the piece and include the "modern youth", Song Xinsheng, who seduces the girl Ding Erhe loves, uses her as long as it suits him and then callously sells her to another man.

Zhou Jichun, who is a cowherd at the start of Modern Youth, is led astray by rich young men and women very like Song Xinsheng and becomes like them. As the final passage shows, the novel seeks to expose the sins of the sons against their fathers. The only young person portrayed sympathetically in Modern Youth is Jufen, whose suicide is a chilling reminder of the extremes to which the traditional value system advocated in the novel may be carried. In her suicide note, Jufen makes it plain that she killed herself chiefly out of shame and anger at Jichun's treatment of her, but also in the hope that her death will shake him and her sister (Kong Lingyi) into giving her mother the respect and support she deserves. Jufen has taken her own life to reassert her own virtue, in traditional terms, or to preserve what is left of it. Her function, as a minor character, is to reinforce the message that the old ways are best. It is to be hoped that the melodramatic way in which her death is suddenly brought about and neatly winds up the novel, together with the fact that she is the only character in Zhang Henshui's fiction to commit suicide for such reasons, is a sign that Zhang Henshui did not actually subscribe to the notorious traditional view that it was right for women to take their own lives to uphold neo-Confucian propriety.

69 See chapter one, note 91 above.

It is significant that Jufen, the only character among the "youth" of Modern Youth to be positively depicted, comes from the lower classes of Chinese society. The antithesis between her values and those of the eponymous "modern youth" is repeated in the dialectic of Heavy is the Night, where the carter-hero Ding Erhe is pitted against yet more venal youths in his righteous quest for the love of Yang Yuerong. In the re-assessment of Zhang Henshui currently under way in communist China, many writers have pointed to his portrayal of working-class people as evidence of progress in Zhang's ideological standpoint. During the 1930s Zhang Henshui did deal increasingly with people of the lower classes and he himself would probably have considered this a part of his process of "catching up with the times", even if this process is a purely retrospective construct. Whatever its ideological significance the process was certainly a development from his early fiction, up to and including Fate in Tears and Laughter, in which his central characters were almost exclusively from the privileged or formerly privileged social strata. Yet again, however, the working-class solidarity of Heavy is the Night has more in common with the rough and ready egalitarianism of the old knight-errant novels than with what, according to their criteria, Marxist critics ought to consider truly progressive.

Rupprecht has compared Heavy is the Night to Lao She's Camel Xiangzi (Luotuo Xiangzi, 1937).⁷⁰ Although Zhang's novel does approach Lao She's masterpiece in both thematic power and literary craftsmanship, he does not achieve a modern realistic portrayal such as we have of Xiangzi. Essentially such realism as Zhang Henshui does attain is due to his literary feeling for folklore as much as to personal observation. His unfamiliarity with Western literature also put him at a disadvantage to Lao She, and the tragic potential of Ding Erhe's failure in love is further weakened by the traditional misogynistic portrayal of the heroine's 'feminine weaknesses'.⁷¹ In the end, while Camel Xiangzi is the tragic masterpiece of modern Chinese fiction, Heavy is the Night is scarcely more than a pastiche of tragedy, in no small part because the author has tried to show us "a colossal figure exemplifying perseverance and diligence"⁷² instead of the real Ding Erhe, with all his faults. The "colossal figure" we are presented with is little more than a cardboard cut-out filial son, too pure in deed and intention to be true and therefore incapable of making the reader feel his tragedy.

70 Rupprecht (1987), pp. 173-178.

71 Very like Fengxi in Fate in Tears and Laughter, Yang Yuerong is seduced by the riches Song Xinsheng can offer her and also by his sophistication and fashionableness.

72 Rupprecht (1987), p. 140.

In spite of the vivid descriptions of Beijing back-alleys and street scenes, even in spite of the relatively profound psychological insights Zhang gives us into his main *dramatis personae*, and in spite of Rupprecht's extravagant claims for this novel, in Heavy is the Night Zhang has led us not into the real world of lower-class city life but, once again, merely into an updated version of the old storytellers' dreamworld of fantastical characters doing and saying not what the author has convinced us they must inevitably do and say but rather what he assumes his readership, as devotees of traditional Chinese fiction, wish and expect them to do and say. The baffling ending, in which Erhe is suddenly and tearfully stopped on the brink of wreaking mortal revenge on his persecutors by the sound of a bell reminding him of his duty to his sick old mother, is indicative of Zhang Henshui's failure to get inside the type of characters he chose to portray in it. Nor does it even have the virtue of satisfying traditional expectations for Erhe to carry through his bloody intentions.

Even if one accepts the argument that the focus on the working class in Heavy is the Night is a way in which it can claim modernity, The Wild Goose Flies South (1934-35⁷³) does not even have this much to say in its favour in the modernity stakes. By virtue of its superior characterisation and an evident authorial feel for the colourful rural setting, it is vastly superior to Heavy is the Night. One of Zhang Henshui's few period novels, The Wild Goose Flies South is superficially a classically composed "talents and beauties" tale, set principally in the last years of the Qing dynasty (i.e. around 1910, though the action is taken right up to 1927 in the last three chapters). Although Zhang claims in his 1946 preface to the first book edition that The Wild Goose Flies South is an anti-feudal work⁷⁴, all that is meant by this is that it takes the part of young lovers against the arranged marriage system, a theme of countless works of traditional Chinese literature at least since The Western Chamber⁷⁵, and very prominent in Saturday School writing (by virtue of which the latter has been defended on the basis of its "anti-feudal" content⁷⁶). It would certainly not have been accepted as "modern" on these grounds by May Fourth writers and critics.

73 Not published in book form until 1946, the novel's early publication history is uncertain. In the author's preface to the first book edition, Zhang Henshui himself writes that it was written in 1935, but only Dong and Xu give a precise date for its newspaper serialisation, saying it began appearing in the Shanghai *Chenbao* in February 1934 (Talking about Zhang Henshui, p. 221).

74 The Wild Goose Flies South (1986), front pages.

75 Xi Xiang. The earliest source of the many versions of this romantic story is "The Tale of Yingying" ("Yingying Zhuan"), a short story by Yuan Zhen (779-831).

76 See e.g. Lu Xun, "A glance at the Shanghai literary scene", in Wei ed. Yuanyang-Hudie Pai Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 5.

The Wild Goose Flies South tells the story of the doomed love affair of a sixteen-year-old boy named Li Xiaoqiu and fourteen-year-old Yao Chunhua.⁷⁷ Xiaoqiu is the son of a county magistrate ranking official at a riverside tax checkpoint at Sanhuzhen in rural Jiangxi. He is sent to study at an old-fashioned private school in the nearby Yao Family Village to consolidate his grounding in traditional scholarship before entering a new-style school with a Westernised curriculum. The village school is run by an old scholar much admired in the district, not least by Xiaoqiu's father. Xiaoqiu is apparently a supersensitive poetic type, whose delight at his elegant new surroundings is dampened only by the fact that the lovely garden his study bedroom looks out onto is the only thing between him and the residence of his stern teacher, Yao Tingdong. His fears that this uncomfortable proximity will cramp his romantic style are soon forgotten, however, when he discovers that Yao has a charming daughter who also attends the school, taking her lessons in a separate room.

Gradually, as the weeks go by, Xiaoqiu and Chunhua progress from glimpses across the garden to "chance" encounters among the fruit trees to secret assignments in the orange groves nearby. The young couple enlist the aid of family retainers and servants as go-betweens (chief among whom are Uncle Hairybairn and his pretty young wife⁷⁸, whose own mismatched marriage is the novel's major subplot), as well as communicating via encoded notes thrown in through each other's windows. Chunhua has been betrothed since childhood, a cause of great chagrin to her even before the arrival of Xiaoqiu because her future husband not only has tuberculosis but is disfigured by favus of the scalp. The knowledge that there is little hope for

77 Ages and dates in this novel are vague and inconsistent. Although Xiaoqiu and Chunhua's ages are given at the start of the novel as fifteen and fourteen *sui* respectively (Changchun 1986 ed., p. 2 and p. 12), presumably meaning fourteen and thirteen full years of age, Xiaoqiu later tells his mother that Chunhua is two years younger than him (p. 256). By this time, at most two or three months on from the start of the action, which occupies only five or six months apart from the leap occurring near the end, Xiaoqiu's fictional age has more or less stabilised at seventeen or eighteen *sui* (e.g. p. 126). Sixteen and fourteen years old seem the most likely ages, given certain circumstances in the novel. The fact that the author did not attempt to produce a semblance of consistency in this matter by standardising the specific textual references to the couple's ages may well reflect certain irreconcilable contradictions. The most obvious of these is the fact that Chunhua, a girl of at least thirteen no later than 1911 (there is no indication of just how close to the 1911 revolution the bulk of the action is intended to be, indeed were it not for the last few chapters one would assume it was nearer 1905 than 1911), is seen a few years later pregnant with her first child in the narrative's first leap forward in time (pp. 481-504, within which Chapter 37 is a flashback to the point where the narrative left off on p. 481), but then reappears in 1927 in the final chapter, the only portion of the narrative unequivocally datable, still a "young wife" and with only two children, of whom the elder is no more than four years old.

78 Their real names are Yao Tianzhu and Feng Cuiying, but they are almost universally known within the clan and the novel as Third Uncle Mao (Mao Sanshu) and Third Aunt Mao (Mao Sanshen). My "Hairybairn" is based on the subject's childhood name, Maoyazai. See The Wild Goose Flies South (1986), pp. 26-27 for a lengthy authorial explanation of their place in the clan and the ins and outs of their appellations.

their love to lead to happiness causes the young people to be occasionally torn between devotion to one another and loyalty to social propriety and to their parents. Unable to make their heads rule their hearts, however, they always end up resuming their secret affair.

Chunhua's parents gradually gain an inkling that their daughter has something on her mind other than innocent study and womanly duty, not least from her unseemly cheerfulness at the news that her betrothed is at death's door. Though they have no hard evidence that she has yet stepped beyond the bounds of propriety, she is forbidden to go to school any more and kept under strict surveillance. Ominously, her mother starts talking about marrying her off early. By this time the young lovers have managed one furtive embrace behind the roadside pavilion on the outskirts of the village and have sworn undying devotion to one another, so that Chunhua's incarceration is deeply painful to them both. Amidst all this trauma Xiaoqiu's parents also find out what their son has been up to and keep him at home. In typically supersensitive style Xiaoqiu has betrayed himself via some love poetry discovered by his parents. Hearing rumours that he has committed suicide, Chunhua attempts to do likewise.

Eventually Chunhua's mother finds out enough to convince her of what has been going on and starts pressing for Chunhua to be sent off to her in-laws in advance, her future husband's health having improved. Mrs. Yao keeps the awful truth from Yao Tingdong, knowing that if the old Confucian gentleman found out it would probably be the death of him and Chunhua. She is proved right in this when Yao does almost die of shame at another aspect of his daughter's wanton behaviour. The cause is that Chunhua, when called on to display her famous prodigy as a poet, unthinkingly quotes a line from The Western Chamber⁷⁹ in front of all the local worthies at a banquet. Incensed that his good name as an upright Confucian teacher should be compromised in public by his own daughter showing off her knowledge of a licentious work, old Mr. Yao falls ill and acquiesces to his wife's plans amidst much muttering that Chunhua is welcome to have another go at suicide.

Xiaoqiu, meanwhile, has been packed off to his uncle's in the provincial capital to be out of harm's way and to start preparing earlier than planned for entrance examinations to a new-style college. Before leaving, he had sent Chunhua a long letter regretfully bidding her adieu. One day, however, Uncle Hairybaim arrives with a parcel containing a note, a poetry jotter

79 Although read and enjoyed by almost any literate person (as evidenced by Yao Tingdong's instant recognition of the quote), the romantic story of the The Western Chamber, most commonly known in the form of Wang Shifu's Yuan dynasty libretto (Xi Xiang Ji), was publicly regarded as an immoral work, quite apart from the fact that it belonged to the *xiaodao* of "ignoble arts".

and a lock of hair from Chunhua. The next, he meets Qu Yujian, a former classmate in Yao Family Village, who has set up home in town with the girl he had been expelled from school for consorting with. Xiaoqiu resolves to make a last desperate effort to overcome the social forces which have kept him and Chunhua apart. He sends word that he will wait for her in a boat on the river near her home for her to run away with him. Overjoyed, Chunhua sees an ideal opportunity in her impending trip to her maternal grandmother's birthday celebrations, a rare chance to get out of the house. Unfortunately, she has been duped by her parents and it is not her grandmother's house but her new marital home to which the sedan chair delivers her. Though she attempts suicide at the first opportunity, eventually the realities of her situation and the kindnesses shown by her new family wear down her resolve. By the time she tells this to Qu Yujian, meeting him a few years later, she is pregnant with her first child. She learns in return that Xiaoqiu has graduated from the army college in Nanchang and gone on to officer cadet school.

Finally, in 1927, on a visit to her parents' home with her two young children, Chunhua discovers that Xiaoqiu is the commanding officer of the regiment of Northern Expeditionary troops billeted nearby.⁸⁰ Rushing into town the next morning, Chunhua is just in time to hear Xiaoqiu conclude a stirring speech to his troops about the social transformation their army stands for, including the liberation not only of the oppressed classes but also of the oppressed sex. The troops immediately set sail downriver from this ferry crossing where Xiaoqiu and Chunhua first met and they are only able to call out a few poignant words to one another before Xiaoqiu is gone.

I have included a detailed plot summary of The Wild Goose Flies South because one of the most remarkable things about this 350 000 character novel is that it is possible to summarise almost all its major narrative developments in a mere thousand words. In chapter one above 800 words were needed to give the barest outline of Fate in Tears and Laughter, the novel in Zhang Henshui's opus most highly praised for its tightness of structure, and a great many of its twists and turns were glossed over. The Wild Goose Flies South is much "tighter" than Zhang's most famous novel and is a much better story, artistically speaking, depending far less on unlikely coincidence and not at all on superhuman feats by any characters for its narrative drive. There are several parallel and interlinking strands to the linear plot, chiefly dealing with Xiaoqiu and Chunhua's thoughts of one another and attempts at communication,

80 The Northern Expedition was the 1927 thrust of Kuomintang forces northwards from Canton which rapidly succeeded in its aims of destroying the status quo of regional warlord rule and establishing a new central government.

but including subplots which naturally arise from the involvement of minor characters in their stratagems. The major subplot, of the tensions in the marriage of Uncle Hairybairn and Feng Cuiying, is vivid and interesting in its own right but is not allowed to distract the central thrust of the narrative. Although the incompatibility of this couple is independent of the central storyline, it is brought to a crisis as a result of the couple's involvement with Chunhua and Xiaoqiu. Seeing how ideally suited to one another they are heightens Cuiying's dissatisfaction with her own ugly, coarse and permanently inebriated husband. Her first beating at his hands is brought about because Hairybairn wants to sell some cloth she has woven in order to pay back some money, entrusted to him by Xiaoqiu, which he has lost at gambling. On a trip to market partly motivated by an errand Chunhua has sent her on to Xiaoqiu, Cuiying narrowly escapes falling into high-class prostitution. Her innocent flirting with Xiaoqiu leads to the second, more severe beating which leads to her returning to her mother's home in Feng Family Village and the feud between the Feng and Yao clans arises indirectly from Xiaoqiu's attempts to bring about a reconciliation between the couple in order that they may resume their function as go-betweens for him and Chunhua.

The Wild Goose Flies South is written in a very lively colloquial style with vivid characterisation of the young lovers, Xiaoqiu and Chunhua, and their accomplices, who include the rakish young dandy Qu Yujian and, among the lower-class characters, such wily, hard-drinking *haohan* ("fine fellows") as Uncle Hairybairn and sharp-tongued young women such as his wife, who are reminiscent of such traditional characters as the maid Hong Niang from The Western Chamber.⁸¹ These characters are deeply revealed by means of a variety of techniques, including description of actions and words, written and spoken, subtle use of natural description and internal monologue. Such full characterisation is not limited to the hero and heroine, nor even to the upper echelons of the society depicted in the novel. Feng Cuiying, in particular, though an illiterate peasant woman, is afforded complex portrayal by means of the gamut of techniques at Zhang Henshui's command, including internal monologue and pathetic fallacy.⁸² Although the focus of the novel is on the scholar-gentry class young couple, vividly human characters from all social classes contribute to the lively and believable picture of southern rural China on the eve of the 1911 revolution which emerges from The Wild Goose Flies South. In many ways such characters resemble the folk-

81 See chapter four below, p. 172.

82 See especially The Wild Goose Flies South (1986), pp. 120-127.

hero types of traditional Chinese fiction: the cunning maids and death-or-honour bandits of the old novels. Zhang Henshui has blended traditional and modern narrative techniques to produce exceptionally believable versions of the types.

Ideologically speaking, a most radical reform may be seen in the ending of the story of Uncle Hairybaim and Feng Cuiying. After leaving her husband and despairing of him taking the initiative for a reconciliation, to which she would have acquiesced if he had only made the first move, Cuiying is caught once more in the trap laid for her in town. Fancying the same young man as last time, who has paid the procuress for an introduction to her, and feeling she deserves a little dalliance after putting up for so long with an ugly violent drunkard, ten years her senior, Cuiying puts up only token resistance this time. It is Hairybaim's discovery of this liaison, and his attempt to follow the example of such traditional *haohan* as Song Jiang from The Water Margin by slaughtering the adulterous couple, which leads to the clan feud after Hairybaim pursues Cuiying into her village wielding an axe. Eventually, however, Cuiying remarries and when Hairybaim sees her with her young husband he ruefully accepts this as the result of his own ugliness and excessive drinking. Far from being punished, Cuiying is allowed an escape from the traditional arranged marriage system, an escape denied Yao Chunhua.

Unlike so many of Zhang's novels The Wild Goose Flies South has a rich local atmosphere created by vivid description of Yao Family Village and its surroundings. This atmosphere is further enriched by chronicles of local and historical phenomena such as the erection of a memorial archway to a chaste widow and the preparations and rites of a clan feud. Told with the unabashed panache of the traditional intrusive storyteller, these chronicles are fully integrated into the plot and help to advance it. The feud, in particular, is one of the most memorably related stories in any of Zhang's novels. It is, according to the author's daughter Zhang Mingming, a fictionalisation of a true story passed down in Zhang's family. Zhang Mingming points out that many of the details of the whole novel's story are taken from her father's real-life childhood. Xiaoqiu's father is clearly modelled on Zhang's, having a similar personal name⁸³ and an identical occupation. When Zhang was twelve years old his father brought him and the rest of the family to the Sanhuzhen checkpost where he worked and before long Zhang was sent to study at an old-fashioned school in Yao Family Village.⁸⁴ As to the feud, in real life it was Zhang's (and not Xiaoqiu's) father who, as a descendant of a

83 For a note on the interchangeability of the surnames Zhang and Li, see p. 82, note 37 above.

84 See Zhang, "My Life and Work", *Ming Bao Yuekan*, 133, p. 75.

military family and schooled in the martial arts, doffed his scholar's robe to take on the role of the 7th Cavalry and intervened to prevent the spilling of blood.⁸⁵ It should be noted that the real-life basis for the story of the clan feud is the only thing it has in common with the journalistic anecdotes of Zhang Henshui's early novels. Unlike them, it is fully integrated and serves to advance the central plot of the novel.

In The Wild Goose Flies South we have a delightful story which is a fine example of the well-honed art of an old-style novelist. Although there is little of startling originality in the novel's plot or message, the novelist's narrative skill, deft character portrayal and vivid evocation of the physical milieu and of the personal tragedies resulting from the prevalent social mores are more likely to impart some, albeit limited, truths to the reader than are his unnecessarily overt attempts elsewhere to enlighten us on weightier issues. The author himself was sufficiently satisfied of this to write in the 1946 preface:

...it is a cry for help from the oppressed. Nowadays in the big cities marriages are entered into freely, but if you take a look at the impoverished and backward areas of the countryside I am afraid you will still find many stories like that told in The Wild Goose Flies South.⁸⁶

Moreover, there are also positive ways in which The Wild Goose Flies South represents progress in Zhang Henshui's attempts to reform the traditional Chinese novel. We have seen above how, although lower class characters are not foregrounded and tend to resemble traditional types, they achieve a depth of realistic characterisation not often seen in the old-style novel. Although this novel contains most of the elements of the "talents and beauties" formula, there is nothing truly "supersensitive" about the young couple at its centre. They are as self-conscious about their inadequacy to live up to the ideal of the *chi* lover as they are determined to continue the attempt. The failures of Chunhua's three suicide attempts and the fact that they are made as much in anger and rebellion as in grief, are symptomatic of this more realistic stance. Although the lovers fall ill in supersensitive style when particularly heavy blows are dealt to their hopes, they never look likely to go so far as to pine to death for one another. There is even a hint of parody of this staging post along the Romantic Route in the scene in Chapter 12 in which Xiaoqiu, puzzled and distressed at being ignored by Chunhua that day⁸⁷, goes into the garden for a good brood. Tired out from chasing round all day trying

85 See Zhang Mingming (1984), p. 14. See also Dong and Xu, pp. 12-13. Dong and Xu's account matches the story of the feud in The Wild Goose Flies South so exactly that it may actually be based on it. No other biographical account is so detailed.

86 The Wild Goose Flies South (1986), front pages.

87 Inspired by the example of the village widow who is having an imperial memorial arch erected to her chastity

to bump into Chunhua, he sits down on the grass and falls asleep. When Qu Yujian finds him there he leaps to the improbable conclusion that Xiaoqiu is dead and promptly wails out this news to the rest of the school.⁸⁸

The attempted elopement is another way in which our hero and heroine depart from the Romantic Route. Not content to resign themselves to their tragedy and comfort themselves with the knowledge of their virtue, the couple take the step, almost unprecedented in Saturday School fiction, of rebelling against the system and defying the conventional social code of propriety. They had already shown themselves capable of bold and impetuous action by giving in to sexual passion in the scene at the roadside pavilion, as Xiaoqiu swore by the sun never to overstep the bounds of decency again after tenderly taking Chunhua's hand, but almost the next moment could not stop himself from throwing his arms around her.⁸⁹ There had been a hint of parody there also, this time of the unblemished purity of the supersensitive lover. When the couple's hopes are finally dashed, each of them is eventually forced to compromise. Though Chunhua attempts suicide one last time, she is no more able than the rather more worldly Xiaoqiu to carry their *chi* devotion to one another to its extreme. Thus the young people are depicted realistically with all their faults, not held up as representatives of the romantic ideal. If anything, the effect is to heighten the sense of their tragedy.

Since its artistic excellence includes judicious assimilation of non-traditional technique, The Wild Goose Flies South might be said to lag behind Fate in Tears and Laughter only in terms of "catching up with the times", but even there it depends on what one counts as true "reform of the traditional novel". If Zhang Henshui's dealing with or including modern subject matter in many of his novels of the 1930s was intended as progress in "reforming" the old-style novel, then perhaps The Wild Goose Flies South ought to have been a lesson to him. The inclusion of modern material in the novels did not necessarily make them modern in conception, while it even seems likely that Zhang's ill-ease with such material had a negative

that day, Chunhua is having one of her bouts of filial conscience. It should be noted that in spite of Chunhua's reaction to this event, there are hints of satire in its narration, for example where Chunhua thinks to herself of the woman, widowed at the age of fourteen before she had even been married, that "it's lucky she has managed to make it to the age of seventy. If she had died at sixty she'd never have seen an archway erected for her by the clan." (Changchun 1986 ed., p. 139)

88 The Wild Goose Flies South (1986), pp. 148-151.

89 The Wild Goose Flies South (1986), p. 102.

effect on the artistic quality of his fiction. This is borne out by the analysis of An Unofficial History of Peking in Chapter 1, where it has been shown that the major weaknesses in this novel lie in the satirical anecdotes along with most of the modern content.

Paradoxically, The Wild Goose Flies South shows that for Zhang Henshui attempts to reform the traditional style novel could in some ways be more successful by sticking more closely to traditional themes and patterns. He was not to make conscious efforts in this direction until his period in Chongqing after the outbreak of war with Japan.

CHAPTER THREE

Eighty-one Dreams

Eighty-one Dreams (Bashi Yi Meng), a work of non-realist satire, is one of Zhang Henshui's most remarkable works of fiction. It was written during the early years of Zhang's sojourn in Chongqing during the Second World War, when this mountainous city in Sichuan was the seat of the KMT government, and originally published in daily instalments in the literary section of Xin Min Bao (New People's Journal), the Chongqing newspaper on which Zhang worked, between December 1939 and April 1941.¹ The first collection in book form was published in March 1942, with some minor revisions.²

Despite the title, the work consists in fact of only fourteen "dreams", each of which may be read as a self-contained short story. In the first book edition there are, additionally, a Preface (Zi Xu), Prologue (Xiezi) and Epilogue (Weisheng). Of these, only the Preface did not make its first appearance in the original newspaper serialisation of the work. Because of the implications of the widespread belief in an unsubstantiated version of the publication history of Eighty-one Dreams, it is important to note that the Prologue which appears in the first book edition is essentially identical to that already present at the start of the newspaper serialisation.

We are told in Memoirs, Zhang Henshui's 1949 autobiography, that because of the sharpness of the anti-government satire contained in the dreams the author was threatened by a high KMT official with imprisonment in the Xifeng concentration camp in Guizhou if he continued to publish Eighty-one Dreams. Taking the hint, Zhang published no more of his "dreams" in Xin Min Bao, but then arranged for book publication of the "dreams" which had been allowed

1 Zhang and Wei (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 563. Around eighty percent of the issues of the newspaper in which instalments appeared are held in the National Library of China in Peking. Instalments appeared in the literary section, "The Final Crux" (Zuihou Guantou), on the back page of this popular tabloid. The instalments appeared daily, although sometimes there would be a gap of a day or two, and each was of only about 400 characters, so that the longest "dreams", of up to 15 000 characters, were published in as many as forty-six instalments, while the shortest "dreams", at around 7 000 characters, appeared in about thirty instalments.

