



CHINESE MODERN

The Heroic and the Quotidian

XIAOBING TANG

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CHINESE MODERN

POST-CONTEMPORARY INTERVENTIONS

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For Fred,

who first explained to me Brecht's insight:

"Woe is the land that needs a hero"

(*Galileo*, Scene 12).

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Since the writing of *Chinese Modern* spanned more than an entire decade of my life, to compose a succinct acknowledgment on the eve of its publication looms as a sobering exercise in remembrance. I have all my friends, teachers, colleagues, students, readers, and editors to thank for being there and for allowing me to pursue the ideas that I present in this book. Fully aware that my memory may falter, I still wish to express my appreciation to the following individuals for encouraging me, commenting on earlier drafts, and/or assisting me in my research. I list their names to reflect the order in which the chapters were written and revised: Jeff Twitcell, Fredric Jameson, Leo Ou-fan Lee, Dawn LaRochelle, Hu Ying, Mary Scoggin, Gan Yang, Howard Goldblatt, Laurels Sessler, Li Tuo, Meng Yue, Ivone Margulies, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Lydia Liu, Judith Zeitlin, Norma Field, Prasenjit Duara, Paize Keulemans, Ted Hutters, Patrick Hanan, Ma Tai-loi, Arif Dirlik, Xudong Zhang, Tang Xiaoyan, Dongming Zhang, Arjun Appadurai, Yingjin Zhang, and Wu Linqing.

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Over the years, audiences at Hong Kong University, the University of Colorado at Boulder, the University of California at Berkeley, Indiana University, and the University of Chicago heard presentations of some of the essays that in different form are presented in this volume. Students in my seminars at the University of Colorado at Boulder and at the University of Chicago read and discussed, always politely, several chapters. I enjoyed all of the queries and comments generated by these memorable occasions, and I hope that the final version will give rise to just as much, if not more, response and interest.

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Yet the one person whose emotional and intellectual investment in the volume is at least as significant as my own is Elizabeth Baker, always my beloved first reader, critic, editor, and cheerleader. I sometimes feel that all the words that I wrote for this book came to life and began to make sense only with the gentle but searching touch that Liza would bestow on each one of them with her exquisite red pen. When my mood became agitated by either “the lyrical age” or “heroic melancholy” that I intimately probed, Liza would often calm me down by making me feel and taste the lasting joy of everyday life.

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Finally, I understand that any remaining errors in the book are entirely

my own and that I am responsible for all my arguments. My ultimate responsibility, however, lies in revealing the contemporary relevance of the Chinese experience in a most remarkable century. This task will demand just as active a part from readers of this book as it has from its author.

A number of chapters of this book have appeared in previous publications, all in an earlier and shorter form.

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INTRODUCTION

This study of modern Chinese literature and culture observes a chronological order in which a series of significant twentieth-century literary and visual texts are studied and interpreted. Varied in both focus and length, the study's ten chapters and two excursions delve into representations of virtually every decade of the past hundred years. Some works discussed here are canonical, but also included are texts that, although not as well-studied, bring into relief a particular issue or moment. One main objective of the book is to demonstrate the pleasure of engaging specific, complex texts along with the need to continually assemble an explanatory historical narrative. Through its exercises in intimate reading, *Chinese Modern* offers interpretations of dense fragments gathered from a yet-to-be-written cultural history of modernity in China.

While the chronological arrangement acknowledges a need to situate individual creative works along a historical continuum, the wide range of topics and materials engaged in this study illustrates, I hope, how rich and multilayered the symbolic domain of modern Chinese literature and culture has been in the twentieth century. The book's underlying concern is to recognize not merely the traces and memories of a profoundly traumatic age, but also the recurring excitements and anxieties that competing visions of the modern continue to generate. These memories and visions are retrieved through a patient inquiry into some of the central themes of modern Chinese literature and culture: formations of subjectivity, the rural/urban symbology, historical consciousness, individual responsibility, and social transformation. The dialectics of the heroic and the quotidian, which I pursue here as an interpretive framework, describe an embedded structure of ambivalence, whereby the maelstrom of modernity is understood both to stir in us passions for a utopian future and to make us long for a fulfilling everyday life that is however constantly postponed. I examine how heroic actions as much as quotidian reassurances amount to a production of meaning that is nonetheless called into question in twentieth-century Chinese history and consciousness; my central argument is that the dialectical movement of the heroic and the quotidian constitutes an inescapable condition of secular modernity.

The book is divided into two parts that reflect a prevailing sense of dis-

continuity or new beginning that the founding of the People's Republic, after decades of war and social turmoil, engendered in midcentury. Up until that rupture, my reading deals exclusively with literary works, all of them seminal texts for twentieth-century Chinese literature and culture. In the first chapter, which explores the ambiguous beginnings of modern Chinese literature, I discuss the invocation of mythical pathos in Wu Jianren's 1906 novel *The Sea of Regret*, arguing that the narrative presents an intricate study of war trauma and human resilience. The discourse of passion that sustains the narrative articulates a cultural politics of virtue, which is nonetheless compounded by libidinal desire and shares the psychic structure of obsessional neurosis. Its indeterminacy between hagiography and pathography makes the novel an apt instance of changing literary conceptions and practices in the century's opening years. The divergence between meaning and experience painstakingly negotiated by the text also makes it a core narrative of modern Chinese literature.

The other four chapters in Part I draw on several analytical approaches—one of them psychoanalysis—to cast a fresh light on important works by the canonical writers Lu Xun, Ding Ling, and Ba Jin. A constant theme is the psychological depth and ambivalence that intensely self-conscious, albeit disparate, experiences of the modern have enabled these writers to reach and represent. The chapters on Ding Ling and Ba Jin can be taken, in turn, as microscopic studies of revolutionary romanticism of the early 1930s in metropolitan Shanghai and a somber poetics of failure in the Chinese interior during World War II. My selection of these texts may appear random, with little relationship of direct influence revealed among them, but each narrative is an overdetermined historical intervention that provides a crucial link in modern Chinese literary and cultural practices. It is not my intention in these pages to construct a systematic literary history, although a sharply focused interpretation of any given literary text—Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman," for instance—invariably involves our conception of the entire tradition of modern Chinese literature. The overwhelming challenge of such an intimate engagement with literary texts, it seems to me, stems from the uneven, multifocal histories that continually surface and demand our imaginative reconfiguration.

Between the book's two main parts, there is a noticeable shift from psychoanalyzing Ba Jin's novel of virtual interior monologue to dismantling a carefully orchestrated theatrical spectacle. This change also foreshadows a broadening scope of investigation. In addition to literary texts,

I introduce cinematic and other visual materials in the book's second part. The ecstatic "lyrical age" in the wake of a time of unbearable despair, as I show in my reading of the 1963 play *The Young Generation*, is nonetheless fraught with anxiety and even terror. It thrives on an aesthetics of exteriority that extends the politics of sublimation, timidly embraced by Ding Ling in her fiction during the early 1930s. The exhilarating new life projected on the socialist stage, upon close examination, appears painfully incoherent and manipulative. In revisiting characters that galvanized the passion of an entire generation of Chinese youth and more, however, I view the play as valuable testimony to the grand project of a Chinese modernity, particularly to its utopian yearnings. Part of what I call "revolutionary mass culture" from the socialist period, *The Young Generation* directly confronts the question of everyday life and advocates self-abnegating heroism as its effective overcoming.

For all of its blatant propagandist style and intent, revolutionary mass culture calls for critical decoding rather than dismissal—as do the fleeting images, logos, and narratives that bombard a consumer society. Both socialist realism and capitalist realism, their best specimens being political propaganda and commercial advertisements, stimulate our dormant or unconscious longings for a transformed, more fulfilling environment. Ultimately, they are two interchangeable forms through which an ideological system may be mounted to help society better absorb the raw impact of secular modernity. Chinese culture and history after midcentury privilege us to witness an extraordinary metamorphosis of mass culture, with its socialist past ingeniously cannibalized by ever more voracious consumerism. To better understand late twentieth-century China, indeed, we must keep in sight the utopia of the lyrical age and all of its discontents. Therefore, my analysis of *The Young Generation* is crucially placed, not least because the play dramatizes a fundamental problem that I explore throughout the book in different contexts. In addition, the play declaratively speaks for a period when literary production was coordinated by the state to hasten the demise of solitary and sentimental readers of novels and when art as an autonomous activity was institutionally realigned to be continuous with life.