2 Since my photocopies of the only copy of the first edition which I have found, in Peking University Library, are almost illegible due to the poor quality of the print and paper of this wartime edition, I am obliged to refer to the 1946 (2nd.) edition.

to appear.³

This story, which is repeated in various different forms, is at best misleading; at worst it may be a fabrication designed to increase Zhang's political capital with the communists. Zhang wrote Memoirs during a period of unemployment following his retirement as chief editor of the Peking edition of *Xin Min Bao* in late 1948. Zhang's account of the curtailment of Eighty-one Dreams may have been inserted as a bid to play up the role of the work as anti-KMT satire and thus in some measure expiate the crime of anti-communist editorial work which had apparently precipitated his demise and which he was about to be accused of in the columns he had until lately edited.⁴ The vagueness of the account may have been due to apprehension on Zhang's part that too much detail might harm its plausibility. If this was the case then subsequent versions of the story from other pens would tend to confirm such fears. Zhou Yufan, for example, supplies a date for Zhang's visit with the senior government official which cannot possibly be correct since the date given is a whole year later than the last instalment of Eighty-one Dreams in *Xin Min Bao* and even postdates the publication of the first book edition. This may be a slip of the pen and perhaps there is no reason to suspect other details of the story supplied in Zhou's article. These details are not backed up by any references, however, and the material inaccuracies which litter the rest of Zhou's article do not inspire confidence.⁵

More significant is the fact that most versions of the story imply that the Prologue was written after the premature curtailment of Eighty-one Dreams and was published for the first time in the book edition. Zhang Youluan, whose 1981 article counts among the earliest lengthy and ostensibly authoritative contributions from mainland China to what King-fai Tam calls "the Zhang Henshui revival", goes so far as to say that "the rats of the Prologue" were written in anger as soon as Zhang returned home from the meeting at which he was warned to write no more.⁶ Clearly, since the Prologue was the first part of Eighty-one Dreams to be published,

3 Zhang Henshui, Memoirs, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 74. See also Zhang Youluan, "The great linked chapter novelist Zhang Henshui", *ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

4 See p. 12 above.

5 Zhou Yufan, "Ma Yinchu and Zhang Henshui" ("Ma Yinchu yu Zhang Henshui"), *Ming Bao*, 56 (1970), pp.58-61. In an example of the errors in this article, Zhou refers to a "Dream Number 37: A Visit to Heaven, Part Two" (Xu Tian Tang zhi You). There is no Dream of this number or title in any edition of Eighty-one Dreams. It seems from content analysis, however, that Zhou may actually be talking about "Dream Number 58: Heaven and Earth, Old Times and New" (Shang Xia Gu Jin).

6 Zhang Youluan, "The great linked-chapter novelist Zhang Henshui", in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong

this version, written by one of Zhang Henshui's oldest friends, is a simple fabrication, and casts doubt on the whole story of government pressure resulting in the foreshortening of the work. None of the versions of the story cite any evidence that would strongly suggest they are based on anything more than the scant version given by the author himself in Memoirs.

The view of Eighty-one Dreams which has arisen from the reiteration and elaboration of the author's assertion that it was cut short has included the assumption that the "dreams" themselves must have been revised for book publication and, most significantly, that the Prologue is to be read as an allegorical account of the premature curtailment of the work. Study of the relevant issues of *Xin Min Bao*, however, shows not only that the Prologue was the first section of the work to be published, but also that it and the "dreams" are virtually identical to the versions found in the first book edition, which shows only minor textual changes, only one of which could obviously be attributed to the blue pencil or to any defensive or defiant reaction to it.⁷ This hard evidence shows that the Prologue cannot be read as an allegorical commentary on the alleged premature curtailment of the work, as writers like Zhang Youlun suggest it should.

There is also plenty of circumstantial evidence suggesting that if Eighty-one Dreams was cut short at all it was not by much. Indeed all the evidence of the original newspaper serialisation points to the work being substantially complete. The original Prologue, as it appeared in the pages of *Xin Min Bao*, already stated, before any "dreams" at all had begun serialisation, that only "a certain number" (*ruogan*) of the "eighty-one dreams" were salvaged "from the teeth of the rats", in a way which suggests that this "certain number" represents a fairly small fraction of the "original" eighty-one.⁸ The fourteen "dreams" which actually appeared in *Xin Min Bao*, and which also appear in the pre-1949 editions of Eighty-one Dreams, are numbered 5, 8, 10, 15, 24, 32, 36, 48, 55, 58, 64, 72, 77 and 80. This random sequence of numbers is consistent in one thing, namely that there is never too great nor too small a gap between numbers. Far from a large gap suddenly appearing towards the end, the gap between the last and second-last "dreams" is one of the smallest and of course there is no gap at all between "Dream Number 80" and the 'lost' "Dream Number 81". One might even say it is more likely that an extra "dream" was inserted than that a projected one had to be missed out. Nor does the final "Dream Number 80: Return to Nanking" (*Hui-daole Nanjing*) show any signs of having been

(eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p.136.

7 See p. 138, note 61 below.

8 Eighty-one Dreams [hereafter Meng in footnotes] (1946), p. 3.

brought to a sudden end, since it is in fact one of the longest "dreams" at around 15 000 characters. The content of the Prologue makes it clear that the aspect of incompleteness is important to the artistic conception of the work, as will be discussed below. It would therefore seem unlikely that the author would have wished to write a "Dream Number 81" since the presence of a truly "final" dream would have implied greater completion than was ever envisaged.

Contrary to all the unsubstantiated anecdotal evidence, reiterated ad nauseam in the Chinese pseudo-academic press, not only are the contents of the first book edition substantially the same as those of the newspaper serialisation, including the "allegorical" Prologue, but it also appears to be beyond doubt that the first edition is as complete a version of Eighty-one Dreams as Zhang Henshui ever intended to write. In the light of these facts it will be possible for the first time to assess the artistic conception and literary functions and qualities of this work without reference to the discredited "forced incompleteness" assumption. The question of the function of the "deliberate incompleteness" of Eighty-one Dreams which I have proven will be an important part of the discussion.

An added complication has been that according to my research all editions of Eighty-one Dreams published since the second (Shanghai) edition of January 1946 have been incomplete. Apart from the addition of illustrations and the creeping in of some misprints, the Shanghai 1946 edition appears to be identical to the first (Chongqing 1942) book edition. Both editions contain the following fourteen dreams:

"Dream Number 5: Extra! Extra!" ("Haowai! Haowai!")

"Dream Number 8: The Road to Riches" ("Sheng Cai You Dao")

"Dream Number 10: A Flying Visit to the Country of Dog-headed People"

("Goutou Guo zhi yi Pie")

"Dream Number 15: Twenty Years Ago" ("Tui-huiqile Nian Nian")

"Dream Number 24: An Unfinished Play" ("Yichang Wei Wan de Xi")

"Dream Number 32: Sunday" ("Xingqiri")

"Dream Number 36: A Visit to Heaven" ("Tian Tang zhi You")

"Dream Number 48: (In the Camp of) Zhong Kui, the Demon-devouring General"

("Zai Zhong Kui Zhang Xia")

"Dream Number 55: The Honest and True Tendency" ("Zhongshi Fenzi")

"Dream Number 58: Heaven and Earth, Old Times and New" ("Shang Xia Gu Jin")

"Dream Number 64: 'Pursuit'" ("Zhui")

"Dream Number 72: I am the Monkey King" ("Wo shi Sun Wukong")

"Dream Number 77: Peking in Winter" ("Beiping zhi Dong")

"Dream Number 80: Return to Nanking" ("Hui-daole Nanjing")

The first revised edition was published in 1955 by Peking Vernacular Arts Publishers (*Beijing Tongsu Wenyi Chubanshe*), consists of only nine dreams plus Prologue and shows significant textual revision. A new Introduction ("*Qian Ji*") by the author, dated 1954, takes the place of the original Preface ("*Zi Xu*") and the Epilogue is omitted. The dreams omitted are Numbers 24, 58, 64, 77 and 80. All subsequent editions (including the Hong Kong: Minsheng Shuju, 1957 edition - I believe the work has never been published in Taiwan) have followed this abridged format, namely Prologue plus the same nine dreams, with or without the 1954 Introduction, although Yuan Jin claims a 1950s edition, which I cannot trace, was published with eleven dreams.⁹

9 known book editions of Eighty-one Dreams (Bashi Yi Meng) (Table)

<u>date</u>	<u>place</u>	<u>publisher</u>	<u>Dreams</u>	<u>Prologue?</u>	<u>Epilogue?</u>	<u>Pref?/Intro?</u>
Mar. 1942	Chongqing	Xin Min Bao	14	yes	yes	Pref.
Sep. 1943	"	"	"	"	"	"
(reprint of above? - referred to in <u>Ziliao</u> as 1st ed.)						
Mar. 1946	Shanghai	"	14	"	"	"
<hr/>						
1955	Peking	Tongsu Wenyi	9	"	no	Intro.
"1950s" (?)	(?)	(?)	11	(?)	(?)	(?)
(see Yuan Jin, <u>Zhang Henshui Pingzhuan</u> , p.288, n.2)						
1957	Shanghai	Shanghai Wenhua	9	yes	no	Intro.
1957	Hong Kong	Minsheng Shuju	9	yes	no	no (but has a brief publisher's note stating the nine Dreams included were selected from the book edition, having originally been serialised)
(the three 1950s editions seen are identical in content, showing textual revision within Prologue and dreams, apart from the absence of Introduction in <u>HK '57</u> and a few variant characters)						
1980 (repr. '85)	Chengdu	Sichuan Wenyi	9	yes	no	no (new publisher's note)

The 1954 Introduction is essentially a self-criticism by Zhang Henshui, an attempt to re-assess Eighty-one Dreams in the light of what he had 'learnt' during the first few years of his 're-education'. He is dismissive of the strength of his work's satirical content and contrite about the fact that "during the anti-Japanese war my attitude towards the reactionary KMT government was one of utter abhorrence on the one hand, while on the other hand it was always in my mind that because it held the reins of power it was 'the legitimate government'"¹⁰. He eagerly 'confesses' that because of this 'backward thinking' Eighty-one Dreams could actually have a "dangerous" influence:

"not only was the 'satire' which I used in these stories merely meaningless 'grumbling', but it might also have had a negative influence in terms of propping up reactionary rule"¹¹

It would be natural to assume that the exclusion of five of the original fourteen dreams was part of a process of limitation of this kind of "negative influence", yet this is not specifically stated in the 1954 Introduction, nor is it at all clear from other evidence. The only clue in this Introduction is where the author states that he personally cut out "Dream Number 24: An Unfinished Play" ("*Yichang Wei Wan de Xi*") for the new edition, going on to use this story as an example of the 'ideological errors' in Eighty-one Dreams. He writes:

I described [a play featuring] a family in which the eldest and second eldest sons are gluttons, drunkards, whoremongers and gamblers and who conspire with their ignorant mother and their ignorant uncle to oppress their extremely goodhearted and progressive-minded younger brother. Everyone in the audience sympathises with the youngest son, but in the play the youngest son has no prospects of improving the situation; why? - the youngest son is illegitimate.¹²

Yuan Jin explains what Zhang 'realised' by 1954 to be 'wrong' with this:

The author uses the illegitimate son as a metaphor for the Communist Party, the legitimate sons being a metaphor for the KMT. It is obvious from the story that his sympathy is on the side of the illegitimate son, however as regards the situation whereby the legitimate sons gang up with other relatives to beat up the illegitimate son, he sees nothing one can do, [merely] sighing at the fact that brothers of the same flesh and blood should have no compunction in enlisting outside aid to engage in a struggle for personal gain.¹³

10 Zhang, "Introduction to Eighty-one Dreams", in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p.256.

11 Ibid., p.257.

12 Ibid., p.256.

13 Yuan (1988), p. 292.

Zhang Henshui does not, however, state in the 1954 Introduction that "An Unfinished Play" was more guilty of erroneous thinking than any of the other dreams, nor is this even really implied, as the author cites almost in the same breath some things which are wrong with "Dream Number 36: A Visit to Heaven", which is retained in the 1954 and subsequent editions.

In fact the exclusion of these particular five dreams is very puzzling. They appear to be no more and no less muddled in terms of any party-political demarcations than the other nine. Of the dreams retained in the abridged editions, "Dream Number 55: The Honest and True Tendency", even appears to contain a parody of life in Yan'an, albeit a rather naïve, not to say crude and inconsistent one. One of the political leaders of the New Honest-true Village of this story is called Mao Chulai, a name meaning something like "to defraud" and surely based on the names Mao Zedong, Zhu De and Zhou Enlai.¹⁴

There is another reason to regard the the information given in the Introduction as unsatisfactory, quite apart from its failure to explain adequately the exclusion of five of the original Dreams. In the 1950s many Chinese authors wrote similar introductions to revised editions of pre-1949 works, and these are generally to be treated with even more suspicion than prefatory writings in general, at least in terms of any statements made in them as to the original intentions of the work concerned. A typical well-known example is Lao She's revision of Camel Xiangzi (Luotuo Xiangzi), also of 1954. In the Afterword to the new edition, from which the last chapter and a half, as well as some other key passages, have been rather hastily cut, Lao She writes:

"I have taken out some of the coarser language and some unnecessary descriptions.

"I wrote this story nineteen years ago. In it I expressed my sympathy for the labouring people and my admiration of their sterling qualities, but I gave them no future, no way out.... This was because, at the time, I could only see the misery of society and not the hope of revolution,....

"The present reprint of my book should surely have only one aim and that is to remind people of the frightful darkness of the old society and how we must treasure today's happiness and light."¹⁵

Writers had a routine to go through as regards revision of their writings and routine slogans to trot out in an introduction or afterword for the sanitised edition. Perhaps many of them were sincere, in the context of the optimism of the early 1950s, in what they wrote about their realisation of the faults of earlier work and their determination to reform their thinking 'under

14 See pp. 135-136 below.

15 Lao She, Camel Xiangzi, trans. Shi Xiaoqing (Beijing: FLP, 1981) p. 230.

the guidance of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao'. Be that as it may, such pronouncements tell us little about the writer's attitude to his or her work at the time of writing. We would be as well to trust our own subjective impressions of a given work as trust such authorial hindsight, especially when the hindsight may not be altogether voluntary.

Eighty-one Dreams, "Prologue: Remnants from Rats' Teeth"

In the Prologue (*xiezi*), entitled "Remnants from Rats' Teeth" ("*Shu Chi xia de Shengyu*")¹⁶, the narrator tells how he wrote down accounts of his frequent strange dreams as a kind of exorcism of the "Dream Spirit" which had haunted him over a number of years. When he had amassed a total of eighty-one of these dreams he judged that the exorcism should be complete, since "nine times nine takes you back to one", meaning when you multiply nine by itself you are brought back to the number one in eighty-one. Since it completes a kind of cycle, he considered eighty-one to be a magical number which would at last allow him to be rid of the Dream Spirit which had plagued him for so long. He bound the manuscripts of the eighty-one dream-accounts into a volume and kept them to leaf through occasionally. Mostly this was to take his mind off his troubles by reading the weird and wonderful dreams, but he also became aware that, strange as they were,

when I looked back on the matters of partings in life and separation in death (*sheng-li si-bie*)¹⁷ of which I had dreamt, there was nothing which could not be seen reflected in reality. Looking at them this way, the dreams really became much sadder and could even be said to be permeated with a little of the flavour of human existence.

Unfortunately,

Because I don't take proper care of the fruits of my mental toil I allowed my dream-booklet to acquire an extra flavour, the oily, rancid one which resulted from my children spilling slops of soup and drips of gravy upon it. This smell excited the singular olfactory organs of the rats, who, mistaking my bland and unattractive dream-scribbles for something new they could get their teeth into, one night burrowed their way right into my musty pile of papers and well and truly chewed up that little book with their teeth and ripped it to shreds with their claws.¹⁸

16 Meng (1946), pp. 1-4.

17 This phrase, like *bei-huan li-he* which it recalls, is expressive of the ups and downs of human existence. The two phrases, by the frequency with which they occur in Zhang Henshui's writings, are indicative of the author's fundamental attitude to life. See p. 80 above.

18 Meng (1946) p.3.

The narrator's wife manages to piece together enough of a "certain number" of the dreams for him to rewrite them, and, seeing himself as having saved them from the jaws of the rats, like Fu Sheng saving the Book of History from the Burning of the Books,¹⁹ he takes the added precaution of having them published in the newspaper where he works. In reply to complaints at the frivolousness of devoting newspaper inches to "prattling on about dreams" in time of war, the Prologue concludes as follows:

*"Ashamed to beg my bread among the high and the mighty,
My peace of mind I seek in a rustic home midst lonely hills,
Master Lu learnt something from his dream on the road to Handan,
So who's to say no truths may be found in the shade of the scholar tree?"²⁰*

But enough of idle talk. Should you, dear readers, feel fed up with society today, why not take a look at the life I describe in these dreams."²¹

Not only is the Prologue of Eighty-one Dreams to be considered part of the original conception of the work, it is actually a part of the fiction itself. The Prologue sets up the fictional premise that each "dream" is based on a (literal) dream which the narrator had in real life. The narrator of Prologue, Epilogue and dreams alike is clearly autobiographical, although in the dreams themselves some distancing is effected by the use of the dream mode. In the Prologue and Epilogue, Zhang Henshui addresses the reader directly in his own voice. This is partly a matter of convention, the *xiezi* in traditional Chinese fiction being typically characterised by a particularly subjective style of narrative. This is especially appropriate to

19 The founder of the first united Chinese empire (Qin Shihuangdi) was a ruthless autocrat, so suspicious of the already powerful Confucian intellectuals that he "burnt the books and buried the scholars alive". Luckily the Qin dynasty was short-lived and those scholars who survived were able to piece together many of the old books from fragmentary remnants or from memory. Fu Sheng, who had held office under the Qin became the early Han dynasty's foremost expert on one of the most important ancient classics The Book of History (Shu Jing), the Han dynasty's reconstruction of which owes its existence to his memory and research.

20 The last two lines of this poem refer to two of the most famous *loci classici* of the dream in Chinese literature. The first, and most famous of all, refers to the Tang dynasty story "Zhen-zhong Ji" ("The Story of the Pillow", also known as "The Dream on the Road to Handan" or "The Yellow Millet Dream") by Shen Jiji (ca. 750 - ca. 800), in which a young man on his way to take the official examinations in Handan dreams of a whole lifetime of prestigious appointments alternating with ignominious disgrace. When he wakes to find that the pot of millet which was boiling when he fell asleep is only just ready to eat he becomes convinced that the pursuit of worldly renown is not the be all and end all of life. The second reference is to a similar Tang story, "Nanke Taishou Zhuan" ("The Tale of the Governor of Southbranch" - this title is translated as "The Governor of the Southern Tributary State" in Lu Hsun's A Brief History of Chinese Fiction, pp. 98-100) by Li Gongzuo (fl. ca. 800-840), in which a man dreams of a world of ants named Huaian Guo (Scholartree Peace Country). Both stories are collected in the authoritative annotated anthology by Wang Pijiang, Tang Ren Xiaoshuo.

21 Meng (1946), p. 4.

the Prologue of Eighty-one Dreams because of the prefatory mode which is part of the function he chooses for it, a function rounded off by the Epilogue as appropriate to its location.

In literature, the word *xiezi*, literally meaning a "wedge", as used in carpentry, was originally applied to the prologues of Yuan dynasty *zaju* plays and occasionally to sections with a similar function inserted between acts or parts. By extension from the literal meaning, the term suggests the practical function of the *xiezi* in terms of providing enhanced "access" to or "grip" on the main text. Such "wedge" acts served to introduce or amplify the themes of the main play.²² Many novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties are also begun by a "wedge" chapter. Jin Shengtan, whose edition of The Water Margin gave it its first *xiezi*, wrote in his commentary to the novel, with characteristic terseness, that the function of a wedge was "to bring out the meaning of one thing using another".²³ This highlights the allegorical aspect of most "wedge" chapters in traditional Chinese fiction. The "thing" being "brought out" by another, allegorical thing is usually the main theme of the novel. In Jin Shengtan's commentary, he points to various allegorical levels of The Water Margin, writing for instance that Commander Hong's arrogance and venality "wedge out" Gao Qiu, the villain who appears in Chapter 1 of the novel. Chapter 1 of The Story of the Stone, though not named a "wedge",²⁴ sets up the allegorical framework, of dream and reality, truth and falsity, for the fiction which follows; in The Travels of Lao Can (Lao Can Youji, 1906) there are two allegories, one of the perennial problem of flood prevention on the Yellow River, the other deals with the broader difficulties of governing China.²⁵ There are precedents for the *xiezi* being used to establish a fictional origin of the story or stories which follow(s)²⁶, as with the

22 See Shih, Injustice to Tou O, p. 6 and p. 37, n. 3.

23 See Jin Shengtan Quanji, Vol. I, p. 28.

24 By no means all such prologues are named as *xiezi*, but I include in the discussion those which are obviously of the same nature.

25 Chapter 1 of The Travels of Lao Can is particularly relevant since its allegory is explained as having been a dream.

26 e.g. the prologue (*Xiezi*) of Wu Woyao's Strange Things Eyewitnessed over Twenty Years (Ershi Nian Mu Du zhi Guai Xianzhuang, 1909) in which a man named "Escapee From the Jaws of Death" (*Si-li Tao-sheng*) sees a man standing in the street holding up a booklet as if to sell it and is told that the price is ten thousands taels of silver but that it would be given free of charge to one who appreciated it (a *zhiyin*, cf. *zhiji*, of the author). "Escapee from the Jaws of Death" is startled first by the similarity of the signature on the book to his own name and then by what he sees from a skim through it. Seeing his reaction, the other man tells him that the author, "The Man with Nine Lives" is a friend of his and that if "Escapee from the Jaws of Death" will undertake to get this volume, entitled "Strange Things Eyewitnessed over Twenty Years", published, then he

Prologue of Eighty-one Dreams, but the latter is unusual in making the prefatory function more prominent than the aspect of integration with and amplification of the message of the main text.

There may be two reasons for this. Firstly, although I have shown above that the Prologue of Eighty-one Dreams was published before the dreams themselves and its allegory cannot therefore be seen as a reaction to the indirect censorship of the work, certain aspects of this view remain relevant. The usual interpretation of the allegory has been that the Dream Spirit of the Prologue is the author's conscience, the stuff of his dreams being a reflection of the waking nightmare of political chicanery, social injustice and moral turpitude which he witnessed every day, and the rats are the censors who reduce his book to a soggy, shredded mass. Although it cannot be applied to Eighty-one Dreams itself, this interpretation may yet fit, when we read what the author has to say about the background to the writing of his "dreams". In Memoirs he writes of the novel Madness (Fengkuang), serialised in *Xin Min Bao* between January 1938 and October 1939, that his original intention of portraying in it the deep frustration of patriots denied the opportunity to play an active role in the defence of China was so greatly hampered by the threat of censorship that he considered it his first failure since the outbreak of hostilities. For that reason he didn't even bother to keep newspaper clippings of the novel, let alone arrange for it to be published separately.²⁷ In connection with Eighty-one Dreams, he goes on to say that:

Finding myself unable to finish writing Madness, I felt that it was impossible to use normal methods to write fiction and at the same time to speak for the common people. Therefore I resorted to the trusty stock in trade of Chinese writers: "ninety per cent of fables are couched in dreams".²⁸

Thus the allegorical framework which has been assumed to apply to the creation of Eighty-one Dreams itself may in fact still remain valid, except that the book gnawed and torn by the rat-censors had Madness as its model. Zhang Henshui's frustration at the fate of Madness may have been the reason for devoting the allegory of the Prologue to Eighty-one Dreams more to the form this work took than to its themes.

can have it for free. When he has read the whole book, "Escapee from the Jaws of Death" is so unsettled by the terrible things it describes that he resolves to quit the material world and live as a hermit. As soon as he has revised the manuscript into novel form and sent it off to *New Fiction (Xin Xiaoshuo)*, the journal which carried the actual novel) he leaves Shanghai.

27 Zhang, Memoirs, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 71.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Secondly, the nature of the fiction itself must have made the conventional allegorical treatment seem unnecessary, even superfluous. All that was basically needed was for it to be established that what followed were the accounts of dreams. Although not all of the "dreams" are fantastical, there is already a strong allegorical element in most of them and so there is no need for the themes themselves to be treated allegorically in the *xiezi*. Instead the allegory of the *xiezi* is given over to justification of the creation of the fiction which follows as well as, perhaps, to satire of the forces which led to the failure of his novel Madness.

The Prologue emphasises the act of getting things off one's chest (for the writer) on the one hand, and the role of the writing itself as lighthearted material to forget one's troubles by (for the reader), on the other. Thus the author states that the bleakness of his domestic standard of living, so starkly apparent at dead of night when writing up his dreams, causes him to take the opportunity to incorporate into the text material which arises directly from his own discontent and not from any mystical process of enlightenment via dream.²⁹ He further states that having bound his Eighty-one Dreams into a booklet, "when I had a spare moment...I'd open up the volume and have a read.... It was a way of taking my mind off my troubles."³⁰

Although this may be related to the process of purging or "exorcism" through writing, the author is here putting himself in the place of a reader and presumably this is the spirit in which he would wish his readers to receive this work. This statement is no different from the kind of thing Zhang Henshui wrote in prefaces to earlier works, claiming he had no higher ambition than to give his readers some inoffensive material with which to amuse themselves when bored, and as with these earlier statements, such authorial modesty or self-defence is to be treated as suspect (see chapter one above). Where the Prologue states that in the Dreams "there was much that moved me to tears and song", that "there was nothing that could not be seen reflected in reality" and perhaps especially where readers are invited, "should [they] feel fed up with society today, [to] take a look at the life I describe in these dreams", the author is revealing his true serious commitment to writing in a spirit of service to society.

Eighty-one Dreams is perhaps Zhang Henshui's fullest expression of his acceptance of the role of the traditional Confucian scholar-writer to create "literature as a vehicle for the Way"³¹. In an age when sage rule is absent and the people are suffering, he considers it his

29 Meng (1946), p. 2.

30 Ibid., p. 3.

31 Cihai (1979) cites Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073), "Wen Ci", in Tong Shu as the *locus classicus* of this phrase

duty to expose abuses and exhort his rulers to mend their ways. As he writes in the Epilogue, "dreams have frequently been used in Chinese fiction"³² and in such dark times of age-old repression combined with sophisticated twentieth-century censorship, the need to seek one's truth "in the shade of the scholartree" was all the more acute.

Why *Eighty-one* dreams?

The number eighty-one was not chosen arbitrarily.

...before I knew it, I had filled a great bundle of paper. When I counted up the dreams, [I found] there were altogether eighty-one of them.

When this time came, I said to my wife, "Nine times nine takes you back to one. Now I can put down my pen."

So I bound this bundle of manuscripts into a little booklet, on the cover of which I wrote large in this angular, higgledy-piggledy handwriting of mine the words 'Eighty-one Dreams'³³

The expression "nine times nine takes you back to one" (*jiu jiu gui yi*) is used in Chinese to convey the sense of a long and involved process taking one back to where one started. This is not always a negative thing, since nine is an important number: not only is it the greatest of the simple digits; each of its multiples is composed of digits which add up to nine or another multiple of nine. It is thus a potent symbol of the concept of the constancy of change central to Chinese cosmology. The square of nine is a particularly powerful number, since the combination of two nines "takes one back" to another important number: one.