On an allegorical level, the second half of the book retraces a gradual journey from the spectacle of collective euphoria to a disconsolate moment of melancholy reflection and nostalgia as the century's end approaches. With the collapse of utopia grimly confirmed in the aftermath

of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), we observe a resurgence of intimate and personal narratives of trauma, one of which I present in great detail through the chapter on “residual modernism.” The revival of a modernist refusal to conform finds its fertile ground in an increasingly disorienting urban landscape. Hence, a subsequent chapter on cinematic representations of Beijing, where two separate visions of the city are brought together to reflect on each other. This tension is further elaborated against a larger historical background in the chapter on the anxiety of everyday life, in which I argue that recent Chinese cultural history vacillates between two logics and two value orientations: a rural but wholesome communal life versus an urban, disconnected, and detail-centered existence. Such a cultural dilemma is not by itself unique, but the imaginative efforts to resolve it often acknowledge a specific historical condition and heritage. In the final chapter, I conclude that a postrevolutionary disavowal of all heroic efforts is at the root of Wang Anyi’s expression of a global melancholy in the mid-1990s; her contemporary tales of sorrow, against a transnational landscape of postmodernity, openly mourn the lost possibility of passionate devotion.

The book’s final two chapters bring us to the contemporary scenario and compel us to rethink the implicit story that we are invited to abstract from the volume as one grand narrative. This move toward historical review is part of what I intend to provoke through this series of intimate readings. Between Wu Jianren’s *Sea of Regret* and Wang Anyi’s *Sadness for the Pacific*, for example, a similar evocation of passion calls forth a felicitous discourse that gauges the emotional and psychic content of modern Chinese literature. It also is uncannily befitting that theater—the most expressive medium of the lyrical age—is now fondly recalled by Wang Anyi’s narrator as her revolutionary father’s youthful fascination and commitment. No doubt it would be difficult to construct a uniform historical narrative from these chapters, but each of them arrests a moment that will have to be reconciled with any future narration of the twentieth century in China.

One explanatory description of the basic structural movement that brings together these texts and ties them to me is the dialectical engagement of the heroic with the quotidian, or a global utopianism with everyday life. While utopian politics often exact a terrible human toll, everyday life is never a complete or completely exhilarating experience; one choice always seems to reveal an unbearable lack in the other. If the revolution-

ary commitment of modern Chinese literature expresses itself in the drive for a grand heroic life, then the frustrated desire to reclaim an everyday life, now either actively disremembered or helplessly out of synch with the times, constitutes its political unconscious. As Zhang Ailing, one of the century's most important writers, remarked in the 1940s when the Sino-Japanese war was dragging on in the Chinese hinterland, there are two types of literature: one extols what is exciting and high-flying in life, the other affirms the stable and harmonious. "Emphasizing the active, exciting parts of human life gives something of a superhuman flavor. Superhumans are born only in certain eras, whereas the stable in human life has an eternal quality. Even though this calm stability is often incomplete and is bound for destruction every now and then, it is still eternal. It exists in all ages. It constitutes the sacredness of humanity, and we can even say it is womanliness itself." What attracted Zhang Ailing as a writer are not heroes with extreme determinations, but "the vast majority of people who bear the burden of our time." "They have no tragic heroism, just desolation. Tragic heroism amounts to a completion, whereas desolation offers a revelation."¹ This private, often internalized, experience of revelatory desolation possesses its own beauty and grandeur, forming an integral part of what Charles Baudelaire in the 1840s anticipated as the "*autrement héroïque*," "the heroism of modern life."²

Yet, according to the dialectics, the stable and constant aspect of life is lived only when its ruination appears inevitable or complete, whereas high-flying aspirations often grow out of impatience with norms or realities. The complete revelation that Zhang Ailing hints at, therefore, arises when we grasp the necessary incompleteness of both the heroic and the quotidian aspirations in life. Indeed, through an acute awareness that her own era was disintegrating, a time when "old things are falling apart while new ones are emerging," Zhang Ailing eloquently defended her work as unmistakably modern and yet nostalgic, and her aesthetic pursuit as one of uneven contrasts. She also succeeded in firmly grasping the rest-

1. Zhang Ailing (Eileen Chang), "Ziji de wenzhang," in her *Liuyan* (Gossip), *Zhang Ailing quanji* (The complete works of Zhang Ailing), vol. 3 (Taipei: Huangguan, 1992), 18–19. For an English translation by Wendy Larson, which I consulted, see Kirk A. Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 436–42.

2. See Baudelaire, "De l'héroïsme de la vie moderne," in his *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 949–52.

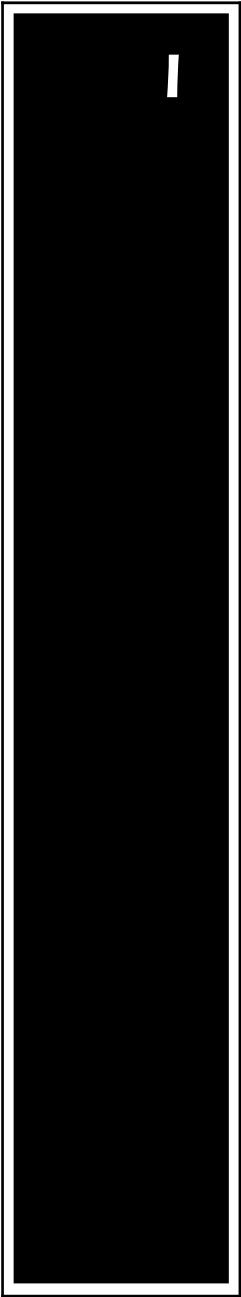
less soul of a literary tradition that she participated in shaping. Hence, the heroic and the quotidian—two complementary visions of reality that constitute the inner dynamics of Chinese literature in the twentieth century. These twin impulses may be a variation on what Jaroslav Průšek once characterized as “the lyrical and the epic” in his pioneering studies of modern Chinese literature,³ although the heroic and the quotidian comprehend more than stylistic qualities or implications. They designate distinct artistic sensibilities and competing fantasies of becoming modern, and, more importantly, they always belie each other.

In addition to my effort to reconstruct the inner logic of these works, a more immediate motivation behind *Chinese Modern* has been to render these modern Chinese texts more accessible and therefore more relevant by means of theoretical discourse. My continual engagement with theoretical writings is certainly not aimed at stripping modern Chinese literature or history of its specificity. On the contrary, my objective is to highlight the extent to which the deeper grains and layers of a text may remain out of focus without the intervention of a theoretical lens. Every reason is present to make our study of modern Chinese literature part of the critical rethinking of modernity that often begins with a theoretical investigation. In employing various interpretive frameworks and vocabularies in my readings, I also hope to define my position as a student of modern Chinese literature who writes in English and for a broad readership. Nonetheless, during my research, as my notes testify, I relied heavily on scholarship published in Chinese over the past decade. It has become increasingly clear that modern Chinese literary studies in the United States will benefit greatly from interacting with its ever more vigorous counterpart in China. Also, wherever possible, I introduce existing English translations of the central texts discussed, hoping to facilitate readers’ access to this body of literature.

A related effort of this volume is to make comparative references to other literary and cultural traditions (from the meaning of sickness in modern Japanese literature to neorealism in Italian cinema, for instance). Comparisons may not always be comprehensive or in-depth, but they begin to suggest, I believe, a historical as well as imaginative affinity among literatures and cultures produced in apparently different places.

3. See Jaroslav Průšek, *The Lyrical and the Epic: Studies of Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Leo Ou-fan Lee (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

They also indicate the multiple sources and influences that combine in the making of modern Chinese literature and culture and in our conceptualizations of the formative process itself. For all of these reasons, I expect this book to speak to an audience beyond those who are strictly students of modern China; they will find here an unprecedented study that engages texts from practically every decade of the past century. After all, this book is as much about what we understand by “the Chinese modern” as it is about how we make sense of the ineluctable condition of modernity.