(*wen yi zai Dao*) and defines it thus: "the belief that the purpose of writing is to explain 'the Way', or that it should serve 'the Way'. What he [Zhou] really means by 'the Way' is the principles of government according to feudal ethics." Another source says the phrase means that "literature is used to expound ideology", giving "art for art's sake" as an antonym, and cites the pioneering Communist writer Guo Moruo as writing in "In answer to a question from a *New Observer* journalist, with regard to the issue of literary trends" ("*Guanyu wenfeng wenti da 'Xin Guancha' jizhe wen*": "...in modern language [the phrase means that] the writing of literature is the expression of ideology, therefore ideology is the backbone and the core of 'writing' (*wen*); the relationship is extremely important" (Pei Qiuxuan and Yang Haiqing (eds.), *Gu-jin Ciyu Xin Bian (A New Compilation of Ancient and Modern Terms)*, p.340). Chow Tse-Tsung translates the phrase as "Literature is meant to convey principles" and writes that "when this was applied to an extreme in later years, it meant that writers should write to propagate the doctrines of the sages and moral principles. In a broad sense, it may be rendered as "literature for tao's [the Way's] sake", and somewhat resembles the Western conception that "all literature is propaganda", though they are not completely the same. Since tao (*Dao*) was at the time regarded primarily as a moral and ethical principle, the theory was sometimes conceived as "literature for morality's sake"." (Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, p. 269).

32 Ibid., p.296.

33 Meng (1946), p. 3.

Paradoxically, nine and eighty-one can also suggest incompleteness, falling one short of ten and ten-times-ten respectively. In the Epilogue, which carries on the fiction of the origin of the "dreams" from the Prologue, the narrator makes it clear that the connotations of incompleteness are a metaphor for wholeness. He has this to say in answer to the hypothetical question "Why Eighty-one Dreams?":

"Eighty-one is a multiple of nine. If in life it is not possible to have something one hundred per cent perfect, then to achieve a result of nine times nine is after all some small accomplishment sufficient to be proud of. In any case in China the number eighty-one has long since been used to describe a result which cannot be surpassed."³⁴

Thus, for the author eighty-one represents the most that can be expected from any given situation. To extrapolate from his apparent attitude (remembering that in the Prologue and Epilogue, even more so than in the Dreams themselves, the voice of the narrator is very much the voice of Zhang Henshui), if Eighty-one Dreams suggests incompleteness by its title, this may even heighten the impact of the work, since this implies that even all eighty-one dreams could not hope to reflect everything their author would wish. How much less the mere dozen or so allowed to see the light of day? Incompleteness is thus made pointedly suggestive of how much more there is still to say on the subjects raised in the dreams.

What, then, was the impact Zhang Henshui was seeking to make with Eighty-one Dreams? There is a clue to this immediately following the above quote from the Epilogue, when Zhang goes on to make a link with the expression "nine nines take you back to one [i.e. when all's said and done], the poor have nothing to eat".

"...since 'eighty-one' can be used to describe the poor's [lack of] food, it can also very well be used to describe what is found in my world of dreams."³⁵

The impact intended is one of satire on social, political and moral conditions in wartime Chongqing. Although the particular plight of the poor is only rarely dealt with directly in these stories, it would be reasonable to accept the implication in the above quote that this is the main underlying theme. Much more prominent, however, is the moral and political satire aimed against the KMT government.

34 Meng (1946), p. 295.

35 Ibid.

Although commentators occasionally point out that Eighty-one Dreams is a collection of short stories³⁶, and Zhang Henshui himself notes this in "My life and work", his autobiographical article of 1965³⁷, this very obvious distinguishing feature of the work is seemingly taken for granted by author and commentators alike. No-one devotes any space to a discussion of this choice of genre, in spite of the fact that otherwise short stories form an insignificant fraction of Zhang's opus. In Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong's "Chronology of Zhang Henshui's Writings" which has over 3000 entries, there are only 33 short stories listed, as against 101 novels and novellas.³⁸ Of the 33 short stories which are listed, only four were published in the same phase of Zhang Henshui's career as Eighty-one Dreams: one in 1939, two in 1944 and one in 1946. All the others were published no later than 1933. Apart from Eighty-one Dreams, only five of Zhang's short stories were republished in collections or anthologies in his lifetime. Of these, one was a very early work in classical Chinese which was collected into a sort of Saturday School compendium,³⁹ while the other five were collected in Wan Gong Ji, Zhang's 1932 volume of patriotic pieces which is reportedly noteworthy more as the author's spontaneous reaction to the fall of Manchuria to the Japanese than as regards any literary qualities of the poetry, essays and short stories contained in it.⁴⁰ Two more short stories, from 1929 and 1946, were collected in an anthology of Saturday School writing published in 1987.⁴¹

It is clear that the short story figures negligibly in Zhang Henshui's opus. So if one of his most talked-about, most written-about and most highly-praised works of fiction, Eighty-one Dreams, is a short story collection, why has this fact attracted so little comment? In fact Eighty-one Dreams is often talked of as though it were a full-length novel. In Zhang and Wei's "Chronology", publication of the individual Dreams is not cited separately, nor is the

36 e.g. Yuan Jin, Zhang Henshui Pingzhuan, p.289.

37 Zhang Henshui, "My life and work (Pt. 2)", Ming Bao, 133, p.33.

38 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 377-688.

39 "The Real Baoyu and the False" ("Zhen Jia Baoyu", 1919), collected in The King of the Stories (Xiaoshuo zhi Bawang), see Zhang and Wei's "Chronology", in Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p.377.

40 Yuan Jin, Zhang Henshui Pingzhuan, pp. 180-181.

41 Liu Yangti (ed.), Writings of the the Saturday School: a critical anthology (Yuanyang-Hudie Pai Zuopin Xuanping).

book designated a short story collection. Instead it is cited as one of the 101 novels.⁴² Dong and Xu seem to sum up the general ambivalence in their appendix which gives short summaries of Zhang's works. The entry for Eighty-one Dreams begins: "Eighty-one Dreams: a [full-length] novel, actually a short story collection."⁴³

It will be necessary to discuss the individual Dreams as short stories, but there are in fact some good reasons for considering Eighty-one Dreams to be at least *akin* to the full-length novel, and these will be dealt with first. The most obvious unifying feature is the oneiric mode, which scarcely needs to be discussed further, having noted that each story is supposed to be the account of a dream of the author's, though the different ways in which it is employed in different individual Dreams will be highlighted below. Other important factors which help to make Eighty-one Dreams appear a unitary composition are consistency of authorial voice, themes and, to a certain extent, style and mode.

Unity of authorial voice in Eighty-one Dreams

As stated in the discussion above, the author speaks in his own voice in the Prologue to Eighty-one Dreams. Since one of the functions of the Prologue is to establish the truth frame within which the "dreams" which follow are first-hand accounts of actual dreams experienced by the author, Zhang Henshui is anxious that it should be clear that in the Prologue it is he himself who is talking to the reader and that he is telling it as it is. This is not difficult to establish, since even without the clues provided - that the "I" of the Prologue is a journalist living in "the wild mountains of Sichuan", who had earlier lived in Peking - it is natural, given the strongly prefatory nature of the Prologue, for the reader to assume that the person claiming therein to have dreamt the dreams which follow is the same person who has signed his name to the whole.

This is especially the case when the "I" within the dreams themselves is a "Mr. Zhang". It is true that when Eighty-one Dreams was first serialised the author signed himself "Henshui",⁴⁴ a name not explicitly linked to the "dreamer" in the stories. Zhang Henshui was, however, known by no other name by this time. His *nom de plume* had become his everyday name. Moreover, throughout the eighteen years since An Unofficial History of Peking (1924-30),

42 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 563.

43 Dong and Xu, Talking about Zhang Henshui, Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 1987, p.225.

44 See Chongqing Xin Min Bao, 11, 235 (1-12-1939), back page.

during which time Zhang had established himself as China's most widely-known novelist, it had been his usual practice to use the signature "Henshui" for the serialisations of his novels and "Zhang Henshui" for the book editions. There was therefore unlikely to be any doubt in the mind of the reader that "Mr. Zhang" was intended to be identified as Zhang Henshui.

Furthermore, as in the Prologue, it is often explicitly stated in the Dreams that the first-person narrator, the "dreamer", is a journalist⁴⁵, and Zhang gives his readers still more pointers that they are to identify the dreamer as himself. For instance, at the start of "Dream Number 58: Heaven and Earth, Old Times and New", the first words uttered by the first personage the dreamer encounters are "Would I be right in thinking, Sir, that you are Mr. Zhang the novelist?"⁴⁶ Another example comes in "Dream Number 5: Extra! Extra!", in which the dreamer gives his home province as Anhui.⁴⁷

It may be seen that Zhang Henshui is at pains to make clear that the first-person narrator is autobiographical. This is achieved not only through the autobiographical "clues" contained in the dreams themselves, but also by means of the prefatory function of the Prologue, which makes it plain that the stories which follow are intended to be read as accounts of the author's dreams. The two mechanisms for establishing the identity of the authorial voice reinforce one another: the extra clues in the dreams help to confirm that those already present in the Prologue identify the narrator of the whole with Zhang Henshui, while the establishment of the oneiric mode in the Prologue explains aspects of the narrative which conflict with Zhang's biography.⁴⁸

The unity of authorial voice which runs throughout Eighty-one Dreams must be a major factor in the tendency for it to be thought of, if not as a novel, then not quite as a short story collection. We might call it a linked short story novel. The dream mode does admit a flexibility in the authorial voice which would not be possible in a conventional narrative novel, allowing, for instance, the first-person narrator to grow twenty years younger in Dreams 15, 64 and 77, when in the other dreams he remains implicitly his own (or a similar)

45 e.g. Meng (1946), p.83 ("Dream Number 32: Sunday"); p. 125 ("Dream Number 48: Zhong Kui, the Demon-devouring General"); p.276 ("Dream Number 80: Return to Nanking").

46 Meng (1946), p. 171.

47 Meng (1946), p. 6.

48 As, for instance, in "Dream Number 15: Twenty Years Ago", in which the narrator dreams of being "back" twenty years in his past when he was a government clerk, a position never held by Zhang Henshui.

age. More striking than this aspect of the flexibility, which is not so different to that which may be made possible by the use of flashbacks within an otherwise conventional narrative, are the supernatural powers the dreamer is endowed with in "Dream Number 36: A Visit to Heaven", "Dream Number 48: Zhong Kui, the Demon-devouring General" and "Dream Number 72: I am the Monkey King". More prosaically, the dreamer is also given licence, in the more realistic dreams, to witness a quantity and variety of events which would be impossible within a purely realistic short story.

One of the functions fulfilled by the unity of authorial voice in *Eighty-one Dreams* is that it brings about a unity of composition that sets this work apart from most short story collections. Other functions of this narrative unity, and some departures from it, together with the questions of unity of theme, style and mode, will be dealt with in the discussion below of the individual dreams.

Of the fourteen dreams, only five, including one of those cut in 1954/5, deal extensively with the supernatural. Of the remaining nine, six have no supernatural content whatsoever. One of these does not even contain any indication that it is the account of a dream. In the others, there is always a point at which the dream may be seen to begin and/or end. For example, "Dream Number 8: The Road to Riches" begins with the narrator describing a moonlight scene and overhearing some talk of people finding ways to get rich. It is only after he has gone back into his house that the first character in the story itself appears. It is obvious that when the narrator went into the house he went to bed and the dream has now begun.⁴⁹

Let us look first at the "realistic" dreams. The six without any supernatural content whatsoever are "Dream Number 5: Extra! Extra!" ("Haowai! Haowai!"); "Dream Number 8: The Road to Riches" ("Sheng Cai You Dao"); "Dream Number 24: An Unfinished Play" ("Yichang Wei Wan de Xi"); "Dream Number 32: Sunday" ("Xingqiri"); "Dream Number 77: Peking in Winter" ("Beiping zhi Dong"); "Dream Number 80: Return to Nanking" ("Hui-daole Nanjing"). Alongside them, we should discuss the other three dreams which are not pure fantasy, namely "Dream Number 15: Twenty Years Ago" ("Tui-huiqule Nian Nian"), "Dream Number 55: The Honest and True Tendency" ("Zhongshi Fenzi") and "Dream Number 64: 'Pursuit'" ("Zhui").

49 Meng (1946), pp. 23-24.

Of the nine, two are set in a near future in which the war ends in victory over Japan (Dreams 5 and 80); three are set in the 1920s back in warlord era Peking (15, 64 and 77); the backdrops of the remaining four "realistic" dreams are more or less identifiable with contemporary Chongqing.

Lest we should get "more or less" lost in too much generalisation we should stop here to examine a dream which is notably different to the other "realistic" dreams and indeed might almost as easily be bracketed along with the fantastical ones. "Dream Number 55: The Honest and True Tendency" is surreal, not downright supernatural, but like the fantastical dreams is strongly allegorical.

"Dream Number 55" is one of six dreams in the collection to begin with a short waking lead-in.⁵⁰ Such lead-ins usually include a narrative slice of the dreamer's waking life. Mostly, however, the bulk of the lead-in is composed of interior monologue. In "Dream Number 55", as in one of the other five,⁵¹ it is only the narrator's waking thoughts we are given before he, more or less obviously, begins to dream. In this dream, the narrative starts off with some musings on the subject of honesty:

It has often occurred to me that if you were to place an announcement in the newspaper inviting the most honest and true people to collect a prize of one hundred *yuan*, then it would not be hard for everyone in the whole city to become the most honest and true people in the universe. On the other hand, if there were a multitude of refugees in need of urgent aid and you solicited donations of a hundred *yuan* from the most honest and true people, then I'm afraid the most honest and true people would suddenly become the tiniest of minority groups. So how can one really ascertain whether the honest and true of the human race are many or few? The answer to this problem cannot be found by mere imagination, but one day I was presented with an opportunity to solve it by a visit to an experimental zone for the honest and true.

At siesta time that day I was pondering whose words I could count to be reliable, when someone called through my window,

"Mr. Zhang, you can trust me can't you? I can take you to a place where you can see the most honest and true people in the universe, but you'll have to give me something in return."⁵²

The speaker turns out to be a little boy of about seven wearing not a stitch of clothing, who claims to be an innately honest and true son of honest parents. Mr. Zhang is impressed by this in such a small boy and readily agrees to pay him the one *yuan* fee he demands for his guidance. A fruit pedlar tries to stop them, claiming the boy has robbed him but of course he can be concealing nothing in his naked state. They go a little way along a path skirting the

50 The others are Nos. 8, 48, 64, 72 and 77.

51 No. 77.

52 Meng (1946), p. 149.

hills and the boy points to a village on the hillside, saying it is New Honest-true Village. As the boy rushes off, however, Zhang realises that his pocket has been picked and since his own money is all still there he must have been used by the boy to conceal the money stolen from the pedlar.⁵³ Zhang assumes that there will be no New Honest-true Village after all, but carrying on anyway discovers that the boy had at least been honest in this.

At the gates to the village a group of old men demand a toll of five *yuan*, but while Zhang is still standing in shock a crowd of youths rushes out and starts berating this "old and decrepit tendency" (*laoxiu fenzi*). As the old men are having their hands tied one of the youths jumps up on a stone and starts to make a speech proclaiming the liberation of the village and its renaming as the Popular Congress of New Honest-true Village (*Zhongshi Xincun Minzhong Dahui*). Votes are taken on this and that and although several hundred of the ordinary villagers have by now gathered to watch the fun, all resolutions are unanimously passed by the acclaim of the original group of youths. Mao Chulai, elected Village Head in this fashion from among their number, takes the stage and makes the following speech:

"I do not feel worthy to accept this honour of being elected Village Head by the democratic vote of the entire population. Since I cannot very well go against the popular will, I will just have to do my poor best in the job. Your humble servant has written a 200 000 -word manifesto of ideas for the reform of the village, which may be distributed later. In a word, what is needed first is honesty and truth; what is needed second is honesty and truth; what is needed third is honesty and truth."⁵⁴

Mao promptly turns on his heel, and amidst the tumultuous applause of his followers, leads them back inside. Nonplussed, the villagers watch as the "old decrepit tendency" is bundled out of the village. When they turn to go home themselves, however, they find that they too have been locked out and the "honest and true" youths are demanding one *yuan* a head for reentry. After much protest, they dutifully pay up, but by the time Mr. Zhang goes up to buy his entry ticket there is no-one to collect his ticket. Walking unimpeded through the unguarded gate, he finds the youths already deep in drunken sleep amidst the remnants of a banquet obviously paid for with the gate money.

53 In the post-1949 editions all references to the boy's thieving and demands for payment have been deleted.

54 *Meng* (1946), p. 152.

The satire of this opening passage appears to be directed against the Chinese communists in their "liberated areas" around Yan'an and elsewhere.⁵⁵ The allegory of this dream is mixed, however, and much of the rest of what the dreamer witnesses in this new model village is of the same stuff as the satire of KMT-ruled Chongqing found in most of the other dreams. The description of Justice Hotel, where the rates appear reasonable until one discovers that there are water, electricity and bedding surcharges to offset its loudly proclaimed contribution to the war effort, may be an attempt to continue the satire of Yan'an, but the profiteers and profligate businessmen Zhang encounters there would be equally at home in one of the Chongqing stories. Nor can one imagine that Zhang Henshui supposed his descriptions of houses of the wealthy piled high with hoarded commodities and guarded against beggars by flunkies and dogs could be applicable to the Communist base areas.

Certainly the closing couple of pages⁵⁶ are an allegory of KMT government corruption. This passage also goes furthest of anything in this dream towards the phantasmagoria of some of the others in the collection, whereas up to now it has been merely somewhat strange. This phantasmagorical atmosphere is created by means of an extended classical allusion, in that the final pages of the dream are composed in conscious ironical imitation of the 5th. century allegorical story "The Peach Blossom Source" ("Taohua Yuan"). In Tao Yuanming's original a fisherman wanders in spite of himself further upstream than he had ever ventured and penetrates through a cave at the source of the stream into a world which has been cut off from the rest of China for at least seven hundred years, since before the Han dynasty. Its people still live in a pre-imperial utopia of peace and prosperity.⁵⁷

In mimicry of this locus classicus of the Chinese Utopia, Zhang's dreamer, unsure of where he is, wanders to a stream which mysteriously flows only in on itself, not a drop finding its way down from the mountain ravine. The dreamer's aimless wandering recalls the original, in

55 Aside from the multiple pun in Mao Chulai's name (see page 122 above), the words "liberate", "area" (*qu* as in *shiyangu* - "experimental zone", cf. *jiefangu* - "liberated area"), "Popular Congress" and "manifesto" are all clearly intended to echo Communist nomenclature.

56 Meng (1946), pp. 167-169.

57 In 1933-34 Zhang Henshui had based a whole novel on this classical source. *The Secret Valley* (*Mimu Gu*, 1st ed. 1941) tells how a student expedition in the Dabie Mountains close to the author's Anhui home discover a hidden valley which has been cut off from the rest of China since its inhabitants' ancestors fled there in the turmoil of the fall of the Ming dynasty (mid-17th. cent.). This early essay at the mingling of classical allegory with twentieth century reference is marred by ineffective characterisation. Since the hero of the novel eventually returns to settle permanently in the secret valley, unlike the fisherman in "The Peach Blossom Source" who is unable to find his utopia when he goes back, *The Secret Valley* is neither as transcendently poignant as its classical model nor as satirically sharp as the closing passage of "Dream Number 15" (see Yuan (1988), p. 201).

which the fisherman "as he paddled up the stream, forgot how far he had come"⁵⁸. The strange circumstance of the gravity-defying water is, however, of contemporary satirical relevance. The life-giving water is monopolised by the owners of the mansion which, instead of a utopian world, lies at its source. At the entrance to the grounds of this country retreat stands a gateway on which are inscribed the words "Place of No Sun and No Day". This recalls the cave at the "Peach Blossom Source" and the timelessness which lies beyond it. It will also, however, retrospectively be seen to be a reference to the "darkness" (heian) of social evils. Thus the signpost beside the archway pointing to the "Residence of the Fortunate" will also assume retrospective irony. The beautifully tilled, garden like land which Mr. Zhang beholds on cresting a ridge recall the fields which so impressed the fisherman in "The Peach Blossom Source",⁵⁹ but the closing lines are pure Zhang Henshui, and represent a piece of satire as vivid, biting and original as anything in his fiction.

In spite of the preposterously self-humbling tone of the couplet inscribed at its doorway, the mansion Zhang beholds is clearly no ordinary residence. As our dreamer is sizing up the opulent lie of the land, a Chinese National Airline plane roars overhead and drops sacks full of all manner of rare delicacies from occupied China and abroad. The sacks, all marked "Fu"⁶⁰ Residence Provisions: Duty Free", are promptly taken indoors by a small army of grinning retainers.

Noticing yet another sign, saying "Ordinary Folk Need Not Loiter Here", Zhang turns hastily around and finds himself, by a strange quirk, on a different path to that by which he came. Following this path, he reaches a cableway terminus, with a waiting cable car. The cables pass through the square hole of an enormous old-style Chinese coin, held by the iron statues of a dog-headed man on one side and a hog-headed one on the other. On the massive coin itself the traditional four characters equivalent to "Pay the bearer..." have been replaced by those for "The Narrow Road to Heaven" (*Kong Dao Tong Tian*). As the dreamer is puzzling over this, some dogs and chickens arrive, board the cable car and are shot straight up into the clouds, for unlike an ordinary cableway that is where this one leads.

58 Tao Yuanming, "Taohua Yuan", in Song (ed.), *Zhongguo Lidai Wenxue Zuopin Xuan*, p. 428.

59 Ibid.

60 *Fu*, a Chinese surname, literally means "wealthy"

The satire here is as sparkling and witty as its target is obvious. The "Kong" of "the Narrow Road" is a direct reference to the Kong clan, one of the notorious "four big families" who effectively ruled KMT China by a network of connections overriding Party and state structures. The Kongs were particularly influential in the financial sector, their greatest scion, H.H. Kong being the KMT Minister of Finance.⁶¹ The appearance of the dogs and chickens is an equally transparent reference to the reflected glory in which the hangers-on of such powerful people basked, as it directly quotes the phrase "dogs and chickens ascending to heaven" (*ji quan sheng tian*) which is a stock phrase in Chinese for, usually worthless, people who achieve privilege purely through association with powerful patrons.⁶²

In "Dream Number 55" Zhang Henshui uses techniques of his "dreamlike" early novels to create a vaguely surreal atmosphere which serves the tongue-in-cheek satire of Yan'an politics and Chongqing society. The manner in which the narrative leads into the presentation of the supernatural elements at the end of the dream is strongly reminiscent of the dreamlike quality of the natural description in the early novels. In spite of the fact that this narrative is explicitly oneiric, however, the description of the dreamer's wandering is if anything less dreamlike than that of Yang Xingyuan's visit to the zoo in An Unofficial History of Peking.⁶³ The landscape of the lush, deeply shaded mountain valley is more vivid than that of the orchards Yang Xingyuan is made to visit in order to give him an excuse for poetic wistfulness. The blend between Zhang's traditional style and new elements introduced for the first time in Eighty-one Dreams, such as the supernatural and the surreal, is at its most evenly mixed in "Dream Number 55". The quality of the blend is different to that of those dreams in the collection which fall more naturally into the two categories of "realistic" and fantastic.

Returning to the remaining eight, more typical, examples of the former group, let us deal first with the six which, unlike "The Honest and True Tendency", contain no supernatural or surreal features. There is a great deal of dull and repetitious satire of the wartime profiteering of Chongqing merchants and the decadent lifestyle of the city's middle classes contained in these dreams. The first dream, "Dream Number 5: 'Extra! Extra!'" deals with this theme in

61 In the 1946 edition the word Kong has been replaced so that the legend reads "Their Road Leads to Heaven" (*Qi Dao Tong Tian*), cf. Eighty-one Dreams (part 243), *Xin Min Bao* ("Zui Hou Guantou"), 25-8-1940. This is the only obvious sign of censorship of the book edition. In the post-1949 editions (none of which were published in Taiwan) the reference to the Kong family has, unsurprisingly, been restored (see for instance the 1980 Chengdu edition, p. 177) and even features on the cover illustration of the 1955 Peking edition.

62 The phrase, in common usage, originates in the story of a Daoist who achieved immortality and whose domestic animals also got to Heaven as a result of licking his elixir vessels. The full phrase is *yi ren de Dao, ji quan sheng tian* - "when one man achieves immortality, [even] his dogs and chickens ascend to Heaven".

63 See above pp. 50-51.

the most lively way. Quite frankly, after this first dream, there is no need whatsoever to read "Dream Number 8: The Road to Riches" and "Dream Number 32: Sunday", which simply contain more of the same, told in the style of the duller passages of "Extra! Extra!". Although, as I have said, there are no very obvious political reasons for the omission of the five dreams cut from the post-1949 editions of Eighty-one Dreams, artistic considerations cannot be deemed to have been used as criteria for this abridgement either. While some of the liveliest and most interesting dreams have been denied to the post-1949 public, "The Road to Riches" and "Sunday", quite the dullest and most repetitious of all the original dreams, have been retained in these later editions. In them, the dreamer is a passive, uninvolved witness, a "Man-with-Nine-Lives"⁶⁴ observing round after unconnected round of merchant wheeling and dealing and middle-class tedium and gambling. The two dreams resemble extended versions of the satirical anecdotes contained in Zhang's early novels. The latter are rarely as intrinsically boring, however, and have the virtue of relative brevity and the promise of eventual return to the central plot of the novel. When the dreamer awakes, the reader feels as cheated as the person who has listened to a friend's account of an "amazing dream" they had the other night and sees nothing amazing in it at all. In real life, the dreamer would probably realise that the "amazing dream" had lost something in the telling, unless, like Zhang Henshui perhaps, they thought the dream, for all its dullness, had something relevant to say about real life. This may well signal the deeper social commitment most critics have said Zhang Henshui displayed in Eighty-one Dreams, and the author himself wrote that "though I wouldn't presume to say that this is a good piece of writing, as far as 'forthrightness' is concerned, everyone acknowledged it at the time."⁶⁵ The "forthrightness" of the satire of "Extra! Extra!" and of lively and original versions of it in other dreams in the collection becomes mere whinging in the way that the same old themes are harped on in the same old way in "The Road to Riches" and "Sunday".

Apart from the fact that it simply does it first, the satire of "Extra! Extra!" has intrinsic originality in that, while its two poor cousins are set in a realistic present, its action is placed in a futuristic present, namely the day news reaches Chongqing of the sudden unconditional surrender of Japan. The greater urgency of this dream is also aided by the immediacy effected by the close personal involvement of the dreamer in his narrative. The dream, which apart from its title gives no indication of being one until the end, opens with the narrator telling how unsatisfactory it has been living with his family in a hotel since arriving in Chongqing. When

64 See above p. 22 and note 26 to this chapter.

65 Memoirs, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 73-74.

his wife complains about this yet again he immediately sets off to go and view a house they have heard is to be let. He is delighted with the style of the house and especially its situation in a leafy suburb. Shrugging off the rudeness of the landlord whom he does not disabuse of the misconception that he is not an impoverished intellectual, he asks the price and is totally shocked by the reply. The landlord insists that the house is well worth the rent because of the private air-raid shelter cut into the rocky hillside against which it stands. "Mr. Zhang"⁶⁶ knows, however, that with his income there is no point in further discussion and leaves the house.

As he leaves, a great commotion is building up around some newspaper vendors selling news extras telling of sudden victory in the war. Overjoyed, Mr. Zhang is just starting to read through the report for a second time when the landlord scurries up and unctuously offers him the house he has just seen at reduced rates, free of deposit and with furniture included. Zhang happily agrees to talk it over with his wife. When he hears that Zhang will be making plans to return back downriver⁶⁷ now that the war is over, the landlord's face immediately falls and he goes so far as to caution Mr. Zhang gloomily that he shouldn't completely believe in all the propaganda he reads and that surely the Japanese cannot have been defeated as suddenly and decisively as the news extra is saying.

This opening passage is typical of Eighty-one Dreams in that it describes the opportunistic profiteering which bedevilled the economy of unoccupied China during the war. It is, however, an unusually vivid example of such satire in that the narrator is personally involved and the commodity being exploited, the house, is as concretely described as the profiteer is colourfully lampooned. The mode of the satire contained in the remainder of the dream is more typical, taking the form of the many and varied manifestations of dishonesty and corruption which come, one after another, to the attention of the dreamer as he makes his way back to his hotel through the streets of Chongqing amid the revelry of victory celebrations. At almost literally every turn the honest, patriotic and genuine jubilation of the crowds thronging the streets cheering, dancing and letting off firecrackers is contrasted with the despondency of profiteers who stand to lose as markets open and prices fall, or with the eagerness of others to

66 By this time the narrator has been established as an autobiographical persona by giving his name and place of origin to the caretaker (Meng (1946), p. 6.)

67 Chongqing is situated on the upper reaches of the Yangtse. Sichuanese, such as the landlord in this dream, refer to people of eastern China generally, not just those from the Lower Yangtse region, as "downriver folk". In the circumstances of the war years when a huge influx of such people arrived in unoccupied Sichuan and tended to form a colonial-style dominant class, the term "downriver folk" assumed a style of resentfully derogatory reference similar to the word "Sassenach" as used by Scots to refer to English people and (the original usage) by Highlanders of Lowland Scots and Southerners generally.

find new ways of making money by running charter services for those returning downriver or holding "victory sales". The absurdist culmination of the examples Mr. Zhang witnesses of this latter trend is a barbershop with a sign in its window proclaiming the steadfast patriotism of the owner and offering five per cent discount plus free blow-dry! The fact that the name of the barbershop owner suggests he is the brother of a political hack the dreamer has just been talking to ties in with this extension of the satire into the political sphere and suggests that the opportunism of people in intellectual, political and governmental circles should be treated with equal contempt to that which the barber deserves.

The satire is also extended to the general decadence of society at large. When Mr. Zhang returns to his hotel, Mrs. and Mrs. Cai, an old friend from university and his wife, drag him into their room to make up a four at mahjong. When Mrs. Cai urges him not to demur, since on this glorious day of victory surely one should celebrate in style with a good game, Zhang reminds her that when they were in Wuhan on the eve of its fall to the Japanese invaders she was urging people to play mahjong since at such a terrible time one should take every chance for enjoyment one could get.

The bulk of "Extra! Extra!" is composed of free-ranging satire such as this. It closes in a neat reflection of its opening. The Cais ask Mr. Zhang's advice about some property of theirs in Nanking which they used to rent to the former students' association and which has survived the war unscathed. Now that the sellers' market in property will be shifting from Chongqing to Nanking they want to get rid of the students' association in order to realize the full value of their houses. Zhang reassures them that the students' association is unlikely to reconstitute itself after the war because half of their former classmates have been made destitute refugees while the other half have made fortunes. Hoping to benefit from his friendship with the Cais and that they will be glad to save themselves the trouble of advertising, Mr. Zhang asks them what they will be charging. The jovial atmosphere in the room suddenly changes and when Zhang hears the rent they are planning to charge he too has the smile wiped off his face:

I breathed in sharply through my teeth and stared up at the ceiling, lost in thought. Just then I heard more cries of "Extra! Extra!" from outside and immediately after that someone could be heard to shout, "Go Home? Don't get your hopes up. The price of rope for tying luggage has suddenly gone up to three *yuan* a length, large net bags are selling for fully twenty *yuan* each and a boat ticket to Yichang may cost as much as five hundred. How are we ever going to get away from here unless we wait for our family to sell some land to send us the price of the ticket? In this world any news, good or bad, always spells opportunity for the mean-minded and ill luck for the noble and good-hearted."

All this time that I had been muddling along amidst the clamour of "Extra! Extra!" everything I had seen and heard had seemed rather strange and unfathomable. As the atmosphere in the room turned icy, and at these last words from outside it, only now did I wake up [to the truth] - and I did wake up.⁶⁸

With its neat circular structure and the clarity of focus effected by the personal involvement of the narrator in much of what he describes, "Extra! Extra!" is one of the "dreams" in the collection to come closest to the mode of the modern realistic short story so favoured by May Fourth writers. Another which comes even closer is "Dream Number 15: Twenty Years Ago". Again the only indication in the narrative that it is a dream comes when the dreamer awakes at the very end. Unlike "Extra! Extra!", however, in this third dream-account the narrative is devoted solely to the dreamer's personal story. The oneiric mode is not merely used to give the narrator licence to witness a quantity and variety of phenomena greater than could credibly be described from an eyewitness point of view in a realistic narrative of comparable length (on the page) and duration (of narrated time).

By way of a gesture towards the critical edition which the complexity of Eighty-one Dreams demands and which would enlighten any discussion of its literary and satirical qualities I shall quote extensively from this "Dream Number 15: Twenty Years Ago". It begins thus:

I was woken from my dreams by scattered bursts of fireworks outside my window.

"What in the world do those bloody little monkeys have to be so happy about," an old man was cursing, "still letting off bleeding thunder-flashes and sky rockets so long into the year. What's so happy about this New Year anyway? A plague of locusts in the countryside, bandits overrunning the Northeast, the Yellow River's burst its banks and coal and flour are both up in price. Mr. Zhang's the only mandarin in our compound, so where's all the easy money coming from, that other folk let their kids go on celebrating New Year for almost a full week?"

At the time I had recently started work as a clerk in the Bureau of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce in Peking, so I suppose you could say I was a mandarin of sorts.

Opening my eyes I saw the calendar hanging on my wall. Printed large upon it was: Chinese New Year, February, Eighth Year of the Republic [1919].

When my neighbour Big Beard the street pedlar was cursing to his heart's content in the courtyard that was also the time for me to be leaving for the office, so what was I doing still in bed? Hurriedly I got up, poured water from the kettle I had left to warm overnight on the white clay stove and poured it out. Having performed my ablutions. I put on a woollen balaclava, wrapped an old scarf of tattered felt around my neck, locked the door and set off.

A mere office-boy can't possibly afford a greatcoat and Peking is a cold place, so there was nothing for it but to dress like this. Coming out of the gate of the compound into the quiet lane I stepped into more than a foot of powdery snowdrift. It made a rustling sound like dry leaves under my feet. The northwest headwind cut my face like a knife, blowing snow from the roofs of the houses and swirling it in the air into a whirling cloud of white mist before flinging it in my face. Despite my tattered scarf, the powdery grains of snow still managed to get under my collar. Although I had on a sheepskin I had bought in Tianqiao market, I still couldn't help giving a couple of shivers. The breath from my nose came out of the face-hole of the balaclava like steam rising from the basket when you take out the buns, soon dampening the hem of the wool.

68 Meng (1946), p. 22.

"It's a hard life," I thought to myself, "when you have to brave wind and snow like this to get to a job that only pays thirty dollars a month."

Just as I was musing thus a car overtook me. Splashing through the mixture of slush and mud on the road it sent up a sheet of freezing muddy rain on each side, covering me with mud splashes. In a flash the car was gone so of course there was nothing I could do. Through the rear window I could see a cuddling couple, huddled together to one side of the car's back seat. The registration number of the car was "Private: 606". Ahah! that's the very car in which the minister rides to work. So of course the man in the back seat must be my ultimate boss, Lai Dayuan, Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce. At the best of times a mere pedestrian can't very well catch a motor car and have it out with the driver, and anyway how could I possibly take issue with my own minister? I just heaved a sigh and walked slowly on towards the office, keeping well in to the side of the road.

Our ministry was generally called simply the Bureau of Agriculture and Commerce, it certainly wasn't known for its industry, being second only to the Ministry of Education in terms of idleness.⁶⁹ The sentries at the entrance, each with an old rifle slung over his shoulder, were doing a quick-march just to try and keep warm. Glancing towards the janitor's office I saw the janitor huddling over a clay stove in the corridor. In his window he had placed a small alarm clock: it was already ten o'clock.

Besides the deep snow in which it was swathed there was nothing of note to be seen in the courtyard. Out of the snowy mass, trees and bushes thrust up a profusion of twigs and branches on top of which another layer of snow had gathered. Under the eaves of the tall buildings there was not the slightest sound or movement, but on the floor of the covered walkway a dozen or more sparrows were startled by my approach and flew⁷⁰ up onto the eaves in a great commotion. It didn't seem like a government office - more like a temple.

In these first few paragraphs of "Twenty Years Ago", a rich atmosphere and a lead-in to the story's themes have been created by the most economical means. The time of the action has been established through words overheard and through the cinematic device of zooming in from newly opened eyes to the calendar on the wall. In the first few lines not only has the bare date, Chinese New Year 1919, been supplied but the reader of the story (at least twenty years later than this date) has been reminded of the turbulence of the times by Big Beard's reference to bandits, floods and inflation. The narrator's somewhat ironic response to being referred to as a mandarin establishes his humble social status, as does the mere fact that he shares his yard with a street pedlar. The notion of poverty concomitant with this is concretised by the description of the young "Mr. Zhang's" clothing. The description of the inclement weather is a vivid piece of writing in its own right, but it also helps to highlight the inadequacy of the narrator's shabby clothing and prompts him to grumble over his paltry salary. Just as the use of the calendar device recalls an aspect of modern narrative technique from Modern Youth, so the coincidental arrival of the young man's boss's car, showering him with slush, reminds one of the blend of traditional and modern techniques of juxtaposition

69 The reference to the Ministry of Education has been deleted from post-1949 editions.

70 Meng (1946), pp. 49-50.

employed in that earlier novel.⁷¹ Finally, the description of the ministry buildings, blanketed in virgin snow and with corridors so deserted as to attract flocks of sparrows even at ten o'clock,⁷² is as satirically effective as it is stylistically fine.

The implications of corruption and idleness in government is developed as the narrator enters "like walking out of winter into spring"⁷³ his own department's offices. This is the First Section of the Department of Mines, where iron stoves charged with the department's special supply of coal belt out heat providing the job's major perk. Zhang is the last of the bona fide junior employees to arrive, but two of the others are engrossed in a game of chess as he walks into the small office into which the five of them cram. Next door in the larger office none of the fifteen or so higher ranking officials has yet arrived. Only the Section Head, a scholar-official of the old school sits at his desk "avidly poring over" a woodblock edition of a classic historical novel, sipping the tea he has been served by one of the two stewards.⁷⁴ Soon a few of the secretaries do arrive, obsequiously bidding Section Head Tao seasonal greetings. When Tao leaves the office:

Immediately it grew very lively through there. First to abandon decorum was a Mr. Tong. Taking a copy of the day's paper from the rack he spread it out on his desk.

"Fan, old boy," he laughed, "have you been to see Miss Eight yet? Hey! There's a good Peking opera on tonight - 'Gathering Cherries'. There's also a production of 'Haihui Temple, Part One'. Why not book a box and go round to the brothel to invite Miss Eight so we can all meet her."

Mr. Fan took a paper too and went back to his own desk to read it.

"Talking of Miss Eight," he laughed, "last year I remember I nearly didn't make it to the New Year festivities. Old Ma's got the right idea with his free love. It's far more economical than all that carry-on we get up to in the 'Eight Big Lanes'⁷⁵. There, look, he's no sooner arrived at the office than he's writing letters."

At the table opposite him was another Grade Two official named Ma who was furiously scribbling away on a piece of letter paper taken from a government-issue pad on the desk. Actually he wasn't writing a love letter but composing a play review which he intended to submit to a minor journal for publication. It was to be entitled "On Seeing a Play on the Third Day of New Year."

While they were talking, Mr. Hu came in and everyone in the room turned to him with seasonal greetings. He was a favourite of the vice-ministers and though he hadn't managed as yet to replace Mr. Tao as Section Head, within the Section he was considered a kind of deputy head.

"Hasn't the Head come in?" he asked as he took off his fur greatcoat.

Now those two stewards who hadn't paid me any attention both came in, one taking Hu's hat and coat, the other bringing a hot damp towel for him to wipe his face with.

"He's been in for ages," volunteered Mr. Tong, "but went out just now."

71 See chapter two, pp. 91-106, especially pp. 98-99, item 43.

72 The reference to sparrows recalls the stock phrase "[even] sparrows and crows are silent" (ya que wu sheng), which is equivalent to the English "one could hear a pin drop".

73 Ibid., pp. 50-51.

74 Ibid., p. 51.

75 Ba Da Hutong: Old Peking's red-light district.

Hu took a cigar from his pocket, bit off the end and put it in his mouth, whereupon the steward who had brought the face towel struck a match to give him a light. He puffed out a cloud of smoke, and made an expansive gesture with the hand which held the cigar.

"I'll tell you all something amazing," he said, "all these years I've been playing poker I've never had a straight flush, but this New Year I had a real beauty. It was spades: eight, nine, ten, jack and queen; just two cards away from the best possible hand."

All Hu's colleagues noisily voiced their astonishment as he beamed round at everyone.

"And that's not all," he went on ecstatically, "the best of it was that one of the other players had a heart flush and another was ace-high, so both of them were upping the ante for all they were worth until the pot stood at over a hundred dollars. In the end it was me who told them not to go on breaking themselves but to show me their hands and just give me some money as a New Year's gift. Collecting the pot and the extra cash I raked in nearly two hundred dollars."

When he finished speaking he clapped his hands in delight and began sucking on his cigar again. Just then, Mr. Tao came back in and the other secretaries were afraid to make any more noise. Only the well-connected Mr. Hu paid no heed but went right on talking and laughing in the middle of the room.

"What great feat have you accomplished, Brother Hu," the Section Head smiled, "to be so blithe of spirit?"

Laughing and gesticulating, Mr. Hu told his story again.

We next door were not in the same class. Even when the hilarity in the next room was raising the roof, we dared not join in with so much as a single word. About ten minutes later Mr. Fan, the secretary who'd bowed the lowest to Mr. Tao, came across to us. My colleagues greeted him with "Happy New Year" and either nodded or gave a slight bow. Since his rank was not high enough for us to consider ourselves dependant on him for our livelihood, nobody bowed very deeply to him. It turned out he actually had nothing to ask of us and only smiled and nodded to us a couple of times. I rather despised him and did not join in greeting him, pretending I was busy looking for documents in a drawer. He gave me a ferocious stare as he passed in front of me but I had no obligation to wish him a happy new year and he just went back into the other room.

Just then, a few more secretaries arrived and two more clerks swelled our numbers, too. One of these was the minister's brother-in-law. He was only seventeen and came into work less than once a month. Today no doubt he'd decided to come and mark himself present since it was the first day back after the holiday. The other 'clerk' was a second cousin of the vice-minister and was over sixty years old. True, his attendance was good, but he never did any work, nor had the Section Head ever given him anything to do. Still he was most disgruntled that his cousin's child, as a vice-minister, should only have given him a post in the lowest official grade, and he was always cursing someone or other under his breath in his native dialect. Today, probably as a result of too much drink at New Year, his face was purplish red, with the white stubble of his beard showing through. Going long in the tooth as he was, all in all he was not very pleasing to look at.

In these two adjoining offices there were twenty-odd officials of high rank and low, each sitting at a desk. Some were writing letters on government-issue letter paper, some reading newspapers, some staring at the ceiling, lost in thought, cigarettes dangling from their lips. Those seated comparatively close together were drinking the scented tea provided in the office and quietly discussing mahjong lore. A slightly more elevated pair among them were discussing the state of the nation, with reference to the newspapers. Our two copyists had finished writing out the documents they'd been assigned and went through to present them to Mr. Tao. Any kind of discipline had been broken for today and in imitation of our superiors next door, since we too had nothing to do, we began chatting about this and that.

Suddenly someone outside was heard to shout, "The minister's here! The minister's here!"

The atmosphere in both offices all at once grew tense. This gives you a flavour of what it was like to be a high official in the old capital. When the minister arrived at the office, a steward would go round all the departments and sections to announce it.¹⁶

Although our internally focalised narrator has strayed momentarily into omniscience in revealing what it is that Secretary Ma is writing, it is only in the last paragraph quoted that he abandons a modern narrative mode altogether in favour of the subjective stance of the traditional storyteller. As it is, in the lively, controlled narrative and dialogue of the above, he has already given us more than a taste of the working lives of minor officials in early Republican China.

As with the references in the first lines of "Extra! Extra!" to bandits, inflation and other afflictions suffered by the ordinary people, Zhang Henshui's intention here was no doubt to "use the past to satirise the present" (*jie gu feng jin*) in the time-honoured tradition, since he was writing at a time when corruption and nepotism in the Chinese government were as rife as they had ever been.

The satire is cloaked, as well as by time and space, by favourable references to the KMT government being planned at the time in Canton. It is our narrator, who is developing into a character of strong moral fibre, who tells his fellow clerk Mr. Li that he has thought of going to Canton to join Sun Yatsen and to "breathe the fresh air of freedom" which contrasts so starkly with Peking under the "rotten government" of the warlords on the eve of the May Fourth Movement.⁷⁷ Zhang's words, spoken when Li pays him an unexpected visit that evening, are intended to comfort Li, who has a family and is thus even worse off than Zhang. It turns out, however, that Li has come to tell his friend that he has had a windfall. Li plays the *huqin* fiddle and has taken the fancy of one of Minister Lai's daughters, whose (Peking) operatic singing he has outrageously flattered. Not only has she given him fifty *yuan* already and engaged him as a teacher, but her brother has given him a note in the minister's hand promoting him, above the secretaries in their department, to the rank of personal assistant.

Now Li has come to ask Zhang to go with him to meet his new young patrons at an expensive foreign hotel where he is too timid to venture alone. Zhang agrees, though he too has never set foot in such a dauntingly modern and affluent public place and is very wary of problems of etiquette. When they get there, Zhang happens to find a platinum ring with a huge diamond

77 *Ibid.*, p. 56. The direct provocation of these thoughts in Mr. Zhang is not, however, the general air of decadence and corruption portrayed in the scenes quoted but the lack of respect shown to him and Li as lowest ranking officials by the office stewards. The references to the 'bad attitude' of these proletarians have been deleted from post-1949 editions. See Meng (1946), pp. 55-56 and compare with the Chengdu 1981 edition, p. 62. In the original version Mr. Li had struck one of the stewards for his insolence and Zhang had been afraid for him that the steward, as a close confidant of the Section Head, might get him sacked. In the revised version the cause of Zhang's concern for Li and especially his family is supplied by putting the first reference to upping and going to Canton into Li's mouth, which is very out of character.

on the floor near the cloakroom. Having instinctively pocketed it, his companion being too distracted by his own nervousness to notice, he is almost immediately overcome by his conscience. A manservant of the Lai family overhears him announcing his find to a waiter and takes him and Li to where his young master and mistress are dining with friends. Before quoting this scene, I shall also give a short extract from Zhang and Li's earlier dialogue which reveals something about their ultimate boss's children and the two clerks' respective attitudes to them:

"Everyone says our minister is a 'scabby-headed turtle',⁷⁸" he said, "but his sons and daughters are all refined people in the height of fashion. His second son and elder daughter are rather keen theatre-goers, as you know."

"Actually I didn't know that," I replied, "I have only heard that the eldest son has a flair for holding multiple appointments, of which he currently has thirty-six. From the State Department down to Zhili Provincial Tax Office, he's got his name on everyone's payroll. His younger brother likes motor cars and owns three or four himself. The elder daughter is fond of trips to Tianjin and Shanghai and the younger one dances and has engaged a foreign piano teacher."⁷⁹

* * *

Master Lai was sitting at the head of the table facing the screen, so that we came face-to-face as soon as I entered. He wore a purple woollen suit and his oiled and groomed hair resembled black satin, but his nest-shaped face, tapering from the jowls up, somehow failed to complement it. He was in the process of cutting a steak with knife and fork, but turned now to his manservant.

"Is that the one who found it?" he said, indicating me with the point of his knife.

Not at all pleased by his manner, I just stood in the corner by the screen and said nothing.

"Mr. Zhang," said the manservant, "this is Young Master Lai."

Li, who stood behind me, respectfully greeted the young master and young miss, automatically giving a slight bow.

Lai looked at me again and asked, "What was it you picked up?"

"I'm sorry, Master Lai," I replied. "I can't tell you straight out."

The young man on Lai's left, sitting next to his sister, was wearing a green suit. His very white complexion and long square face reminded me somewhat of a certain amateur actor.⁸⁰ He nodded and said, "He's right, Master Lai. We must first say what it is we've lost."

Lai impaled a piece of steak on his fork, stuffed it in his mouth and began to chew. Then, pointing at me with the fork, he said, "I've lost a platinum diamond ring with three English letters, K.L.K., engraved on the inside. Tell me, am I right?"

"Yes," I replied, "it was a diamond ring I found. As to the three English letters, however, I hadn't noticed any. Wait and I'll have a look."

I took the ring out of my pocket and held it up to the light. Sure enough, there were the letters as Lai had described them. Before I could speak, Master Lai took from his pocket a green silk brocade box and put it on the table with a smile.

"Have a look and see if this is the ring's box."

78 This is a pun on the minister's name, Lai Dayuan, the term of abuse being *laitouyuan*.

79 Meng (1946), pp. 56-57.

80 Here, where the original gave a name almost identical to that of a famous Peking Opera actor, Cheng Yanqiu, I am happy, for translation purposes, to accept the equivocation of the revised edition (Chengdu 1981, p. 68, cf. Shanghai 1946, p. 61).

I picked up the box and opened it. There was a sunken place in the blue velvet lining into which I placed the ring. It was a perfect fit.

"Just right, Mr. Lai," I said. "The ring is yours. There, take it. I can trust you as a man of honour. There won't be any need to get anyone as a witness."

I placed the box in his hand and turned to go. But Master Lai stood up and pointed at me again with his knife. "Tell me how much you want as a reward," he said. "To tell the truth, this ring is nothing much. It's only worth three thousand *yuan*. However, it was a gift for Miss Kao⁸¹ here."

At this he smiled and nodded to the other young woman, who was dressed in red.

"I'm very pleased," he went on, "that you've answered my prayers by bringing it back and I'd like to thank you."

"It's your ring," I replied, "and now I've given it back to you there's an end to the matter. I don't want any reward."

"Hu," said Lai, pointing to his manservant. "Don't let him go. I'll just...." He put down his knife and fork, took a cheque book and fountain pen from his pocket, then made out a cheque just where he stood, bending over to lean on a corner of the table.

When he'd finished writing the cheque, in English, he tore it off and handed it to his servant.

"Give him this," he said. "It's a cheque for one thousand *yuan*. I've put today's date, so he can cash it when the banks open tomorrow."

"Master Lai," I said, "there's no need for that. If I had wanted a thousand *yuan* out of you I could have taken the ring and sold it. I'd have got even more money that way, wouldn't I?"

Lai scratched his head and looked me up and down.

"And yet," he mumbled, "by the looks of you, you can't be too well off."

The young woman in red smiled.

"You ought to know what he means when he says he doesn't want money."

"Ah yes, yes," said Lai, nodding and pointing at me, this time with his finger. "What's your name? Where do you work? Been to college?"

I could feel myself reddening to my very scalp, such was my indignation at this behaviour.

"To tell you the truth," I said with a smile, "my father was a millionaire who went bankrupt a few years ago. Having such a good father I never bothered about my studies and now that I'm poor I'm no good for anything."

When Li and the manservant heard this they just glared at me.

"So you're originally a gentleman too," laughed Lai. "No wonder you aren't bothered about money."

Miss Lai, probably as a result of a bit too much to drink, was leaning on the shoulder of the man who looked like an actor, her face flushed.

"Brother," she said, squinting at him, "don't be so absent-minded. You're just like Daddy. Didn't Hu just say, his name is Zhang and he too is an office boy in the ministry?"

Lai grunted acknowledgement.

"Well then," he said to the manservant, who was still holding the thousand dollar cheque, "you cash the cheque. Those dresses I had made for Miss Kao at Wang Hong Jiangsu Tailor's are all very well made. Seven hundred *yuan* can pay for the time and material. With the remaining three hundred you can tip the tailor's men."

"Yes, sir," said Hu.

"Oh," said Lai, suddenly, "what brings you here, Secretary Li?"

Li took a step forward and bowed.

"You see, Brother," laughed Miss Lai, "you really are muddle-headed. Didn't you tell him to come along to Miss Kao's house to give a singing lesson?"

"Did I?" laughed Lai. "But now we're going dancing at the Peking Hotel, so that's put paid to that idea. I didn't say anything definite, though. Hu, use ten dollars of the money to take them out for a meal."

I left without waiting to hear any more.

Before I had got far from the hotel Mr. Li caught up, calling my name as he came.

81 This is the very common surname which should be spelt Gao in *pinyin*, but I have rendered it in a transcription which fits in with the three letters inscribed on the ring, since I cannot pretend that they were G.L.G. (or G.L.K.).

"What's the matter with you?" he asked when I stopped to see what he wanted. "Couldn't you even have said goodbye to Master Lai before you left?"

"I returned to him something worth three thousand *yuan*," I replied with a wry smile, "yet he didn't even ask me to sit down. If he wasn't pointing at me with his knife, he was pointing at me with his fork. I'm no household slave of his. Why should I tolerate his insulting treatment?"