Trauma and Passion in *The Sea of Regret*:

The Ambiguous Beginnings of Modern Chinese Literature

The momentous emergence of the modern Chinese novel was greatly accelerated in 1902 when Liang Qichao (1871–1929), in political exile in Yokohama, started the literary journal *Xin xiaoshuo* (New fiction) and in its inaugural issue published a manifesto-like article to expound on the vital connection between “new fiction” and social progress and democracy. Hyperbolic rhetoric aside, Liang Qichao in this essay presents a compelling argument that the popular novel should function, and therefore be respected, as the most effective medium for mass education and spiritual cultivation.¹ With its unsurpassed capacity for expressing emotion and depicting reality, the novel is extolled as the highest form of literature. This rather pontifical revaluation, according to the literary historian Chen Pingyuan, ushered in a structural adjustment to the native aesthetic order and helped push novelistic narratives to the center of literary discourse and production during what is commonly referred to as the late Qing period.² The unprecedented social and cultural prominence

1. Liang Qichao, “Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi” (On the relationship between fiction and the governance of the people), in his *Yinbingshi heji-wenji* (Collected writings from the ice-drinker’s studio: collected essays) (Shanghai: China Books, 1936), 10:6–10. For an English translation, see Kirk A. Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 74–81. For a discussion of Liang Qichao’s contribution to the modernization of Chinese fiction, see E. Perry Link Jr., *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 125–33.

2. Chen Pingyuan, *Ersbi shiji Zhongguo xiaoshuo shi: di yi juan 1897–1916* (History of twentieth-century Chinese fiction: volume one, 1897–1916) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1989), 1–22, esp. 15. Also see his *Zhongguo xiaoshuo xushi moshi de zhuanbian* (The transformation of the narrative pattern in Chinese fiction) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 1988), 155–63.

granted to the popular novel, in retrospect, prepared a necessary condition for the beginning of modern Chinese literature at large, even though not all that was initiated would later be recognized as legitimate or relevant.³

In direct response to Liang's tireless trumpeting as both a theorist and an enthusiastic practitioner of the new fiction, the modernization of the Chinese novel forged ahead in the first decade of the twentieth century, often turning fiction into an open forum for either direct social commentary or political fantasy. This generic transformation was further aided by the contemporary influx of modern Western popular fiction (at first, mostly by means of Japanese translations) that demonstrated a new set of techniques, such as the rendering of narrative time, plot arrangements, and perspectival shifts.⁴ Late Qing fiction or *xiaoshuo* (at the time the term also included drama) generated enormous creative energy because this once lowly literary form was now explicitly related to the reality of the modern world as well as its representation. The overwhelming volume of fiction writing from this period attests to a historical need for novelistic narration and, more importantly, for new narratable knowledge. Indeed, the numerous and ephemeral labels that accompany the new fiction point to a continual effort to name and order an estranged world and its hidden logic. The first five issues of Liang Qichao's *New Fiction*, for instance, introduced a dozen different types of *xiaoshuo* defined in terms of their subject matter, ranging unevenly from historical, scientific, and diplomatic to adventurous and detective.⁵ If a general intersection of what David Der-wei Wang calls "confused horizons" took place in the late Qing conception of the novel, the seemingly unstoppable fictional output also signaled the active engineering of an epistemic restructuring, on the one hand, and a multifarious, often conflictual reality that the new fiction would have to encounter and represent, on the other. The

3. For a detailed study of this topic, see David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849–1911* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).

4. See Chen, *The Transformation of the Narrative Pattern in Chinese Fiction*, 37–141.

5. For an informative discussion of the various types of fiction that were labeled during this period, see Chen Pingyuan, *Xiaoshuo shi: lilun yu shijian* (History of the novel: theory and practice) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1993), 186–99. The Fiction Grove Society listed, for example, twelve different kinds of fiction that it had published by 1905.

ideal reader, consequently, was bluntly instructed to acquire encyclopedic knowledge and to respect the pedagogical seriousness of the new novel.⁶