I had spoken in great agitation but straightaway felt rather sorry for what I had said, since it contained an element of criticism of Li himself. Far from minding that, he kindly hired me a rickshaw and paid my fare home.⁸²

The next morning at work, to his great surprise Mr. Zhang receives a telephone call from the minister's wife. His reward is to be promoted above the secretaries in his department to the rank of personal assistant. Everyone in the office is eager to congratulate him:

Only when I put down the telephone receiver did I realize that everyone was standing in a semicircle behind me. Since I normally maintained a certain aloofness I now couldn't help blushing with shame at the thought of my undignified behaviour when answering Mrs. Lai's phone-call [bowing into the receiver and saying "Yes, Ma'am" to everything she said]. But these people didn't think my attitude wrong in any way at all. They were all grinning broadly at me.

"I didn't know Mrs. Lai knew you, Mr. Zhang," said Mr. Tao.

"Actually, she doesn't," I replied with a smile. "But she says I am to be promoted to personal assistant and she wanted to let me know in advance."

"Congratulations, congratulations!" said Tao right away, giving me two or three slight bows.

Now everyone in the whole Section crowded round me to offer their congratulations.

"My dear Zhang," said Mr. Fan, shaking me by the hand, "didn't I tell you? You were looking so well this New Year, I knew you were going to have some good luck. Wasn't I right?"

I never heard you say anything of the sort, I thought to myself. But I was so happy that I just said, "Yes, so you were. You were right."

"Well then," said Fan, with a smile, "you really must take us out for a meal to celebrate."

"No, no!" cried Mr. Hu before I could answer. "This should be an office function."

"It's on me, I'm buying," [said Mr. Tao]....

With all this flattery I was like a poor man who goes into a mirror shop and forgets his own sorry state when he sees nothing but other miserable wretches all around him....

After work Mr. Tao and the others dragged Li and me straight to the Cantonese restaurant in Dongan Market for a chafing-pot meal.⁸³

In spite of retaining a certain awareness of the quality of such flattery, as shown in his inward thoughts about Secretary Fan, by the time Mr. Zhang gets home from the celebratory feast, his sudden good fortune has totally gone to his head:

It was past eight o'clock and the streetlights were all lit up when I returned home by rickshaw. As soon as I entered the yard, however, a new thought occurred to me. I felt that something had changed. It seemed quite unfitting that a personal assistant in the Bureau of Agriculture and Commerce, who every day would be in close contact with the minister and vice-ministers, should have to come home at night and live alongside a street-peddler and such as Wang, the tailor, and Li, the cobbler. My colleagues would be bound to ridicule me if they knew. I would have to find a new place to stay as soon as possible.

82 Ibid., pp. 60-63.

83 Ibid., pp. 64-65.

From the darkness I heard Wang the tailor call out.

"There you are, Mr. Zhang. Congratulations!"

"So you've heard I've been promoted to personal assistant?" I said in a loud voice. "Let me tell you, where there's a will there's a way. My luck was bound to change sometime. Many people have tried the route to promotion which leads by Mrs. Lai and found it a dead-end. However much money they shelled out all they got was slaps in the face. But look at me. In my case it was like the priest who searches high and low for a sacrificial animal and returns empty-handed to find a fat pig scratching at the very gates of the temple. Oh, dear! What a thing to say! How can Mrs. Lai be compared to a fat pig?"

I was so carried away that I completely forgot myself and although I saw lamps lit in my room I forgot whether or not I had locked the door and just kicked it open.

"The personal assistant is home," I laughed. "Mrs. Lai's personal...."

Still rabbiting on like this, all at once I saw my dead grandfather, my father and Old Mr. Xiao my elementary teacher⁸⁴ all standing there in my room. One held a horse-whip, another a cane and the third a ruler.

"Generation after generation," my grandfather began to shout, "our family name has been untarnished. We were known as an honourable house. Today you have become an apron-string official, relying on the favour of your superior's wife for your position. You should be shamed to death at disgracing your family and proving yourself unworthy of your teacher. Yet here you are boasting loudly of your success. Tell me, how many strokes of the whip do you think you deserve?"

Thrown into a panic, I remembered my strict Confucian upbringing and fell unthinkingly to my knees.

"Beat him to death!" yelled my father, and Mr. Xiao raised the ruler and brought it down on my head, so that I fainted to the ground⁸⁵ in pools of cold sweat.... Ha! ha! Of course, this didn't really happen, gentle reader. Don't worry!

As in "Dream Number 5: Extra! Extra", the plot of this story is cyclical, taking the reader back at the end to the humble Peking "four-square courtyard" where the action had begun. Much has changed in the thirty-six hours of the story, however. The young man who was developed in the main body of the story into someone of personal integrity, even of high ideals, has suddenly succumbed to the government corruption which is the main theme. He who had once merely resented his humble lot, while "despising" sycophantic superiors such as Secretary Fan, is now he who accepts Fan's flattery and despises his poor neighbours.

No such profound critique emerged from "Extra! Extra!". The narrator of that first dream remained aloof from the social and economic moral aberrations he recounted. He was a passive witness, merely "awoken" to certain truths by what he observed. Although he was more personally involved in some of the phenomena related in "Extra! Extra!" than is the case in certain other dreams he remained "comfortingly" unimpeachable himself. This is reminiscent of the posture of the protagonists of Zhang's early novels in the anecdotal satire

84 Here is another autobiographical reference, albeit an obscure one, especially, I assume, to the reader of this story at the time of its first publication. Xiao was the name of Zhang Henshui's elementary teacher in Yao Family Village, Jiangxi, around the year 1907 on whom Yao Tingdong in *The Wild Goose Flies South* is based (see chapter two, pp. 107-115 above), and whom Zhang named as his first good teacher in *Memoirs* (Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), *Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao*, p. 14). Moreover, as to the words with which the narrator is berated below, Zhang Henshui, who never held any government post, not even a junior one, was no doubt genuinely attempting to reflect what his own grandfather might have said in such a situation.

85 Meng (1946), pp. 65-66.

incorporated therein. In the "dream" cum short story just described, no such comforting distance between the protagonist and the target of the satire is maintained. The dreamer of "Twenty Years Ago" is revealed to the reader, by means of dialogue, internal monologue and the internal focalisation which betrays his attitude to the circumstances he narrates, as a person of basic goodness. This goodness is put to a severe trial but comes out with flying colours when the narrator not only resists the temptation to pocket the valuable object he has found but even refuses any reward for its return to its owner, to whose rudeness he reacts with righteous indignation. As is the case in most of Zhang's fiction, the reader is invited to sympathise totally with the protagonist's lofty moral stance and to join him in his condemnation of the immoral and the dishonest. Yet suddenly we are shaken from that by the abrupt total surrender of this high moral ground. Although the author intervenes at the very end of his story to urge us "not to worry" on his behalf, because it was only a dream, he *has* worried us.

Having been brought to a state of total identification with "Mr. Zhang" in the first six sevenths of this dream suddenly we find him capitulating on all fronts: acting obsequiously, accepting flattery from those he formerly despised, boasting of a "success" such as he had gently scorned in his colleague Mr. Li only the evening before and feeling himself too good to consort with his humble neighbours. What's more, his change of heart seems wholly understandable. We have been vividly shown how impoverished he is, but not only that: the suddenness and indirectness of his preferment is such that his acceptance of it does not seem out of character. Perhaps in the night elided from the narrative he may have had the kind of rueful thought the reader seems invited to entertain on his behalf on the subject of the thousand dollars (almost three years' salary) he has turned down. Yet he has won his moral victory by refusing the detestable Master Lai's objectionable reward, so why should he turn down the indirect reward he is now so suddenly and unsolicitedly presented with? He is not, in any case, given any opportunity to do so. Mrs. Lai's phone call is a polite, brief, to the point announcement of a promotion to which she would not imagine Zhang might have any objection. The "flavour of what it was like to be a high official in the old capital" provided earlier in the story, where the mere arrival of the minister somewhere in the ministry complex would instil an air of tension in every department, excuses the state of mild shock into which the narrator is put by "Tigress" Lai's personal telephone call and this in turn excuses his uncharacteristic obsequiousness towards her and his smugness towards his colleagues.

When, just as suddenly as this turnaround, protagonist and reader are violently confronted with the contradiction between our earlier certainty of moral superiority and this total surrender, it is profoundly disturbing. The ghosts of Zhang's grandfather, father and teacher

are the ghosts of the old values Zhang has himself upheld in his novels and which we have sought in his fiction and found comfort in. The chilling appearance of these ghosts is a stern reminder that we have a responsibility to them.

"Dream Number 15: Twenty Years Ago" is the first truly disturbing work of Zhang Henshui's career, shocking the reader out of complacency. Perhaps the nearest thing hitherto was Yang Yanqiu's monologue in Chapters 2 to 4 of Return of the Swallow, which I described as "harrowing reading" in chapter two above. That passage was not truly disturbing, however, for a number of reasons. It was the story of a "dreamlike" character, the basketball princess of Nanking whose fantastic escape from the famine it described and whose knack of bouncing back from any subsequent setback does not invite profound identification with the horrors she suffered. Though the protagonist of "Extra! Extra!" is explicitly a dreamer, he and his dream are uncomfortably realistic. Moreover, the events described in Yanqiu's monologue are comfortingly distant in time and space. Readers of Return of the Swallow are highly unlikely to be residents of a region of China prone to such a natural disaster and even less likely to be of the social class which would suffer most in the event of one. In contrast, though the action of "Extra! Extra!" is set even further away in space and time from its contemporary (Chongqing) readership, the parallels between warlord-era Peking and wartime occupied China are only too plain.

In my discussion of Return of the Swallow in chapter two I applied criteria which Fay Weldon used to assess whether or not Jane Austen was a "great writer" and was forced to conclude that Zhang could at most hope to measure up to Weldon's less stringent criterion that novelists are "meant to civilise, push societies on just a little into self-awareness." In the same television programme, Weldon and others were seen to set much store by the "disturbing" in literature. Weldon sneered that there was "not a single truly disturbing moment in Austen, only really a polite tittering behind ladylike hands" and quoted a letter in which Charlotte Brontë wrote that Austen "ruffles the reader with nothing vehement, disturbs him with nothing profound".⁸⁶ While I am not sure there is not a place for Austen's (and Zhang's) gentle "civilising" and even the "polite tittering behind [or for] ladylike hands",⁸⁷ if it is disturbing you want, you'll find it in Eighty-one Dreams.

86 Weldon, "J'accuse: Jane Austen", Without Walls. Channel Four. U.K. 19 Nov 1991, citing Brontë, letter to George Lewis. See chapter two, pp. 88-89 above.

87 Nor am I, on the basis of the highly equivocal stance in her programme, sure that Weldon rules this out.

If it's disturbing you want, you'll find it in Eighty-one Dreams, but only here and there. Several of the "realistic" dreams, such as "Dream Number 5: Extra! Extra!", are thought-provoking, "civilising", conducive to social "self-awareness". "Dream Number 15: Twenty Years Ago" is, however, perhaps the only truly "disturbing" of the nine. As such it is a fine short story which, I believe, can stand comparison with the best of May Fourth short fiction. More difficult to compare with the new Chinese literary canon, however, is the dream which perhaps alone among the fantastic dreams of this collection may be counted disturbing and which is also a fine piece of fiction.

"Dream Number 72: I am the Monkey King"⁸⁸ begins with a "waking" lead-in, in which the narrator castigates those "ignorant people" who still entertain the fantasy that a mythical hero like Sun Wukong, the monkey king from the allegorical novel The Journey to the West (Monkey [Wu Cheng'en, Xi You Ji, 16th century]), could be the answer to China's contemporary problems and the war in particular. He tells how one day he was lying on his bed reading the newspaper in which there were several news items which displeased him, and which "although not to do with the war, one could also only hope to deal with by turning into the Monkey King"⁸⁹. Just as he was thinking this, he saw a figure resembling the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (*Guanyin*) floating towards him on a cloud. She⁹⁰ tells him not to be so scornful of legends and the next minute he finds himself on a cloud like that ridden by Monkey, which takes him to a barren desert. There he is greeted by the local god, who addresses him by Monkey's honorary title. The dreamer finally convinces himself that he has indeed turned into Monkey by plucking a hair from his body and looking in the mirror he bids it turn into.

The local god tells Monkey the land has been laid so barren by three demon kings, the Gold Demon, the Silver Demon and the Bronze Demon, who owe allegiance to the greatest demon of all, the Immortal-in-touch-with-Heaven. They have feasted on human flesh and bathed in human milk for so long that the lesser demons who serve them now have to travel great distances to bring them fresh food. Monkey resolves to rid the land of this scourge but encounters resistance as stiff as has ever been put up by evil-doers in his illustrious career. The demons fight him off with monstrous dogs and eagles, build magic walls and, "copying

88 Meng (1946), pp. 217-238.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 217.

90 In Chinese popular Buddhism, Avalokitesvara is usually portrayed in female form.

the Japanese pirates"⁹¹, conduct gas warfare against him, using a gas formed of the vapours of gold, silver and bronze which is deadly to all but those who would "rather starve than suffer a wrong"⁹². Eventually, with help from other righteous immortals, Monkey chases the three demons out of their lavish palace, which stinks of decaying human flesh and blood. They disappear, however, into the place where the Immortal-in-touch-with-Heaven reigns, which is shrouded by a vile black fog that not even the King of Heaven, the Jade Emperor, can penetrate. Monkey changes himself into a thousand foot tall, six-armed warrior, mounts a hundred million year old dinosaur, turns handfuls of his hair into an army and dares the great demon to fight. An old woman with a golden death's head comes out astride a giant turtle and with a puff of her breath turns all his hairs back into their original shapes. Then she turns day into night by enveloping all in an infinitely large hand which Monkey eventually escapes from only by turning himself into a microscopic mite. He finally decides that only the Great Buddha himself can possibly deal with this evil and is turning a ten-thousand mile somersault in the direction of the Western Heaven when he hears someone say, "What a terrible nightmare; you've fallen out of bed!"⁹³

This is the only mention of the word "nightmare" in Eighty-one Dreams.⁹⁴ Unlike "Dream Number 15: Twenty Years Ago", there is no exhortation "not to worry" and apart from these two, the only other dream to end nightmarishly is "Dream Number 10: A Flying Visit to the Country of Dog-headed People". "I am the Monkey King" is more disturbing than either of these two. Although on one level it is a fantastical romp with a well-loved legendary figure who plays all his usual tricks, the evils he fights have a truly nightmarish quality and in the end he is defeated by a Supreme Evil. While the three demon kings represent the everyday wickednesses of materialist society, whose insatiable cannibalism is blood-chilling enough, the Immortal-in-touch-with-Heaven is a far more ominous incarnation of the age-old, all-encompassing, eternal curse of gold and the greed it brings out in men. Even the faint hope that Monkey's mission to Tathagata may not be in vain has been negated earlier in the story by the revelation by one of the demon kings that their mistress "now wants go to the Western Heaven to worship, and wants us to build a magical flying ship made [by alchemy] from the fresh blood of 108 000 people."⁹⁵

91 Meng (1946), p. 229.

92 Ibid., p. 227.

93 Ibid., p. 238.

94 Actually *e' meng* is not used in the original, but is clearly implied by *xiong' e de meng* (terrible dream).

95 Ibid., 223.

"I am the Monkey King" is disturbing in a different way to "Twenty Years Ago". It is less didactic, less of an immediate moral lesson, but it is much more profoundly depressing. There again, it is depressing in a different way from An Unofficial History of Peking, A Grand Old Family or Heavy is the Night. With those novels, though we are not uplifted, there is a certain contentment in the sigh we heave as we close them. Righteous heroes (and a heroine in A Grand Old Family) have met with unhappy fates, but those were their fates not ours, unlucky fates we have been made to feel for but with no implication that we must inevitably share them. In "I am the Monkey King", we have instead been shown an unremittingly bleak aspect of human life, the all-pervading and insurmountable corruption of wealth, which is a strong theme in much of Zhang Henshui's fiction, but which has never been so tellingly developed as in this "dream" and, to a slightly lesser extent, in "Twenty Years Ago". For the first time, in these two dreams and occasionally elsewhere in Eighty-one Dreams, for instance in the ending of "A Flying Visit to the Country of Dog-headed People" which contains a shocking tableau suggesting that all wealth is built on the corpses of the poor⁹⁶, Zhang Henshui has moved away from the "comforting" and produced the "disturbing".

Yuan Jin writes, of a passage from "Dream Number 80: Return to Nanking" that "this is an expression of despair, a despairing curse. Precisely because it is despairing, however, we should admire Zhang Henshui all the more for having the sense of mission and the courage to engage in the battle. We should admire him for daring to attack social evils with nothing more than "moral integrity" for his weapon."⁹⁷ When we read "I am the Monkey King", we may see what Yuan means by this. Having blown away his army and the dinosaur on which he rode, the Immortal-in-touch-with-Heaven mockingly asks Monkey:

"What else do you have up your sleeve, little monkey?"

"I have a breath of natural integrity," I replied.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" roared the old demon. "How much of that to the pound?"⁹⁸

So much for the ideology of Eighty-one Dreams. The book is at least as important in terms of its structural features. We have seen in earlier chapters some ways in which Zhang Henshui attempted to "reform" the old-style Chinese novel, while retaining those features of the traditional genre which he felt to be held dearly by the Chinese reading public. These reforms chiefly took the form of the introduction of modern content and the selective assimilation of non-traditional narrative techniques and linguistic features. Zhang's fairly sustained efforts in

96 Ibid., pp. 47-48.

97 Yuan (1988), p. 291.

98 Meng (1946), p. 236.

this direction during the 1930s produced mixed results and I have suggested that The Wild Goose Flies South shows that a less dogmatic approach to the inclusion of modern content combined with modest technical innovation tended to produce the better fiction. During his Chongqing period Zhang Henshui was even more concerned with making the content of his fiction as positive as possible. The focus now, however, was not so much on "catching up with the times" as with meeting the particular demands of the present time of war. His experience with Madness of having a war novel's original purpose totally negated by the pressures of government censorship persuaded him, however, that the conventional novel *per se* was not always adequate for his purposes and he sought a new form in Eighty-one Dreams.

I have discussed individual dreams in the book as I would discuss short stories. Yet I also suggested ways in which there may be some basis for the widespread habit of discussing Eighty-one Dreams as if it were merely a rather odd novel. Unity of authorial voice has been discussed at some length. We have seen that while internal mode varies greatly from dream to dream there are on the whole two groups, the realistic and the fantastical. These groups are linked by the external mode of the dream, and overlap is also provided by the presence in most cases of fantastical elements within realistic dreams and vice versa. Although "I am the Monkey King" is the most purely fantastical of all the dreams, it still contains references to Japanese poison gas, propaganda, skyscrapers with multicoloured carpets (the demons' palace), flush toilets (Monkey threatens to cut off the demons' dogs supply of food forever by converting all humans to use of such!) and parachutes (Monkey wishes he had one at one point). In other fantastical dreams it is often the narrator who provides the link with reality. "I am the Monkey King" is the only one in which he turns into a supernatural being himself. More typically, he remains firmly Mr. Zhang the journalist-literator, taking notes as he visits Heaven in "Dream Number 36: A Visit to Heaven" and "Dream Number 58: Heaven and Earth, Old Times and New", or being assigned secretary to Zhong Kui, the Demon-devouring General in "Dream Number 48".

Common themes also run through the dreams, irrespective of mode. In "A Flying Visit to the Country of Dog-headed People" the same profiteering merchants and corrupt officials as in the most mundane dreams are seen, only with dog's heads. In "A Visit to Heaven" they appear again in a variety of semi-human forms, as do the idle young rich who have been more directly satirised in such dreams as "Twenty Years Ago". The hypocrisy of the "progressive" politicians in "The Honest and True Tendency" links this surreal dream to the more conventionally realistic narratives. The latter are full of such hot air balloons, who also make their appearance in such fantastical dreams as "Zhong Kui", in which the good general leads a

campaign against the "Country of Empty Talk", whose leaders are so busy setting up sub-committee after sub-committee to discuss responses to his ultimata that they never get round to responding at all.

Finally, there is also a certain unity of style running through the whole work. Although there is a general tendency for realistic dreams to employ more modern colloquial style, while there is a lot of *ban wen bu bai* especially in the words of the historical and legendary figures who appear in them, there is again a considerable mixture of styles. "I am the Monkey King" is a good example in this regard in that the narrator, who has "become" a mythical being, continues to think and narrate largely in a modern vernacular while verbally interacting with the other immortals in a more archaic register.

Thus in Eighty-one Dreams we have a short story collection which is greater than the sum of the individual "dreams". Seeking an alternative to the conventional novel, after the failure of Madness, Zhang turned his efforts to reform the old-style novel onto a new path. Since An Unofficial History of Peking, he had abandoned the classic model for satire in Chinese fiction set by The Scholars. During the 1930s he had sought to avoid its pitfalls of loose structure and lack of central interest by learning from May Fourth style fiction. With Eighty-one Dreams he went in the opposite direction. Instead of trying to bind his satire more closely into a continuous narrative he abandoned the continuous narrative altogether, writing a series of stories which could stand independently of one another. Yet he linked his dreams together by a variety of means of which the most important was the Prologue, an unequivocally traditional feature. Evidently he was not simply trying to emulate the success of May Fourth writers with the modern short story. He still considered the new fiction, as he wrote in 1944, "not acceptable to the ordinary people who were used to reading Chinese books and speaking the Chinese tongue".⁹⁹ Eighty-one Dreams represents a return by Zhang Henshui to the classics of Chinese fiction in terms of themes and style. Paradoxically, however, though he pointed out himself that "couching fables in dreams" was an old trick of Chinese writers, in exorcising the Dream Spirit he came closer to removing "dreamlikeness" from his writing than in some of his earlier, more conventionally realistic works. In doing so he also came closer than anywhere else in his fiction to the spirit of May Fourth writing, the "disturbing" for the first time becoming more prominent in places than the "comforting".

⁹⁹ Zhang, "An open letter of thanks", in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 280, quoted at more length in my introduction.

Zhang Henshui wrote in 1949 that "times have changed greatly since then and Eighty-one Dreams is not worth much, but I do believe that the techniques I used in its writing set a unique style".¹⁰⁰ Unique it was, in Zhang's own opus as in modern Chinese literature in general. He was never to write anything like it again.

100 Zhang, Memoirs, in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 74.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Later Novels, 1943-1949

It has been demonstrated in chapter three that Eighty-one Dreams is of great importance in the development of Zhang Henshui's fiction, in that it seems to have acted as the catharsis necessary to resolve the conflict between fantasy and realism which characterised his earlier writing. There is, however, little evidence that the stylistic experimentation which is its most striking feature directly influenced his later writing. An exception is his Water Margin sequel, A New Tale of the Water Margin (Shuihu Xin Zhuan, 1940-43), representing as it does an even more direct return to traditional themes, style and form than Eighty-one Dreams. A New Tale of the Water Margin was partly a product of Zhang's life-long fascination with its inspiration, one of the classics of traditional fiction. In writing it, Zhang was also motivated by the desire to publish work with patriotic themes in "orphan-island" Shanghai.¹ By providing a sequel to the tale of the outlaws of Liangshan, from their capture by government forces at the end of the 70-chapter version of The Water Margin, emphasising the patriotism of the former bandits as they join Song government troops against the Jin invaders², Zhang hoped to encourage anti-Japanese feeling among the Chinese living in Shanghai under the uncertain protection of the International Settlement.³ In spite of the similarities between this "use of the past to satirise the present" (*jie gu feng jin*) and the satire of Eighty-one Dreams, A New Tale of the Water Margin is technically less innovative than Eighty-one Dreams in that Zhang has chosen a ready-made vehicle for satire, that of an existing traditional story, and though creating something new by way of a sequel, adopts the style of the original with only minor adaptations. In Eighty-one Dreams, while the sources to which he turned and the motivation were similar, Zhang had attempted something more literary in searching for an altogether new form in which to combine traditional features with modern ones. It is true that Zhang was a devoted student of The Water Margin and his sequel was no doubt a labour of love. Yuan Jin rates A New Tale of the Water Margin very highly indeed, considering it one of Zhang's most important works of the Sino-Japanese war period and even according it a

1 See Gunn, Unwelcome Muse: the basic background is given on pp. 2-4 of this book.

2 The Water Margin is set during the last years of China's Northern Song dynasty, before the Han Chinese were forced to cede northern China to the Jin tartars from the steppes and plains north of the Great Wall.

3 Zhang, "Author's Preface" (1943), Shuihu Xin Zhuan (1986), p. 1.

place of significance in the development of the Chinese historical novel.⁴

In fact, A New Tale of the Water Margin was perhaps written too early after Eighty-one Dreams to have been influenced by the latter's success. Although the serialisation of A New Tale of the Water Margin was not completed until late 1942, having been interrupted by the fall of Shanghai, the two works were begun within three months of one another, in December 1939 (Dreams) and February 1940 (New Tale). Similarly, Crimson Phoenix Street (Dan Feng Jie), a dreary kind of latterday Water Margin, began serialisation in Shanghai on 1st January 1940, only one month after the first episode of Eighty-one Dreams appeared in Chongqing. Thus in fact these two novels represent not a new phase, but only a (less ambitious) side of the same phase to which Eighty-one Dreams belonged; a phase during which Zhang was returning to his roots in the old novel. In spite of Yuan Jin's praise of A New Tale of the Water Margin, as far as progress in the art of his fiction is concerned, Eighty-one Dreams is this phase's only success.

We do not have to look too far ahead to find a true example of the post-Dreams phase. Only one week after the last episode of Eighty-one Dreams appeared in Xin Min Bao on the 25th April 1941, Zhang began serialisation of Goblin Market (Wangliang Shijie). In spite of the title, Goblin Market is a realistic social novel of wartime Chongqing and not at all a continuation of the dabbling with the supernatural which characterises Eighty-one Dreams. The fact that it also counts among Zhang Henshui's longest novels, his longest work since A Grand Old Family (1927-32) at over 500 000 characters, also shows that Zhang did not immediately seize on the success of the form chosen for Eighty-one Dreams as a springboard to a career as a short-story writer.⁵

In terms of structure, not only did the later novels not follow Dreams, there is also great variety from one to the next, although to a greater or lesser extent three of the four main novels of the period represent a return to the *zhanghui* format Zhang had been gradually abandoning since the early 1930s, in spite of the fact that all of them followed the trend begun around 1940 of having single word or phrase titles for chapters instead of the traditional chapter-title couplets.⁶ Goblin Market (1941-1945) closely resembles the novels of Zhang's

4 Yuan (1988), p. 311.

5 Two of his other important later works are of a similar length: Night Rain in Sichuan (Ba Shan Ye Yu): 565,000 chars. [1946] and The Root of all Evil (Zhi-zui Jin-mi): 474,000 chars. [1949], while the third, Five Things No Self-respecting Official Should Be Without (Wu-zi Deng Ke), 1947) is below Zhang's average length of around 300,000 characters, at about 200,000 characters.

6 Five Things No Self-respecting Official Should Be Without (Wu-zi Deng Ke) originally began serialisation in

early period (ca. 1924-1930). In spite of the absence of couplet headings, it is basically a *zhanghui* novel and the narrative style is traditional, although storyteller stock phrases have been reduced to a minimum. The Root of all Evil (1946-49), which of the four novels is most similar in content and scope to Goblin Market (the two rank among Zhang Henshui's socio-panoramic novels of which An Unofficial History of Peking was the first), is the only one to have escaped almost entirely from the *zhanghui* structure, and has assimilated most from non-traditional fiction in both structure and narrative technique. Both of these novels are largely successful attempts at moderate "reform" of the old-style novel, The Root of all Evil being the more radical and the more successful.

The other two novels of the period are much less successful. Five Things No Self-Respecting Official Should Be Without (Wu-zi Deng Ke, 1947-1957⁷) is a failed attempt to put new wine in an old bottle. Although originally published, like the others, without chapter-title couplets, it is a *zhanghui* novel which appears more tightly structured than the norm only by virtue of its modest length. Thus far it succeeds in emulating Fate in Tears and Laughter, but it is quite grotesquely spoiled by storyteller intrusions of the worst kind and a profusion of peripheral characters cramming into the would-be tight, for these purposes certainly too restrictive structure. The fourth novel, Night Rain in Sichuan, also fails to "catch up with the times" because its style is ultra-traditional. It is essentially a massively over-extended lyrical essay disguised as autobiographical fiction. While its whimsical literatus musings on life in wartime Chongqing proved suitable content for Zhang's highly-regarded series of short personal essays in classical Chinese, Shanchuang Xiaopin (1945),⁸ the author fails to provide a plot which might have allowed them to serve a similar function to that fulfilled by the anecdotal content of An Unofficial History of Peking.

In my opinion The Root of all Evil, Zhang Henshui's last fully realised original work of fiction is not only the finest of these four, it is actually the best novel of his entire career. While it is his furthest departure from the indigenous narrative tradition it also owes much of its success to the judicious retention of traditional features.

1947 but was left unfinished until 1957, when chapter-title couplets were added (see Zhang, "Preface to Wu-zi Deng Ke", in Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 258.)

7 The novel began its first serialisation in August 1947 in the Peking edition of Xin Min Bao, but was not finished until 1957, when it was completed in Harbin's Beifang and then published in book form by Shanghai Culture (see Zhang and Wei, Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 678 and 686).

8 See Huang Jundong, Shuhua Ji, pp. 444-446 and Xiao Qian and Chen Yifei, "Tan Zhang Henshui de Shanchuang Ji [sic]", Wenxue Bao, 25-3-1982, p. 4, for examples of highly favourable assessments of the literary qualities of this book.

Old and New in the Structure and Narrative of Goblin Market

Goblin Market (Wangliang Shijie) was serialised over a period of four and a half years, between 2nd May 1941 and 3rd November 1945 in the same section of the Chongqing *Xin Min Bao* which carried Eighty-one Dreams.⁹ The action takes place over a period of a few months up to just after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941. Set in and around Chongqing, the central group of characters is formed by two families of intellectuals who each occupy one floor of the same house at the start of the novel: a childless middle-aged couple, Dr Ximen De, a psychologist, and Mrs. Ximen (whose personal name we never learn), and three generations of the Ou family.¹⁰ Within the narrative of the novel as a whole, the Ximens' activities play a pivotal role, particularly in respect of the people whom they introduce to various members of the Ou family. The Ou family is at the heart of Goblin Market and is the protagonist of the novel just as the Jin family is the protagonist of A Grand Old Family.¹¹ Other similarities with Zhang's early novel include the wording of the title: "Wangliang Shijie" is reminiscent, via parallelism and assonance, of "Jinfen Shijia".¹²

Ou Zhuangzheng, a retired historian of nationwide repute, is the head of an old-fashioned scholarly family. The eldest son, Yaxiong, is a civil service clerk, married with a young child; the second eldest, Yaying, is a junior paramedic, his medical studies having been cut short by the outbreak of war and the family's removal to the safety of southwest China; the third son, Yajie, is a primary school teacher; and the youngest child, at 18 or 19, and only daughter, Ya'nian, is apparently still at school or college, studying to be a schoolteacher.

9 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, p. 581.

10 References to "the Ou family" or "the Ous" below are generally to the three-generation nuclear family resident in Chongqing at the start of the novel. Ou Zhuangzheng's niece Ou Erjie and her husband fall into a different section of the *dramatis personae* and will only be talked of in the same breath as their more centrally important relatives where this is obviously appropriate.

11 See chapter one, p. 58 above.

12 Wangliang Shijie literally means something like "World of Demons", but as it would be difficult to convey in English the full meaning of the particular types of mischievous sprites denoted by the compound word *wangliang*, I have translated loosely. My title is taken from that of the fairy tale in verse by Christina Georgina Rossetti. Not only does the word "market" convey something of the context of wheeler-dealing contained in the novel, but Zhang Henshui was in the habit of naming his novels by literary allusions and I am grateful to Professor Bonnie McDougall for drawing my attention to a rare opportunity to do likewise. Goblin Market was originally entitled Niu Ma Zou ("Oxen and Horses Abroad"), not assuming its new name (Wangliang Shijie) until 1955. It is not at all clear what this original title was intended to signify, which may explain why the author changed it. Early in the novel, the central characters frequently lament the fact that they, as intellectuals, have to struggle for a living like "*niu ma*", which in this context means something like "beasts of burden". Thereafter, however, for seven hundred pages or more of this nine hundred page novel, there is no reference at all to whatever metaphor was intended by the original title. At the very end the phrase "*niu ma*" is used again in a sense very different to that of the early part of the novel. Here it is the villains of the piece, those who take advantage of wartime circumstances to feather their nests and who further take advantage of their wealth to save their skins irrespective of the national good, who are referred to as "*niu ma*". Presumably the reference here is to demons with the heads of beasts and Zhang, more satisfied with this image than his original one, chose the eventual title of the book as a more resonant evocation of this.

The youngest son, Yajie, is the subject of the first controversy of the novel. Even with three sons working, the family is scarcely able to obtain so much as the cheapest vegetables to go with Yaxiong's civil servant's allowance of subsidised rice, and Yajie decides to give up his position to accept a much more profitable job as a long-distance lorry driver. With supplies to Chongqing at a premium, even in these days before the cutting of the Burma Road, merchants were willing to pay their drivers high wages.

Yajie's "change of profession" (*gai hang*) is contrasted from the start with the ideal of "sticking to one's post" (*jianshou gangwei*).¹³ The dichotomy is a recurrent theme of the novel: the Ou family, and particularly Ou Zhuangzheng, waver between advocating "sticking to one's post" and accepting that their circumstances demand that at least one or two of their number "change profession". Ou Zhuangzheng shows his conservatism in being particularly keen that at least Yaxiong should "stick to his post", since even if his junior government post is rather Gogolian¹⁴; "at least he is an official of some sort" ("*da-xiao shi ge guan*"). In spite of being tempted a few times, Yaxiong doesn't leave his post. Yaying, however, swiftly follows his younger brother's example and becomes a small-time merchant himself. Ximen De, from the very beginning of the novel, is shown to be hypocritical in his attitude to the issue. He makes speeches and writes articles advocating "sticking to one's post", but he himself has given up teaching to devote more time to acting as a broker and middle-man. For the rest of the novel, Ximen and especially his wife become increasingly carried away with ambitious money-making ventures, which bring them into contact with some highly immoral figures in the world of Chongqing business. Meanwhile the Ous are shielded from the worst effects of economic insufficiency by the kindnesses of others (often earned by unselfish kindnesses of their own in the first place) as much as by the efforts of the two 'turncoat' sons. The latter, however, and particularly Yaying, also come into contact with some of the "goblins" of the title, and Yaying becomes almost as intoxicated with greed as the Ximens. Eventually, in the final chapter, he flies off with them to Hong Kong in hopes of making a few fast bucks only two days before the Japanese begin bombing it, at the same time as the attack on Pearl Harbour, and the novel closes with Ou Zhuangzheng and his daughter waiting in vain at the airfield for news of Yaying.

13 This was apparently a slogan employed to discourage intellectuals in particular from seeking private gain instead of enduring wartime hardships and continuing to do what they were trained for, presumably so that the war effort would not be undermined by a high personnel turnover in certain sectors of the economy and infrastructure.

14 I am thinking of N.V. Gogol's portrayal of pitiful minor officials in his St. Petersburg stories, such as "The Nose" and "Nevsky Prospekt" (both 1835) and especially "The Overcoat" (1842).

Goblin Market is a much longer novel than would have been necessary to develop the theme of the tension between "sticking to one's post" and "changing profession". That theme is represented by the Ou family¹⁵, who have both the will to do what's right and the forgivable tendency to bow to necessity by temporarily "changing profession". Ximen De shows a different aspect of the theme as a hypocrite whose practice is very different from what he preaches. In the background, there is a multitude of even more negative examples to back up the central development of the theme. The people who provide these negative examples fall into two categories. On the one hand there are the senior government officials who, at the first opportunity of private gain, display no compunction whatever about abandoning the moral standpoint commensurate with their public position. On the other are the businessmen who in the first place lack any scruples about making money wherever they get the chance, irrespective of whether their speculative profiteering may be against the national interest. In the case of these two groups, the tension between morality and pragmatism is lacking, for all the interest inherent in the tales of their speculation in gold and foreign currency and their illicit hoarding of industrial matériel, medicines and the like. Zhang's zeal in furnishing such a proliferation of these negative examples thus detracts from the main theme and makes the novel far too long and shapeless. In this way Goblin Market is a return to the style of the late Qing satirical novel which Zhang Henshui had begun leaving behind him as he began writing Fate in Tears and Laughter, resembling An Unofficial History of Peking in its wealth of anecdotal satire as much as other features recall A Grand Old Family.

Interlocking central plotlines and profusion of peripheral anecdotes

In Wu Woyao's Strange Things Eyewitnessed over Twenty Years (1909) the linking character, "The Man With Nine Lives" (*Jiu-si-yi-sheng*), who is also the narrator, is more often an observer of the events described than a participator.¹⁶ This technique of using a single linking character to lend cohesion to wide-ranging satire was an advance on the loose structure of Wu Jingzi's The Scholars (ca. 1730). Zhang Henshui further refined the technique by making Yang Xingyuan a true protagonist with a storyline of his own in An Unofficial History of Peking. The author's choice of a whole family as his multiple protagonist in A Grand Old Family was yet another advance in that it removed the need for the introduction of anecdotal

15 As noted above, references to "the Ou family" or "the Ous" are to the nuclear family of eight detailed above. Ou Erjie, who arrives from her Hong Kong home at the start of Chapter 12, is a rich, fashionable, "modern young woman" married to a businessman and is entirely free of the old-fashioned values of her uncle's family.

16 See above, p. 22.

sub-plots, tenuously linked to the central storyline, to provide the traditional "panoramic" breadth the author sought.¹⁷ What Zhang attempts in *Goblin Market* is simultaneously an advance to a more sophisticated, Western-style narrative structure and a return towards the more traditional plurality of plot. This is achieved by the interlocking of a secondary storyline (that of Dr and Mrs Ximen) with the multiple-protagonist (Ou family) central storyline. In the event, these plots turn out to be just that: secondary and central respectively. The intention seems, however, to have been that they should be two parallel, interlocking central storylines.

During the first six chapters, the double-stranded central plot scheme seems set fair to work very well. Even after the Ximens and Ous are forced to seek accommodation under different roofs after their house is destroyed in an air raid in Chapter 5, their paths continue to cross frequently as long as the Ous remain in Chongqing. Close physical proximity allows for effective contrasts between the lifestyles and attitudes of the two families to be made.

In Chapter 4 for example, a party of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides comes to the house where the two families live, offering trinkets, fruit and other odds and ends in return for donations for the troops. Yajie has just left two or three hundred *yuan* with his family, and they are counting on this to see them through the next ten days or so, but Ou Zhuangzheng cannot bring himself to ask for change out of the ten-*yuan* note he pulls from his pocket thinking it was a fiver, nor to accept anything in return. When the scouts go upstairs Ximen De, who is better off than the Ous in the first place and has recently had a windfall of 1600 *yuan*, his first sizeable amount of "expenses" (*paotui fei*) in his new career as financiers' go-between, gives them only one *yuan*, for which he takes an orange. As the children leave, Mrs Ximen comes home laden down with new clothes and expensive groceries.

The contrast between the families is made even starker in the following chapter by the differing effects on each of the shared loss of their house. As Chapter 5, which is entitled "Two sorts of evacuation", closes, the Ximens have gone off to an expensive hotel courtesy of one of their new contacts, whom they have arranged to have dinner with at a posh restaurant once they are settled into their suite. Meanwhile, Yaxiong is huddling in the pouring rain outside the devastated house to stand guard over the belongings the Ous have managed to drag out of the rubble, while the rest of the family struggles through the mud pouring down one of Chongqing's steep streets without so much as a glimmer of light to guide them. When Ou

17 See chapter one, pp. 55-58.

Zhuangzheng hears a fellow refugee exclaim that "The Heavens are as cruel as the enemy, they've turned us poor refugees into fish"¹⁸ he immediately thinks of the "Yellow River" fish specialities Dr Ximen and his wife may well be tucking into at that very moment with their rich new friends.

At the beginning of Chapter 7 the Ous move, however, to a cottage some miles outside of the city, made available to them by the family of a classmate of Ya'nan's. For fully two of the novel's quite lengthy chapters¹⁹ hereafter the narrative is devoted solely to the Ximens and to the rise and fall of Ximen De's influence and prosperity among a circle of shady businessmen. When Ximen De bumps into Ou Yaxiong in the street just after the collapse of all his recently established good relations with rich businessmen, Zhang Henshui resorts to the traditional storyteller device of providing a recap on the recent experiences of the Ou family, in which Yaxiong tells Dr Ximen about the circumstances of their removal to the countryside. Since Ximen was not only fully aware of the facts, but actually saw the family off from the cheap hotel they had been staying in since the air-raid, it is obvious that the recap is not for his benefit but for that of the novel's readers. This would have been particularly necessary in the case of the original serialisation of Goblin Market, because the novel appeared in such short extracts that it would have been perhaps as long as a month or even more since the Ou family had appeared in the pages of *Xin Min Bao*.

For the next twenty or so pages contact between the two families is reestablished, as first Ximen De and then his wife pay visits to the Ous' new home in the hopes of getting an introduction to an old gentleman neighbour of theirs in the village whose sons are influential officials. Then the focus switches back to the Ximens for another fifty pages. This time it is Mrs Ximen who plays the role of a female "Man with Nine Lives". She throws herself into the social whirl of a circle of the womenfolk of profiteering officials and merchants, with the aim of cultivating contacts useful to the get-rich-quick plans her husband and she are making. Although this is the task he has set her, Ximen De is not altogether pleased at the enthusiasm with which she performs it. This is partly due to a hypocritical self-deception that he remains untarnished by his contacts with such people, partly a less discreditable concern at his wife's inability to keep things in proportion. She mistakenly believes herself to be fully accepted by

18 Goblin Market (1987), p. 121.

19 The chapters of Goblin Market, at an average of almost 15 000 characters, are roughly half as long again as a typical chapter in most of Zhang's novels.

her new "friends", unaware of the fact that they despise her for her poverty (and her attendant lack of fashionable clothes) and simultaneously enjoy the kudos their association with the wife of a distinguished academic brings.

It is in this section of the novel that the mass of anecdotes and peripheral negative characters (mostly, though not exclusively associated with the Ximens at least in the first instance) begins to snowball. Mrs Ximen's introduction to Chongqing high society is actually provided by a member of the Ou family, Ou Zhuangzheng's rich niece from Hong Kong, Ou Erjie, whom she meets on her visit to their country lodging. Through Ou Erjie, she gains entry to the select band of courtiers to Second Mistress Wen, the fashionable young wife of a corrupt, womanising senior official. In return, Mrs Ximen is able to introduce into their circle someone more obviously to their taste than she could ever be. This is the amateur actress Huang Qingping, who uses her charms to extract money, clothes, jewellery and other material benefits from a string of unsuspecting men, who include Ou Yaying and Second Mistress Wen's husband. In Zhang Henshui's early novels there are frequent appearances by heartless men who con innocent young women into sexual liaisons and eventually leave them in the lurch (effectively destroying their lives, since in China's patriarchal family-based society they are virtually doomed to enter prostitution by such a course of events). In his wartime and later novels Zhang displays an even stronger fascination with the female variety of this kind of "adventurer", making one such type the protagonist of *The Idol* (*Ouxiang*, 1941-43).²⁰ The activities of the adventuress Huang Qingping develop into the major nexus of dramatic tension in *Goblin Market*. The Ou family is intimately involved in this through Yaying, who is duped into a bogus engagement to Qingping. The Huang Qingping plotline has the potential to become the driving force of *Goblin Market* from a point around half way through the novel when the author's attempts to keep the Ou family storyline and that surrounding the Ximens in parallel are increasingly thwarted by his introduction and elaboration of a profusion of subplots and subsidiary characters. The author fails, however, to grasp this opportunity to impose discipline on his novel, choosing to continue to develop Qingping's story against the complex background of the social set on whom she preys. When he cuts back from time to time to the Ou family out in the country the parallelism is kept up only in as much as the tendency of that storyline to become overburdened with subplots and subsidiary characters of its own causes it increasingly to rival the complexity of the tales of goings on in the city.

20 Yuan (1988), pp. 297 and 303; Dong and Xu (1987), p. 226.

There seems, for instance, no particular need for a lengthy passage to be devoted to the all night gambling bout Mr Wen indulges in as a means of escaping his wife's anger after the discovery of his affair with Qingping. Although this episode adds yet more colour to the picture of decadence in high Chongqing society which the novel paints, it is isolated from and largely irrelevant to the main thrust of the plot. The character of Mr Wen is not deeply developed by it and the effectiveness of his role in the story, as a shady but powerful figure in the background, is perhaps even hampered by it.²¹ Similarly, though the Ou family's encounters with Yang Laoyao highlight certain aspects of the tension between "sticking to one's post" and "changing profession", the subplot adds less to the main story than it takes away in terms of focus.²²

Underdevelopment of female and juvenile characters

Aside from the peripheral characters which attach themselves to the main storylines of Goblin Market in the traditional anecdotal style I have just described, there is another important group of peripheral characters in this novel, namely the female and juvenile members of the Ou family.

Ou Ya'nan, the old couple's only daughter, is in some ways as important to the novel as are her brothers. Unlike them, however, she is not so much a player in the drama of the novel as a one-woman chorus, acting as the author's moralistic mouthpiece. Ya'nan never appears at all in the novel without making a judgemental observation or exhortation, or bringing out the moral of the situation in her thoughts. Because Zhang omits to give her a full role to play in the fiction on which she comments, as he had done with Yang Yanqiu in Return of the Swallow²³, Ya'nan's role as a narrative persona is altogether too obtrusive. She is not accorded any individual characteristics of her own; it is not even made plain whether she is supposed to be still at college or what her role is, if any, in society outside the family. 'Too good to be true', or rather, too seldom anything but good to be true, Ya'nan is therefore

21 Goblin Market (1987), pp. 418-431.

22 The central passage involving Yang Laoyao occurs in Chapter 20. See below for references to other passages in which he features.

23 See chapter two.

ineffective as a mouthpiece for the author's views. Denied realistic portrayal and forced to spout words of wisdom which ring untrue for that reason, Ya'nan is as peripheral a character as her cousin Ou Erjie or any of the other 'negative' characters discussed above.

Yaxiong's wife's peripheral status is signalled in several ways. She doesn't even appear in the first three chapters, where the rest of the family is introduced, and thereafter is almost always referred to as "Eldest Young Mistress" (Da Nainai), and not by her own name. Unlike the senior Mrs Ou, her name is actually revealed, when Yaxiong calls for her on his return home after the air-raid, the family home in ruins and his wife nowhere in sight.²⁴ Her name, Wanzhen, means "beautiful and chaste", but only appears once more in the whole novel, in the mouth of Ou Zhuangzheng.²⁵ Its connotations of passivity and docility are therefore far less significant in terms of her role in the narrative than the fact that she remains literally anonymous for 881 pages out of 883. Wanzhen's child, whose age and sex are not even very obvious, is even more anonymous, and not merely in the literal sense that he can scarcely claim to have a proper name at all. At least his mother is portrayed, through a few short speeches, as a cheerful, witty young woman with a sense of mischief which belies the impression her name might suggest if it were more prominent. The child, on the other hand, is not even unequivocally identified as a boy until Chapter 16, where we find the only piece of description of him in his own right.

[Yaying's] little nephew was standing beside his mother eating a cold boiled sweet potato which he held in his hand.²⁶

The attentive reader will have noticed circumstantial evidence of the child's sex already in Chapter 12, where his mother's use of the third-person pronoun to refer to him is rendered with the masculine form.²⁷ This is inconclusive, because at the time the book was written there was as yet no standardisation of the written forms of *ta* (he/she/it). The revelation on the same page that the child's name seems to be Xiaobao was equally flimsy evidence of the child's sex. Aside from the problem of sexing, the name Xiaobao serves to emphasise the child's anonymity, in a way similar to that in which Lu Xun's use of Ah Q as the name of the eponymous protagonist of his famous story marks him out as a kind of Everyman.²⁸ Xiaobao,

24 *Goblin Market* (1987), p. 111.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 126.

26 *Ibid.*, p.364.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 248.

28 Lu Xun, "Ah Q Zhengzuan" (1921). In the most famous story of modern China's most celebrated author, the eponymous anti-hero, a kind of lowest common denominator of Chinese society, is pointedly given the non-

literally "Little Treasure", is a baby-name (*xiaoming*) almost synonymous with the word baby itself. It may be true that Chinese babies are often similarly anonymous in the first few months of their lives, but the net effect of the author's indifferent efforts to fix Xiaobao's identity even at the basic level of defining name and sex is that for most of the novel he might as well be a doll for all the difference it would make to his profile in the narrative. He remains almost permanently crooked in one of his mother's arms as she goes to and from the market or shares the kitchen work with Old Mrs Ou and fetches her husband's pipe etc., occasionally cheerfully chipping in to the conversation to tease Yaxiong or one of his brothers. Wanzhen has developed an uncanny ability to perform almost any task with only one hand and, apart from the passage quoted above in which even Xiaobao acquires some independence, virtually the only time she is ever portrayed without baby in arms is when she hands him over to her mother-in-law in order to dive unencumbered in amongst the rubble of the family's bombed-out home to single-handedly (alone, that is) begin salvage operations.²⁹ This is Wanzhen's most active involvement in any part of the novel, but although her infrequent appearances are often merely a walk-on, at least she is walking, and even sometimes carrying something (usually a teapot), not merely being carried, like her young son.

Here is the nearest Xiaobao himself comes to making an impact on the narrative. The words I have italicised also show that Zhang Henshui was aware of, perhaps even apologetic at, the role assigned inescapably to Wanzhen (as I will call her, though she is referred to in the original as "Eldest Young Mistress" [Da Nainai]).

Old Mrs Ou, hearing that Dr Ximen was here, came out to welcome him, as did Wanzhen, *baby cradled in one arm, teapot held in the other, as ever*. Dr Ximen rose to meet them, clapping his hands and smiling at the baby.

'Remember me, my little treasure³⁰?' he said. 'Your baby's getting cuter every day', he added as he opened up his briefcase which he had placed on the coffee-table. He took out a little paper bag of sweets and gave it to the child.

'How nice of Dr Ximen to still think of you and bring you sweets,' laughed Wanzhen. 'Say thank you, Xiaobao!'³¹

name Ah Q: Ah is a prefix attached to the name of almost everyone in south China, while Q is the initial of his personal name, the written form of which no-one can remember ever having been specified. He has no surname, although "on one occasion, it seemed as though he might have been surnamed Zhao" (Lu Xun, *Nahan* (1979), pp. 69-70.)

29 *Goblin Market* (1987), p. 111.

30 He says "xiao baobao", not "Xiaobao".

31 *Goblin Market* (1987), p. 248.

We are not told whether or not Xiaobao obliged. Anything more than a gurgle would be surprising to the reader at this stage. Up until now we have had the impression that Xiaobao must be less than a year old, but suddenly we wonder if he is old enough to talk and eat sweets, while still going everywhere on his mother's left elbow. The evidence of the sentence from Chapter 16 quoted above shows that Xiaobao must indeed be at least eighteen months old already, for if by Chapter 16 he can eat sweet potatoes standing up then there's no reason he couldn't have been old enough to talk and eat sweets a few chapters and no more than a few weeks earlier. It remains puzzling, however, that he spends so much time being carried around in the crook of his mother's arm. Though it adds to the child's anonymity, this may be part of a bigger problem in the timespan of the novel's action, arising perhaps out of the discrepancy between the length of time it took to write, while being serialised in short instalments, and the need which arose at least seven months after the novel was begun, to limit the action to a period of no more than three months.

Before looking in more detail at the apparent inconsistency in the timespan of Goblin Market, some more words are necessary on the role of the female and juvenile members of the Ou family. While Ou Ya'nan's function as a narrative persona is a special case, I have made much of the anonymity of Wanzhen and Xiaobao because they make such good examples of the general tendency in many of Zhang's novels for these groups (excepting of course the females who provide the love interest) to be under-written. There is no reason why Zhang should not limit his depiction of characters to those he considered central to his purposes. It is clear, however, given the profusion of walk-on characters in this and many other novels that economy of description was not necessarily at the forefront of Zhang's narrative style.

It should first be noted that the fact, which has been dwelt on above, that such characters as Wanzhen and Xiaobao are frequently referred to only by the titles which indicate their position in the family rather than their names, or by names which are conventional to the point of virtual anonymity, is a reflection of actual practice within Chinese families. To an extent Zhang Henshui's practice in this regard may therefore have been part of his resistance to the Westernisation of fiction by new-style writers which he considered unacceptable to the Chinese readership. In Goblin Market, however, there also seems to be a positive function to his adherence to this practice. Far from it being at odds with his placing the family in the central role of this novel to devote more space to a number of peripheral characters outside the family, such as Mr Wen and Yang Laoyao, than to certain of its members, the stereotypical depiction of the female and juvenile members of the family actually heightens the sense of cohesiveness of the Ou family and its adherence to traditional virtues, aspects which the author evidently hoped to portray in a positive light. While Ou Zhuangzheng, as a traditional

patriarch of old-fashioned integrity is clearly the most positive character of the novel, he is shown to have failed in his role as head of the household in that he cannot control his younger sons, let alone foster their proper establishment in society. This failure is excused by the unfortunate instability of the society in which the family finds itself, but it remains a warning to right-minded traditionalists. The main note of comfort in this respect is deftly and quietly sounded by the presence in the background of a wife, a daughter-in-law and a grandson who perform nothing but their allotted roles as appropriate to their position in the family. While Mrs Ou senior and Xiaobao are the more orthodox examples of this in their almost total anonymity and silence, the character of Wanzhen goes even further towards reinforcing traditional values. Not content to play the "good mother and virtuous wife" (*xian qi liang mu*), not to mention dutiful daughter-in-law, she also stands in for the maidservant the impoverish-ed family lacks and assumes the clownish function of a Hong Niang or a Chunxiang³² by way of jocular interjections and pert teasing of other members of the family.

The timespan of Goblin Market

As stated above, the timespan of Goblin Market is somewhat fluid, and appears to be inconsistent. This was a recurrent feature of Zhang Henshui's fiction, and has been noted with regard to A Grand Old Family and The Wild Goose Flies South. Although a minor flaw, it tends to contribute to a "dreamlike" atmosphere. Only two dates are specified in the whole of Goblin Market: in Chapter 5 the sunlight on the day when the house where the Ous and Ximens live is bombed (only a few days after the novel begins) is described as one of "late autumn"³³ and in Chapter 17 we are finally told that the year is 1941.³⁴ The only other reliably concrete date is marked by the start of the Pacific War, news of which reaches the Ou family a few days before the end of the book. This, 7th December 1941, is the only precise date for any of the events of Goblin Market. Neither are many indications supplied as to the timing of particular parts of the narrative relative to one another, and what we are told does not tally with the two dates we have, apart from the year. After being bombed out of their home the Ous spend at least a few days in a cheap hotel, and have subsequently lived for "less

32 The former is Yingying's maid in Wang Shifu's Yuan dynasty classic play and other versions of The Western Chamber (*Xi Xiang Ji*), while the latter is Du Liniang's maid in Tang Xianzu's Ming dynasty *chuanqi* play, The Peony Pavilion (*Mudan Ting*).

33 Goblin Market (1987), p.109.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 390.

than a fortnight"³⁵ in the country when Yaxiong bumps into Ximen De. This does not tally very well with the time Ximen De has spent engaged in brokering between Lin Muru, Ximen Gong and the rest of the group of 'guerrilla merchants' (youji shangren).³⁶ The account of this period, occupying almost fifty pages, indicates a period nearer to four weeks than two.³⁷ Even if we ignore this inconsistency and accept that at the time of Mrs Ximen's visit to the Ous' country home it hasn't been much more than a month since the air-raid³⁸, in the remaining 600 pages, the number of weeks which go by and things which happen would seem too many to fit in between this point, at least five weeks further on from the "late autumn" day of the air-raid, and 7th December.

It seems as though the timespan may have been condensed to allow the novel to end with the outbreak of the Pacific War, still many months in the future when Zhang wrote that the air-raid in Chapter 5 took place on a day in late autumn. Perhaps some dates and other clues to the timing were taken out or altered for the book edition to make the timespan appear as plausible as it does. One episode, however, proves that some of the inconsistency can only be explained as the result of carelessness. In Chapter 20 Ou Yaxiong chances to re-encounter Yang Laoyao, a coolie he and his father had helped out in Chapter 4 and who had returned the favour a chapter or so later by helping the family with overnight accommodation and salvage operations immediately after the air-raid. With another sixteen chapters and surely at least a week or two still to go before Pearl Harbour, Yang has somehow managed to be reunited with a long-lost rich uncle, pass a ten-day test of his integrity the latter sets him before deciding to make him his heir, and to wait around for "less than two months" for the uncle to die, since which he has divided the estate with the help of a lawyer engaged for the purpose.³⁹ When Yaxiong sees Yang's business card, on which he is designated as assistant-manager, director

35 Ibid., p. 205.

36 This term, descriptive of opportunistic profiteers, is frequently used in the many of Zhang's post-1938 novels which satirise their ilk.

37 *Goblin Market* (1987), pp. 155-201. The clues to the passage of time are as follows (running total in brackets): on page 162 there is a "Next morning" (day 2); p. 166 - "Next day" (3); p. 167 - "not until the following afternoon" (4); p. 168-169 - "from that day on..., every time he made a nice little earner, he'd go home and use it to put his wife in a good mood. With his wife in a better humour, sometimes he could even get away with scolding her a little, which gave him an unsurpassable feeling of well-being" (takes us up to at least day 7); p. 174 - "Five days later" (12); p. 179 - "On the third day" (14); p. 180 "Having put in a few days of effort" (taking us at least up to day 17, which is a Saturday as this quote from p. 185 shows: "'Damn! He knows I'm always at home on a Saturday. Oh well, all right, you'd better show him in'"); "on Monday morning" (19); "the next day" (day 20: the day Ximen De meets Yaxiong in the street, but on that occasion Ximen identifies the day as a Friday (p. 203), which pushes the time of Yaxiong's weekend at home on to around at least day 24 since the family's removal to the countryside).

38 During Mrs. Ximen's visit, Ya'nan thinks to herself that it is strange that "having not seen them for over a month..., first her husband comes and now her" (Ibid., p. 260).

39 *Goblin Market* (1987), pp. 462-463.

and general manager respectively of three companies, he thinks to himself "who'd have thought that Yang Laoyao, who'd been doing coolie work while ill for Headman Zong *a few months ago* would by now have got himself so many titles".⁴⁰ In other words, Yang Laoyao has fitted in at least three months between "late autumn" and mid to late November. The inconsistency here is merely highlighted by several references at the Ous' next meeting with Yang in Chapter 22 to their first meeting "that year" (*dang nian*)⁴¹, as if it had happened as long ago as it was written!⁴²

None of this fully explains the inconsistencies in indications of Ou Xiaobao's age, discussed above. Apart from the "that year" slip in Chapter 22, it does seem clear that the action of the novel was never envisaged as extending longer than one Chongqing season of mist (*wu ji*), i.e. at most six months, so there would be no sense in Xiaobao progressing from babe in arms to walking, talking, fully teathed toddler over the course of the first half of the novel's action. These particular inconsistencies regarding Xiaobao's age and the timescale of Yang Laoyao's rise to riches must therefore be genuine oversights on the author's part, while the broader problem of reconciling the amount of action with the time apparently available may well be the result of an artificial process of condensation carried out with insufficient care in order to finish the action of the novel neatly with the start of the Pacific War putting Hong Kong in danger.

As stated above, Zhang Henshui was attempting in Goblin Market to improve further on the tightening up of the structure of the traditional novel he had achieved with A Grand Old Family in the late 1920s. This attempt, founded on building the novel around the Ou family as protagonist, while using the intimately linked parallel plot of the Ximens, has limited success in enhancing the structure of Goblin Market. Though barely more than half as long as An Unofficial History of Peking or A Grand Old Family, this is one of only two other works of Zhang's career to exceed a length of half a million characters. The author employs considerable skill in interweaving the two storylines, each being enriched and heightened by the introduction and juxtaposition of material from the other, but his indulgence in journalistic elaboration of the shady financial wheeling and dealing in which the Ximens in particular get involved results in an overshadowing of the character-development of the members of the Ou family.

40 Ibid., p. 464, my italics.

41 Ibid., pp. 504-508 *passim*.

42 It will be recalled that the novel was serialised between May 1941 and November 1945.

Although there are major problems with the development, even as minor characters, of the female and juvenile members of the Ou family, those family members whom the author chooses to concentrate on, namely Ou Zhuangzheng and his three sons, are portrayed convincingly and realistically, in so far as one can concentrate on their story at all amidst the distractions of the subplots. This is achieved largely through the use of the received techniques of traditional Chinese fiction, namely through depiction of clothing, words and actions. Modern techniques, such as internal monologue, are used sparingly. The techniques employed are adequate for the depiction of the men of the Ou family, whose actions are quite unexceptional after all. In the novel under discussion, my quarrel is not with the techniques Zhang uses to depict his characters' personalities but the distracting effect on his otherwise largely successful development of the major characters produced by the excessive quantity of superfluous sub-plots and minor characters.

The Root of All Evil

Yuan Jin accuses Zhang Henshui of being unable, in The Root of all Evil, "to overcome the shortcoming of substituting quantitative exposition for 'typification'", by which he means that the novel attempts, in the style of the traditional picaresque novel, to achieve a panoramic exposition of society as a whole, rather than social analysis through close examination of individual social 'types'.⁴³ This view, which I would broadly accept of Goblin Market, ignores the fact that The Root of all Evil is a conspicuous example of the fact that Zhang Henshui's "social novels" are generally only secondarily concerned with society at large. That is to say that their primary focus is on the effects of social forces on individuals. While this is true even of Goblin Market, it is especially unfortunate that Yuan ignores this in the case of The Root of all Evil, in which the author achieves rare success in keeping sight of the individuals he portrays.

Yuan Jin further points out that in the end of The Root of all Evil Zhang has chosen an 'easy way out' by showing how the speculators and profiteers and other villains of the novel get their comeuppance at the end of the war. Apart from the fact that Zhang's is an allowable interpretation of the historical events, it is also the case that retribution against these social

43 Yuan (1988), p. 345.

criminals is not the main issue. Zhang's major concern is rather to highlight the tragic outcome for the Wei family, the individuals collectively at the heart of this novel.

The four parts of The Root of all Evil were serialised in the Shanghai *Xinwen Bao* between September 1946 and November 1948 and first published in book form in March 1949.⁴⁴ The novel's subject matter is firmly rooted in and around wartime Chongqing, the action taking place over a period of about five months between mid March and mid August 1945. The events begin to unfold on a day in late March 1945 when news leaks out that the gold bonds by means of which the KMT government was attempting to raise revenue and stem inflation are about to be revalued at 35,000 *yuan* per ounce as against the previous face value of 20,000 *yuan*. Faced with this once-in-a-lifetime chance to make a fortune literally overnight, most of the characters who have been introduced in the opening chapters amidst a growing atmosphere of 'gold fever' go to extraordinary lengths to scrape together the cash to buy as many bonds as possible. In real life, as in the novel, because of the leakage of the supposedly secret revaluation, which had been intended to curb the rampant speculation encouraged by the bond issue, twice as many bonds as normal were sold on the day before revaluation. Later, following a government enquiry, some banking and government officials who were found to have misused funds to buy bonds on that day were prosecuted and all bonds bought on that day were to be redeemed only after six months and at only sixty percent of the new value.⁴⁵

After the two full chapters (Part 1, Chapters 9 and 10) devoted to the frustration and physical discomfort experienced by two of the characters as they spend a sleepless night and most of the next day queueing at a bank to buy bonds, the greater part of The Root of all Evil is given over to the economic and/or moral decline of almost all the characters in the novel. Most of them have overstretched themselves financially in order to buy bonds. Even those who have a stronger economic base are eventually hard hit when the instant profit they had counted on is wiped out as a result of the enquiry.⁴⁶ It is, however, the losses, not purely economic, suffered by the two central characters, Tian Peizhi (Mrs Wei) and her common-law husband Wei Duanben, that are central to the novel.

44 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 669-670.

45 Yuan (1988), p. 343.

46 See The Root of all Evil, IV, pp. 79-80 for an explanation, in his own words, of the process by which Fan Baohua made a killing on gold only to be ruined by the sixty-percent ruling.

As the novel begins, Tian Peizhi has become a compulsive gambler, seeking escape from the drudgery of her marriage at the stud poker tables which are all the rage in Chongqing. She salves her conscience by telling herself that she merits a little self-indulgence, since as an attractive, well-educated woman of not yet thirty she deserves better than to be the wife of an impoverished minor civil servant and mother of his two children (in fact, she is not even his first wife, but effectively his concubine, or "war wife" [kangzhan furen]). On his part, Wei Duanben feels at least embarrassment, if not shame, that he still has a legal wife back home, and tacitly agrees that Tian Peizhi deserves better. Mention of this legal wife is made only a very few times in the novel, usually during a quarrel between Wei and Tian, when the latter is more likely than not to accuse Wei of tricking her into concubinage. Wei's defence, when it does not take the form of silence, is that although Tian found out about his marriage from friends, she entered into co-habitation with him in full knowledge of the facts. For some reason, he is unable to obtain a divorce. My assumption is that this is because his wife was in his home village at the time he was taking up with Tian in the city and there was no opportunity to communicate with her before Wei and Tian made their escape together to Sichuan at the outbreak of war. He may well, of course, have been secretly happy with such a train of events, as it would prevent him incurring the full opprobrium of his clan.

As a result of his embarrassment, Wei humours Tian in money matters well beyond the limits of his financial circumstances. He takes an indulgent attitude even when she steals money from his wallet. On one occasion the money she takes from him is government funds which he has left at home temporarily en route to do some official purchasing. Wei Duanben possesses the combination of fundamental right-mindedness coupled with moral weakness which is so common in the major male characters of Zhang Henshui's novels. His inability to take a stronger moral line with Tian Peizhi contributes to his decline, since her theft of the ministry's money compels him to start thinking of ways of diverting portions of the money he is entrusted with to cover up for missing sums.

His is not the only money Tian Peizhi purloins. Already in danger of being compromised by her relationship with a fellow-gambler, a shady businessman named Fan Baohua, her theft from him of around two hundred thousand *yuan*, which she uses to repay the money, owed him from the poker table, which she has spent on gold bonds, is the start of her rapid decline into an increasingly sordid round of compromising relationships and gambling or theft-related money dealings with glamorous men of means. By the end of the book, having been forced more than once into hiding from Fan and others of his ilk, ever abetted by the society-hostess

cum bawd Fourth Mistress Zhu, Tian Peizhi has sunk to the status of a high-class whore, at least in Wei's eyes. At any rate, she has joined the ranks of the class of "adventuresses" so common in Zhang's novels of this period.³⁴

Wei Duanben himself, meanwhile, has spent some time in prison, having been made one of the scapegoats of the gold bond scandal for his (minor) part in a conspiracy to misuse government funds to purchase bonds. By the time he gets out of prison, Tian Peizhi has fled Chongqing to escape the pursuit of Fan Baohua and a friend of his whom she has tricked out of two diamond rings and a large sum of money. Wei tracks her down and takes the children, whom she had been neglecting, back to Chongqing. Eventually, rather melodramatically, he ends up scraping a living from touring the towns around Chongqing giving street performances. He has his small children perform witty songs of his own composition on the subjects of official and market corruption and of wives who desert their families to pursue a decadent and immoral materialist lifestyle.³⁵

In the last few pages of the novel, the surrender of the Japanese forces in China, on 14th August 1945, brings about another change in the fortunes of the dramatis personae of The Root of all Evil, particularly those whose livelihood had become reliant on the peculiar economic infrastructure of unoccupied China.³⁶ As Zhang had 'predicted' in such wartime writings as "Dream Number 5: Extra! Extra!" (Eighty-one Dreams),³⁷ the end of the war causes despair among the profiteers whose fortunes were based on speculation in scarce goods. Cut off as it was from almost all supply routes other than airlift over the Himalayan Hump after the Burma Road had been cut in April 1942, the Chongqing economy was highly susceptible to such mercantile opportunism and there were huge profits to be made from hanging onto anything - from a box of lipsticks or a suitcase-full of quinine through to a shipment of scrap metal - until the price was right. When peace came with the prospect of renewed access not only to the resources of the rest of China but also to more reliable, less expensive international trade routes, prices immediately plummeted, even for those commodities which would soon prove of great value in the context of a war-ravaged economy embarking on recovery. Especially with hundreds of thousands of wartime residents of the unoccupied Southwest planning an immediate return downriver to the homes now evacuated

34 See above, p. 167.

35 See The Root of all Evil, IV, pp. 68-69 for the song "Our Good Mother" ("*Hao Mama*") and IV, p. 72 for "Buying Gold" ("*Mai Huangjin*").

36 See The Root of all Evil, IV, pp.131-132 for an explanation, in her own words, of how Fourth Mistress Zhu is ruined by the outbreak of peace.

by the Japanese, a buyers' market with precious few buyers came about overnight. Hundreds of the profiteers who had long been the subject of Zhang Henshui's satire were ruined, having sunk large sums, much of it not backed by capital, into hoards of goods.

Most of the negative characters in The Root of all Evil, including Fan Baohua and Fourth Mistress Zhu, are among those who are ruined by the crash of the wartime black economy. Fan is left with only the clothes he stands in and a house emptied of its contents, down to the last kitchen utensil, by his servant. The latter had actually helped him to escape from his creditors with a little left in cash and bonds, but this was stolen from him once more by Tian Peizhi. Finally, he is saved ignominiously by a hand-out from Yuan San, a woman friend who had walked out on him some time before. Zhu's ruin is so complete that she chooses suicide as the only way out.

Wei Duanben and Tian Peizhi, however, having reached the nadirs of their respective fortunes some weeks previously, are relatively unaffected by this last turn of events. Wei has returned to Chongqing, where he makes a living as a street pedlar along with several friends who have had similar reverses, and now he plans to return downriver with his children. Tian is by now in great demand with a wide circle of men: apparently enough of them have managed to avoid ruination for her to be able to continue with this lifestyle. In his last week in Chongqing, Wei twice happens to see her in the company of smartly-dressed men (once coming out of the "family" section of a public baths, the other time talking to her companion about gambling as they enter a hotel together).

The author's sympathies clearly lie with Wei Duanben because of his albeit imperfect moral rectitude and in spite of his moral weakness - the latter being excused by the difficulties of his circumstances. The author's message is that in the corrupt society of the time Wei is powerless to redress the imbalance which sees him always at a disadvantage.³⁸ In his public life, in spite of his right-mindedness and his education, Wei cannot aspire beyond the humble status of a government clerk. The consequent loss of purchasing power and of self-respect results, in his private life, in Wei feeling himself unworthy of his attractive second wife. There is a hint that his failure to divorce his first wife may also be excusable: this marriage was the result of traditional clan pressure in the first place, quite apart from the practical difficulties involved in obtaining a divorce due to separation by war.

37 See chapter three, pp. 138-142.

38 cf. Ou Zhuangzheng in Goblin Market: see above pp. 171-172.

Wei is portrayed as an honourable man whose transgressions are a result of pressures he cannot be expected to resist. He is dealt with by others not merely unfairly but also dishonourably. Just as his senior-ranking fellow conspirators in fraud at the ministry allow him to be scapegoated, so Tian Peizhi abandons him in spite of having encouraged him to take part in the fraud.

Use of internal monologue in The Root of all Evil

While Tian Peizhi, by contrast, plainly does not receive much sympathy from the author, he is remarkably even-handed in examining the circumstances which bring about her downfall as well as that of her husband. Indeed, while the background to Wei Duanben's shortcomings is revealed by indirect means, his second wife's frequent struggles with her conscience and moments of lucidity about her transgressions are given careful attention via direct revelation of her thoughts and feelings. A passage setting out her feelings one night walking home from a soiree at Fourth Mistress Zhu's may serve as an example:

Walking out of the front gate she could see no-one else afoot on this out-of-town hillside road, lined as much by trees as by houses.... The sky was extremely dark... [and] the stars...were all obscured by fog. From [down here] at the foot of the steep hill one could see the electric lights of Chongqing's busy streets, layer upon layer. As if inlaid in the dark void...[or] hanging amidst Sky and Earth merged into one...., the lights seemed like dazzlingly bright stars.... It was as if one were walking in the sky, able to see only the stars all around.

Tian Peizhi had felt especially warm today and was wearing only her new satin cheongsam. She now felt rather cold, and the chill entered her thoughts. Turning her head she saw that she had already left Fourth Mistress Zhu's residence far beneath her. Although the modern building was in a dip in the hills and lightly covered by the night fog, the light blazing from every window pane clearly revealed its [modern] geometrical outline. She thought of the people inside, who would be dancing or playing stud. To them this cool and refreshing outside world would be unimaginable. They'd call what they were doing fun, but it was simply the darkest decadence, darker even than this foggy Chongqing night, where at least the starlike streetlights provided a little light.³⁹

Although the use of the phrase I have translated as "darkest decadence" (*hun-tian hei-di*) is rather trite, the subtlety of this exposition, albeit spoilt in the very next paragraph,⁴⁰ surpasses anything of the kind in Zhang Henshui's entire opus, contrasting with his more usual, traditional practice of revealing states of mind through actions. Earlier in the book, on another

39 The Root of all Evil, III, p. 51.

40 There is a trite attempt here to perform a classical turn (*zhuan* as in *qi-cheng-zhuan-he*, the archetypal structure of *shi* poetry: "begin-amplify-turn-gather") in the imagery, reinforcing the message by telling it through a different natural image, that of the leaves of trees growing out of the cliff above Tian Peizhi's head being lit by the torchlight and making her think of people in a similar state of darkness, who only need to be shown the light....need I go on? Compare this to a successful example of employment of the "begin-amplify-turn-gather" rules of composition in An Unofficial History of Peking, discussed above (p. 49).

occasion when Tian Peizhi is returning from the Zhu residence but this time early in the morning after a night's gambling in which she has for once won a large sum of money, her thoughts are described through a more direct form of internal monologue, without recourse to natural imagery.

While gaily gambling away the night, Tian Peizhi had not given the slightest thought to her family. Only when she was already in the sedan chair on the way home did she remember that her husband had been summoned before the magistrates, and that her son had fallen ill. But then again she thought in any case her relationship with her husband was already extremely strained, and what's more he had a legal wife at home, so that there was really nothing good at all to hope for in the future. What would it matter even if she did lose a husband such as him. As for the children, they were precisely what was holding her back. If not for the two children she would have left Wei Duanben long ago. The only thing for it was to fight for her own future. If she couldn't forget this wretched family then she'd only be able to watch as she was dragged down willy-nilly into the gloomy future which she faced. Never mind them then, she'd do her own thing, seek her own happiness. Thinking thus, her mind was much freer of trouble.⁴¹

In The Root of all Evil the proportion in which use is made of internal monologue and the more traditional description of the outward manifestations of feelings (*xiao dongzuo*: little actions) is the reverse of Zhang Henshui's accustomed practice. Here he generally limits use of the latter technique to situations in which it is particularly appropriate. A good example is the description of Wei Duanben's 'little actions' during his final, climactic row with Tian Peizhi.

The more she spoke the louder her voice grew, and her face was very flushed. Mr. Wei had a cigarette and matches in his hand, but all he did was hold them, making not the slightest move. Only when his wife [Tian Peizhi] had finished laying down the law did he strike a match and light his cigarette. Sitting on the stool on the other side of the table he smoked calmly. He rested his left arm, slightly bent, on the table-top. All the while he kept swinging his left leg, crossed over the right, up and down. Although he had lit a cigarette, he wasn't actually smoking it at all, just holding it between two fingers of his right hand, constantly flicking ash onto the floor with his index finger. He bowed his head and stared fixedly at his swinging leg, not saying a single word.⁴²

Wei's posture, his silence and the timing and manner of his cigarette being lit and smoked are eloquent commentators on his inner turmoil, which he is powerless to put into words, even in thought. The traditional method of exposition of inner feelings is shown to be very effective here. Compare it to another example of description of 'little actions' which follows shortly afterwards, describing the agitation of Section Head Liu, Wei's immediate boss and fellow-conspirator, who has come to tell him that the game is up.

41 The Root of all Evil, II, p. 122.

42 The Root of all Evil, II, p. 110.

Wei Duanben gave him a cigarette, then passed him a box of matches. [Liu] was holding his hat in his left hand and he took the cigarette with his right, but when Wei passed the matchbox over he put down the contents of both hands. Matchbox in his left hand and matchstick in his right, he struck the match on the side of the box. Only when he brought the match up to his mouth to light the cigarette did he realise he hadn't put the cigarette in his mouth yet. Reaching out for it he found that the cigarette was covered by his hat. He lifted up the hat, meaning to retrieve the cigarette, but then began to fan himself with the hat instead and forgot all about smoking.⁴³

The only thing missing to complete the slapstick is a description of Liu burning his fingers on the forgotten match. The technique is effective in its own way, but it is overused in many of Zhang's novels, with characters implausibly falling repeatedly into such distracted behaviour whenever something is on their minds. It can be tiresome in descriptions of certain situations to which it is not appropriate and Zhang is right to be sparing in its usage in The Root of all Evil, in which he attempts to provide deeper, more serious insight into the minds of his characters. As regards Tian Peizhi, in particular, Zhang's use of internal monologue, by offering glimpses of her inner turmoil, invites far greater involvement in her predicament. Although she is scarcely a positive character, the insight into Tian's thoughts and feelings is a more successful way of revealing the inevitability of her fall, and especially the impossibility of turning back once embarked on her ill-chosen road, than the depiction of "little actions" alone, as he often did in his earlier novels, particularly with female characters.

It should be noted that Zhang Henshui himself wrote, in "An open letter of thanks" (1944)⁴⁴, that his use of "little actions" was derived from Western fiction⁴⁵. This is puzzling, since the technique is surely one that is associated more with traditional Chinese fiction and drama than with European literature. One only has to think of the most famous scene of the Peking opera, The Jade Bracelet (Shi Yu Zhuo), in which the heroine's bashfulness mingled with delight and expectation of romantic fulfillment are conveyed almost entirely through a long series of intricate trivial actions, to find a classic example of this. In The Story of the Stone there are also numerous examples, among the most celebrated of which is the tragic farewell scene between Bao Yu and the dying Qingwen in Chapter 77.⁴⁶

43 The Root of all Evil, II, p. 112.

44 Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 280-281.

45 Zhang had earlier written, in "My Career in Fiction" (1931), that since he only knew a little English and not enough to read English literature in the original most of his knowledge of foreign fiction had come from the translations of Lin Shu, who himself had known no foreign language and had loosely "translated" novels as recounted to him by others into classical Chinese (Zhang Zhanguo and Wei Shouzhong (eds.), Zhang Henshui Yanjiu Ziliao, pp. 274-275).

46 See Hsia (1968), pp. 282-286.

While using the technique of internal monologue, borrowed from Western fiction, to good effect in the development of his novel's characters, Zhang's judicious retention of traditional features of Chinese fiction includes not only sparing and (mostly) appropriate narrative technique. An extremely important traditional feature which sets The Root of all Evil apart from the novels of the new school of Chinese literature is the panoramic, holistic, approach to society so distinctive in such classic novels as The Water Margin and The Scholars.

Whereas Zhang Henshui's adherence to the panoramic style contributed to many of his earlier novels having a "dreamlike" atmosphere to them, populated as they were with strangely idealised and anachronistic characters with which the modern reader is unable to identify,⁴⁷ in The Root of all Evil the judicious use of such non-traditional narrative techniques as internal monologue within a tighter structure makes the characters more immediate and better rounded. This is achieved by virtue of judicious selection of small numbers of characters for development at what I shall call primary, secondary and tertiary development, and by the juxtaposition of contrasting locales. Only two characters in The Root of all Evil, Tian Peizhi and Fan Baohua, are developed at the primary level, and the tension between them is maintained from beginning to end as the major dramatic nexus of the novel. At the secondary level, Tian's husband and neighbours and Fan's business associates, his maid and his former mistress, are developed less in their own right than as mirrors to reflect the development of these two. At this secondary level, we already have representatives of a wide range of social strata, providing the middle-distance of a panorama of Chongqing society. The background is filled in by the characters of the tertiary level of description, who include such caricatures of greedy opportunists as Fourth Mistress Zhu, and by the locales of city and hinterland.

Juxtaposition is the key to the success of the combination of these different elements in bringing out not only the dramatic tension of the central storyline but also the panoramic evocation of society. For instance, while Tian Peizhi, who is after all the protagonist of the novel, is developed at the primary level and given fuller attention than any other character, her husband Wei Duanben remains relatively undeveloped. It is not necessary for his character to be explored in the same depth as that of hers, since his actions and feelings are to a great extent understandable only in the context of her actions and the tensions and contradictions in their relationship, which are dealt with at length. Moreover, his indulgence of her weaknesses,

47 See chapter one above.

his moralising stance towards her, tacit as well as explicit, and his own actions and misadventures are directly and indirectly responsible for many of the twists and turns of her story.

Juxtaposition is also used, and especially effectively, between groups of characters, most notably between Mr and Mrs Tao and their next-door neighbours the Weis. The respective fates of the two couples are virtually mirror images of one another, with Tao Bosheng gambling, purloining money and abandoning home on a risky business venture, while his wife quietly and uncomplainingly struggles on at home until she is forced to go out on the streets as a pedlar to make a living. More immediate juxtapositions are also effected at various points in the narrative, a most striking one being at the division between Chapters 16 and 17 of volume 2: on arriving home after her successful *nuit blanche* at the stud table, her thoughts on the way home being summed up in the sentence "if not for the two children she would have left Wei Duanben long ago",⁴⁸ Tian Peizhi has one of her rare moments of lucidity about the neglect in which her children are existing. No sooner does this occur to her than Mrs Tao from next door comes round asking after her son's health and bringing him some medicine. The performer of this kindly gesture, whose material circumstances are no better than Tian's, sees great piles of banknotes lying on the bed and all the signs of a sleepless night on her neighbour's face.⁴⁹

The function of authorial voice is what determines the development of the range of characters discussed above. Central to the ways in which The Root of all Evil resembles a traditional 'panoramic' social novel is the role of the author as independent yet intrusive observer of the action. Although Zhang Henshui's use of internal monologue shows that he does not limit himself to the role of the traditional storyteller who merely describes a piece of action to his audience, commenting on it in his own voice if at all, he always stands back from his characters again to reassume something very like the vantage point of the traditional storyteller. Even within the internal monologue, it is not always clear whether the thoughts being expressed are those of author or character. Zhang Henshui was evidently not too sure of how to use this 'new-fangled' technique. In the passage following that describing Tian Peizhi's walk home in the night on page 51 of The Root of all Evil, III, quoted above, in describing her thoughts when she notices the torchlight shining on the underside of the leaves of the trees, Zhang is especially intrusive in volunteering the information that she was susceptible to such romantic musings because she had been an exceptionally bright student in

48 See above, p. 181.

49 The Root of all Evil, II, pp. 124-125.

high school literature classes. Not all such intrusions are so disruptive to the narrative. More typically, they simply have the effect of obscuring the fact that this is internal monologue at all. The narrator often begins such a passage with a traditional tag of the sort: "Now, So-and-so was actually a young woman not at all versed in the ways of the world, and so when she saw this she thought to herself....." If it were not for the complexity of the thoughts and feelings described, the tag would persuade one that there was in fact no influence of Western literary technique to be discerned here at all, that these were merely examples of the storyteller intervening with his own interpretation of what the character might be thinking and feeling. It is not just the complexity of the emotions Zhang Henshui articulates in the guise of his characters' thoughts, but also the consistency he imposes on each character's thinking which marks his departure from the traditional storyteller's role. At best, in his earlier, more traditional novels, Zhang is a sympathetic, understanding observer of his characters' actions and feelings. It is only in The Root of all Evil that he advances significantly beyond that to set his characters free, by giving them relatively independent expression, himself retreating towards the less obtrusive position of omniscient but invisible narrator.

Zhang's use of locale is more traditional, but is a further subtly important way in which The Root of all Evil represents a new departure, contributing to both panoramic portrayal of society and to the scheme of individual characters and character groupings.

City and Hinterland in Goblin Market and The Root of all Evil.

In spite of its structural defects and more traditional narrative technique, Goblin Market ranks alongside The Root of all Evil as a panoramic epic of wartime Chongqing unrivalled by the work of more "progressive" novelists. Ba Jin's Cold Nights (Han Ye, 1946) may be a superior psychological novel of the tensions between husband and "war wife" than The Root of all Evil, but its atmosphere is largely confined to its protagonist's cramped lodgings and tortured mind and body. While the greater breadth of Zhang's two novels is responsible for some of their weaknesses, particularly apparent in Goblin Market, it also provides an area of great strength. An extra dimension is added not only to the portrayal of the novels' dramatum personae but also to their ideological frameworks by a full evocation of the physical and cultural backdrop to the action of the fiction.

Both novels take place largely in the city of Chongqing itself, but both also have extended passages set in the countryside round about. Interlinking and overlapping with the various other dialectical tensions is the theme of the contrast between city and hinterland. The former,

with its noise, stench and loose moral atmosphere stands for all that is corrupt and "darkly decadent" (*heian*) in modern society, while the latter usually represents the healthy organic society perceived to be in danger of being forgotten. It is significant that near the beginning of Goblin Market, the Ou family removes to a country cottage, and that apart from Yaxiong, who as a civil servant is forced to spend most of his time in the city, the "untainted" members of the family (Mr and Mrs Ou, Wanzhen and her son and Ya'nan, all of whom "stick to their posts") largely remain there for the rest of the story. Ou Zhuangzheng and his daughter are only occasionally impelled to venture into town on some errand of mercy or other for one of their wayward sons/brothers. These latter, Yaying and Yajie, are the links with the city and the sordid side of society, having given in to the pressure to "change profession". Perhaps it is because that pressure is so strong that the rest of the family has been forced to seek refuge in the more sheltered countryside.

The scheme is not as simple as that, however, for Yajie also provides a link with another type of hinterland. The village where the Ous live is relatively close in to Chongqing, but for Yajie and his band of fellow long-distance lorry drivers it is a kind of staging post to farther-flung places. This group of Johnny-come-latelys, with their suddenly enhanced spending power, indulge in behaviour as decadent, if somewhat more boisterously so, than the sophisticated people of means in the city.⁵⁰ Their itineraries also take them further away from Chongqing, past the playgrounds of these city slickers, who have country retreats in more remote areas of the hinterland. We catch only rare glimpses of these, and even where they are described more fully they have a "dreamlike" quality to them, as in Yaxiong's visit to Plum Farm, where Mistress Wen is entertaining his cousin and Mrs Ximen. This is also where Yaxiong stumbles upon the farm which Yang Laoyao has so improbably inherited.⁵¹

In The Root of all Evil there is not even the relatively "comforting" middle ground of the in-between village which provides a refuge to the Ou family. In both novels, Chongqing's station for out-of-town buses is a frequent scene of confused, frantic action, a node for the movement between the different spatial and cultural spheres. In Goblin Market, there is always a strong sense of the linearity of the bus line itself, a consciousness of the various possible stops along the way,⁵² whereas in The Root of all Evil the bus station almost resembles a space shuttle dock: no one seems quite sure, or perhaps they just don't much care

50 See Goblin Market (1987), pp. 343-361 for the passage dealing with Yajie's colleagues' actress-supporting (*peng xizi*; "supporting" as in "supporting a football team") rivalry with some posher youths.

51 Goblin Market, Chapter 20.

52 See for example *ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

about the destinations of the buses; the station is just the place to go in an emergency to be immediately catapulted off far away from the city. Things are in fact much less vague than I am making out: it is almost always Tian Peizhi who dives for this ejector seat, and she invariably goes to a place called Geleshan which is "sixty or seventy" kilometres from Chongqing. The far greater physical distance from the city is not all that sets this place apart from the village where the Ous settle in the earlier novel. Even if there really is such a place as this Geleshan,⁵³ it was surely chosen for its name, which means "the mountain of song and mirth". What's more, although a fairly precise location is given, at least in terms of distance from Chongqing, Geleshan has a highly "dreamlike" air, being far more remote from the city than the bare statistic of distance would suggest. There are regular buses between the two places, yet Tian Peizhi only has to go there to become miraculously immune to the pursuit of her creditors and victims. It's not that she doesn't fear discovery, and in fact people do find her there, but somehow when they find her it's almost as if nothing had happened back in Chongqing. Unlike the Ous' village, with its concrete surroundings and material, tangible ties to the city, Geleshan represents complete escape to a different, parallel world in which Tian, at times when she is no longer able to show her face in gambling circles in Chongqing, can reenter the fray with as much verve as ever. That is not to say, however, that Geleshan is the paradise its name suggests. It is in the nature of both Tian's parallel environments that sooner or later she will have to leave one to return to the other. When she runs out of money in the country she has to return to the city, where it starts all over again. This is a vicious shuttle from which there is no escape. There is no golden mean of realistic country dwelling for Tian Peizhi, such as there is for the Ou family, no "comforting" "bipolar unity" between city and countryside. The bus line in Goblin Market, with regular stops on the way from city to countryside, represents "ceaseless alternation" on the axis between the poles of city (confusion and corruption) and countryside (stability and purity).⁵⁴ The dreamlike depiction of places in the countryside which are more associated with the negative qualities shows this ceaseless alternation and banishes the simplistic idea that comfort may always be found in the countryside. The fact that comfort may sometimes be found there, however, is equally emphasised by this scheme of complementary bipolarity. In The Root of all Evil a dialectical approach produces a more disturbing world view. Tian Peizhi's bus line seems to have no stops; there are no half-way houses between the poles of city and countryside. Desperately catapulting herself from one to the other, she must (to mix my metaphors) wake from one nightmare only to plunge back into its looking-glass image.

53 I have not been able to trace such a place within hundreds of miles of Chongqing, although there appears to be somewhere of that name in Guangdong (Canton) Province.

54 See Rupprecht (1987), p. 34.

I began my analysis of An Unofficial History of Peking in chapter one by looking at the way in which the "dreamlike" aloofness of Yang Xingyuan's existence within a hostile modern environment worked to provide a "comforting" atmosphere. In The Root of all Evil, the same mood, although also associated with the countryside, gives the novel a "disturbingness" which contributes to its enduring power. The spatial framework of city and countryside is the major traditional feature of Zhang's masterpiece in that it provides it with a panoramic quality. The dreamlike mode is retained not to provide a "comforting" escape, however, an escape which does not cut one off entirely from the evil yet fascinating forces of modern society. Tian Peizhi's escape is desperate and at the same time hopeless: unlike the Ou family's withdrawal to a safe distance, for Tian it is total escape or nothing. Even more disturbing is the fact that this escape is proved to be illusory, the escapee sooner or later being forced or drawn back to the city from which she has escaped. It is thus shown to be a fruitless and negative *escapism* which is really a trap. Both The Root of all Evil and Goblin Market are successful products of the exorcism of Zhang's Dream Spirit, even if this cannot be said of his other post Eighty-one Dreams novels. The Root of all Evil goes one stage further by making a new and radical use of the quality of dreamlikeness Zhang Henshui had so recently shaken off.

Summary

In chapter one of this dissertation I have shown how Zhang Henshui's early fiction was characterised by traditional features of the indigenous Chinese novel in terms of structure, style, language and mode, and how modest modification in all these areas was begun already in his second major novel, A Grand Old Family. In chapter two we saw how in his 1930s phase Zhang continued such gradual reform of the old-style novel, but concentrated on radical modernisation of the content of his fiction, with regard for instance to the portrayal of women. I showed how this new modern content often sat uneasily with an overall atmosphere which tended to remain "dreamlike" and how "retrogressive" novels such as The Wild Goose Flies South could actually be more successful works of fiction. In the detailed analysis of the extraordinary linked-short-story novel Eighty-one Dreams in chapter three I demonstrated ways in which the author's unabashed embracement of an explicit oneiric mode allowed a greater realism, or at least a less "comforting" artistic conception, to be achieved, although this may be seen only patchily in this experimental work. In my final chapter I applied this metaphor of the exorcism of the Dream Spirit to Zhang's later novels to show how two of them, and The Root of all Evil in particular, not only brought the author's achievement in terms of blending traditional and modern features to a new height and banished "dreamlikeness" from its centrally escapist ("comforting") role, but even adapted this mode to present an altogether different and more challenging view of the world in which escapism is shown to be just that. Zhang Henshui may not be Dostoevsky, but The Root of all Evil is a novel with the power to disturb, perhaps even to "change lives".⁵⁵

55 See above, pp. 88-89.

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Zhu Dongrun (see top of p. 196)

GLOSSARY OF CHINESE NAMES AND TERMS

<i>Pinyin</i>	<i>Chinese</i>
Amao	阿毛
Ba Da Hutong	八大胡同
bai mian shu sheng	白面书生
Bai Xiuzhu	白秀珠
báihuà	白话
ban wen bu bai	半文不白
bei ji sheng xi	悲极生喜
bei-huan li-he	悲欢离合
<i>Beifang</i> (Harbin)	北方(哈尔滨)
"Beiping zhi Dong"	"北平之冬"
bi yi tong fei	比翼同飞
biaoti	标题
bu deng Daya zhi Tang	不登大雅之堂
bu jue	不觉
bu mian	不免
Cai (Mr and Mrs)	蔡
caizi	才子
chá [raft]	槎
Changguan Lou	畅观楼
Changnian (Fei)	费昌年
<i>Chen Bao</i>	晨报
Chen Zibu	陈子布
Cheng Lihang	程力行
Cheng Shewo	成舍我
Cheng Yanqiu	程艳秋 (cf. 程砚秋)

Chou-hua Hen-shui Sheng	愁花恨水生
chuan ["unfuri"; summon]	传
chuang ming ji jing	窗明几净
chuanqi	传奇
"Chukou ye reng ke leguan"	"出口业仍可乐观"
Chun Xiang	春香
Chunhua (Yao)	(姚)春华
Chunming (University)	春明(大学)
ci (poetry)	词
"Ci di shi yipian retu"	"此地是一片热土"
Cuiying (Feng)	(冯)翠英
cun-zhong que; que-zhong cun	存中缺; 缺中存
Da Nainai (Ou Wanzhen)	大奶奶
Dabie Mountains	大别山
Dai Zong	戴宗
daibiaozuo	代表作
dandan-de	淡淡的
dandan-de dadao	淡淡地答道
dangnian	当年
dao [quoth]	道
Daozhi (Jin)	(金)道之
Ding Erhe	丁二和
Dongan Market	东安市场
Dr Ximen (Ximen De)	西门博士
Du Liniang	杜丽娘
dui'ou	对偶
duoqing	多情
e'meng	恶梦

Erjie (Ou)	(区) 二姐
Fan (Secretary)	范 科员
Fan Baohua	范宝华
Fan Jiashu	樊家树
fang [to place]	放
Fei Changnian	费昌年
fendou	奋斗
Feng Cuiying	冯翠英
Fengju (Jin)	(金) 凤举
<u>Fengkuang</u> [Madness]	《疯狂》
Fengxi (Shen)	凤喜
Fu	富
Fu Sheng	伏生
fujian	副隗
fukan	副刊
gaihang	改行
"Ganjue ruhe?"	“感觉如何?”
Gao (Kao)	高
Gao Yihong	高一虹
Geleshan	歌尔山
"Goutou Guo zhi yi Pie"	“狗头国之一瞥”
Guan Shoufeng	关寿烽
Guan Xiugu	关秀姑
Guangxin	广信
guanzi	关子
Haihui Temple	海会寺
han [cold; winter]	寒
"Hao Mama"	“好妈妈”

haohan	好汉
"Haowail Haowail"	"号外!号外!"
He Jianchen	何剑尘
He Lina [Helena]	何丽娜
heian	黑安
Helena [He Lina]	(何丽娜)
Hen-shui	恨水
Hong Junsheng	洪俊生
Hong Niang	红娘
Hu (Secretary)	胡科员
Hu (the manservant)	胡听差
Hu Qiuxia	胡秋霞
Huajun	花君
Huang Mengxuan	黄梦轩
Huang Qingping	黄青萍
hui [(old-style) chapter]	回
Hui	慧
hui tou yi kan	回头一看
"Hui-daole Nanjing"	"回到了南京"
hui-guo tou kan-jian	回过头看见
huímù	回目
hún wú nài	浑无奈
hun-tian hei-di	昏天黑地
huqin	胡琴
ji quan sheng tian	鸡犬升天
Jiansheng (Wu)	(伍)健生
jianshou gangwei	坚守岗位
jiaoren [merfolk]	鲛人

jiaren	佳人
Jiashu (Fan)	(樊)家树
Jichun (Zhou)	(周)计春
jiefangqu	解放区
Jin Daozhi	金道之
Jin Fengju	金凤举
Jin Meili	金梅丽
Jin Quan	金铨
Jin Yanxi	金燕西
Jing	静
Jingdezhen	景德镇
jingqin tian shi	精禽填石
jingwei tian hai	精卫填海
jiu-jiu gui yi	九九归一
Jiu-si-yi-sheng	九死一生
ju ke lian	剧可怜
Jufen	菊芬
kangzhan furen	抗战夫人
Kao (Gao)	高
kelian chong	可怜虫
Kong Dao Tong Tian	孔道通天
Kong Dayou	孔大有
Kong Lingyi	孔令仪
ku [bitter]	苦
kuhai wu bian, hui tou shi an	苦海无边, 回头是岸
Lai Dayuan	赖大元
laitouyuan	癞头鼋
laoxiu fenzi	老朽分子

lei zhu yuan	泪珠缘
Leng Qingqiu	冷清秋
Li (Clerk)	李办事
li [Chinese mile]	里
Li Canying	李灿英
Li Dongqing	李冬青
Dongqing (Li)	冬青
Li Jing	李璟
Li Nanquan	李南泉
Li Niang	梨娘
Li Xiaoqiu	李小秋
Li Yu	李煜
Li Yun	梨云
Libailiu Pai	礼拜六派
lienu	烈女
Lin Daiyu	林黛玉
"Lin hua xie liao chun hong"	"林花谢了春红"
Lin Muru	蔺慕如
Lin Shu	林纾
Lingyi (Kong)	(孔)令仪
Lu Qingmei	陆情美
lǔshi	律诗
Ma (Secretary)	马科员
"Mai Huangjin"	"买黄金"
Mao Chulai	冒出来
Mao Sanshen (Feng Cuiying)	毛三婶 (冯翠英)
Mao Sanshu (Hairybairn)	毛三叔
Mao Zedong	毛泽东

Maoyazai [Hairybairn]

毛仔仔

Master Lu

卢生

mei mu chuan qing

眉目传情

Nan (Zhou)

(周)南

Nanjingren Bao

南京人报

Nanwenquan

南温泉

"Ni jue de zen me yang?"

"你觉得怎么样?"

niu ma

牛马

"Nongyong chanpin jichu yuanliao wei fazhan zhongdian"

"农用产品基础原料为发展重点"

Niwa

女娃

Ou Erjie

区二姐

Ou Wanzhen

区婉贞

Ou Yajie

区亚杰

Ou Ya'nan

区亚男

Ou Yaxiong

区亚雄

Ou Yaying

区亚英

Ou Zhuangzheng

区庄正

pao zhuan yin yu

抛砖引玉

paotui fei

跑腿费

Peizhi (Tian)

(田)佩芝

Peizhu (Yuan)

(袁)佩珠

peng xizi

捧戏子

piaoliang laofuzi

漂亮老夫子

pingdengzhuyi

平等主义

Pingliang

平凉

pingmin sixiang

平民思想

Qi da fei ou

齐大非偶

Qi Dao Tong Tian

其道通天

qi-cheng-zhuan-he	起承转合
"Qianji"	"前记"
Qianshan	潜山
qing guanren	清官人
Qinghua (University)	清华
Qingmei (Lu)	(陆)情美
Qingqiu (Leng)	(冷)清秋
qingtan	清谈
qu (zone; area)	区
Qu Yujian	屈玉坚
quweizhuyi	趣味主义
"Ren sheng chang hen shui chang dong"	"人生长恨水长东"
ruogan	若干
Sanhuzhen	三湖镇
"Shang Xia Gu Jin"	"上下古今"
shangganzhuyi	伤感主义
Shangrao	上饶
Shen Fengxi	沈凤喜
"Sheng Cai You Dao"	"生财有道"
sheng-li si-bie	生离死别
shi (poetry)	诗
Shi Kelian	史科莲
Shi Nailao	石耐劳
shi wei zhi ji zhe si	士为知己者死
Shijie Ribao	世界日报
Shijie Wanbao	世界晚报
shiyangu	实验区
Shoufeng (Guan)	(关)寿烽

"Shu Chi Xia de Shengyu"

“鼠齿下的剩余”

Shu Jiucheng

舒九成

Shuangyun

霜筠

shuodao

说道

Shuyun (Zhou)

(周)淑云

Song Jiang

宋江

Song Xincheng

宋信生

sui

岁

Sun Wukong

孙悟空

Tao (Section Head)

陶科长

Tao Bosheng

陶伯笙

Taoranting

陶然亭

ti xiao jie fei

啼笑皆非

Tian Peizhi

田佩芝

Tianqiao

天桥

"Tiantang zhi You"

“天堂之游”

Tong (Secretary)

佟科员

Tongguan

潼关

"Tui-huiqule Nian Nian"

“退回去了廿年”

Wan Jiang Ribao

皖江日报

Wanxiang

晚香

Wanzhen (Ou)

婉贞

Wanzhong Huiguan

皖中会馆

Wei Duanben

魏端本

weile renqing zhai

为了人情债

"Weisheng"

“尾声”

Weiyang (Club)

未央俱乐部

Wen (Mr)

温(五爷)

Wen (Second Mistress)	温二奶奶
wen yi zai Dao	文以载道
wendao	问道
wenmingxi	文明戏
wenyan	文言
"Wo shi Sun Wukong"	"我是孙悟空"
Wu Bibo	吴碧波
wu bing shen yin	无病呻吟
Wu Jiansheng	伍健生
wu mianmu	无面目
wùjì	雾季
Wuxi Laosan	无锡老三
wuyi-zhong zou, bujue ta-shang xiaodao	无意中走, 不觉踏上小道
xi ji er bei	喜极而悲
xi wen le jian	喜闻乐见
xiake	侠客
xian qi liang mu	贤妻良母
Xiao (Old Mr)	萧老先生
xiao baobao	小宝宝
"xiǎo dào"	"小道"
xiao dongzuo	小动作
Xiao Hong	笑红
xiao niao yi ren	小鸟依人
xiao shimin	小市民
xiàodào	笑道
xiaoming	小名
Xiaoqiu (Li)	小秋
Xiaoshuo Yuebao	小说月报

xiezhen	协镇
xiezi	楔子
Xifeng	息烽
Ximen De	西门德
Ximen Gong	西门恭
Xin Min Bao	新民报
Xin Wenxue Shiliao	新文学史料
xin-li huangran da wu	心里恍然大悟
"Xingqiri"	"星期日"
Xingyuan (Yang)	杏园
Xinhua Ribao	新华日报
xiong'e de meng	凶恶的梦
Xiugu (Guan)	秀姑
"Xiyou Xiao Ji"	"西游记"
Xunzi	荀子
ya que wu sheng	鸦雀无声
Ya'nan (Ou)	亚男
Yajie (Ou)	亚杰
Yandi	炎帝
Yang Laoyao	杨老么
Yang Xingyuan	杨杏园
Yang Yanhua	杨艳华
Yang Yanqiu	杨燕秋
Yang Yuerong	杨月容
Yanjing (University)	燕京(大学)
Yanqiu (Yang)	燕秋
Yanxi (Jin)	燕西
Yao Chunhua	姚春华

Yao Family Village

姚家村

Yao Tianzhu (Hairybairn)

姚天柱

Yao Tingdong

姚廷栋

yao zhidao..., qie ting xiahui fenjie.

要知道..., 且听下回分解.

yaren

雅人

Yaxiong (Ou)

亚雄

Yaying (Ou)

亚英

ye bu zhidao nali lai de yizhen bu ping zhi qi

也不知道哪里来的一阵不平

"Yeguang"

“夜光”

之气

yeshi

野史

yi ren de Dao, ji quan sheng tian

一人得道, 鸡犬升天

"Yichang Wei Wan de Xi"

“一场未完的戏”

Yihong (Gao)

(高)一虹

yilao

遗老

Yingying

莺莺

youji shangren

游击商人

yuán [dollar]

元

yuàn [blame; regret]

怨

Yuan Peizhu

袁佩珠

Yuan San

袁三

yuan xian chuan

怨侠传

yuanlai

原来

Yuanyang-Hudie Pai

鸳鸯蝴蝶派

Yun Qian

筠倩

"Zai Zhong Kui Zhang Xia"

“在钟馗帐下”

zhang [new-style chapter]

章

Zhang Henshui

张恨水

Zhang Kaijia

张开甲

Zhang Muye	张牧野
Zhang Wentao	张问陶
Zhang Ximeng	章希孟
Zhang Xinyuan	张心远
Zhang Xuemeng	张学孟
Zhang Yu	张钰
zhanghui [linked-chapter]	章回
zhe yi...bu dajin,...	这一...不打紧,....
Zheng Zhenduo	郑振铎
zhengyigan	正义感
zhi jian	只见
zhiji	知己
zhiyin	知音
"Zhongshi Fenzi"	"忠实分子"
Zhongshi Xincun (Minzhong Dahui)	忠实新村(民众大会)
Zhou Dunyi	周敦颐
Zhou Enlai	周恩来
Zhou Jichun	周计春
Zhou Nan	周南
Zhou Shiliang	周世良
Zhou Shuyun (Zhou Nan)	周淑云
Zhu De	朱德
zhuān (as in "qi-cheng-zhuan-he")	转
Zhuangzi	庄子
"Zhui"	"追"
"Zi Xu"	"自序"
Zong (Headman)	宗保长
"Zui Hou Guantou"	"最后关头"