However, the predominantly rationalist approach to fiction writing, which fueled Liang Qichao's "revolution in the realm of the novel,"⁷ soon led to an awkward situation. The new fiction writers were so absorbed in popularizing new ideas and concepts that novels seemed more and more like political or philosophical treatises. Even more problematically, such compositions were often left unfinished either because no viable plot was present to continue or because a central argument had been made.⁸ Also, from the start, the new fiction carried strong elitist and moralizing overtones insofar as its readership was largely imagined to be a nation of new citizens. While didacticism helped elevate the literary status of the novel, inattention to entertainment value rendered the once popular form of vernacular fiction increasingly abstruse and unpalatable to actual readers.⁹ Already there appeared an ideological strife between a serious proto-literature of engagement and a literature for popular entertainment. This divide was to yield greater and longer lasting shock waves during the May Fourth period, when a thriving consumerist urban culture became one of the declared adversaries of the modernist New Literature movement. In historical hindsight, the intense enthusiasm for a new fiction at the turn of the century may illustrate how modernity was largely anticipated to be a mobilizing and morally uplifting mode of collective existence. The apo-

6. See "Du xin Xiaoshuo fa" (The method of reading new fiction), *Xinshijie xiaoshuo she bao* (Journal of the new world fiction society), nos. 6 and 7 (1907); collected in Jian Yizhi et al., eds., *Zhongguo jindai wenlun xuan* (Selections from early modern Chinese literary criticism) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1962), 272–79.

7. This does not contradict the fact that in Liang Qichao's theorization of the effectiveness of fictional writing, emphasis also falls on the emotional impact of the novel, although it is an efficacy ultimately serving the purpose of social administration and democracy. For a helpful discussion of Liang Qichao's theory of the novel in terms of its intellectual sources, see C. T. Hsia, "Yen Fu and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao as Advocates of New Fiction," in *Chinese Approaches to Literature from Confucius to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, ed. Adele Austin Richett (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 221–57.

8. This tendency was already indicated by Liang Qichao's own 1902 political novel *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* (The future of new China). See my discussion of the novel in *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 117–37.

9. See Chen Pingyuan's documentation and analysis of the tension between elitist and popular fiction in his *History of Twentieth-Century Chinese Fiction*, 101–22.

ria in the new fiction discourse reveals that its passionate endorsement of a political modernity served to reduce, rather than reaffirm, the secular and fragmentary experience that called for novelistic representation in the first place.

For Wu Jianren (1866–1910), a prominent late Qing novelist, one mortal weakness of the rationalistic new fiction was precisely its departure from being novels. Specifically, Wu Jianren deplored the new fiction’s inability to appeal to readers both intellectually and emotionally. In his preface to the first issue of *Yueyue xiaoshuo* (The all-story monthly), he critically assessed the achievements of the new fiction since Liang Qichao’s revolutionary 1902 essay on the symbiotic relationship between the novel and social governance. Denouncing a facile conformity among fiction writers, Wu Jianren vented his frustration with reading an ineffective novel. “Of today’s hundreds of thousands of new works and new translations that are called fiction, I dare not say that there are not any that reflect a concern with social governance; yet I have seen more than enough bizarre and fragmentary works, strenuous and unreadable translations. With publications like these, I do not know what others may think after reading them; as for myself, they all fail to move me emotionally.”¹⁰ Wu Jianren made these disparaging remarks in September 1906, when he and the translator Zhou Guisheng were invited to coedit the newly established literary journal *The All-Story Monthly*. By then, he had already published several novels in Liang Qichao’s *New Fiction*, including parts of his widely acclaimed *Ershi nian mudu zhi guai xianzhuang* (Strange things witnessed in the past twenty years). His affiliation with Liang’s journal, however, did not entirely define his profile as a popular novelist. On the contrary, although some of his own works may also seem “bizarre and fragmentary,” Wu Jianren was never comfortable with a narrow understanding of new fiction as the forum for promoting modern cultural values and practices. He may be best remembered for his contribution to what Lu Xun once famously characterized as the “fiction of exposure” of the late Qing period, but the social criticism embedded in his exposé-style fiction did not always lend itself neatly to an agenda of program-

10. Wu Jianren, “Yueyue xiaoshuo xu” (Preface to *The All-Story Monthly*), *Yueyue xiaoshuo* (The all-story monthly), no. 1 (1906). Collected in Wei Shaochang, ed., *Wu Jianren yanjiu ziliao* (Research materials on Wu Jianren) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1980), 320.

matic political reform.¹¹ Nonetheless, Wu Jianren never disavowed the grave social and moral responsibility on the part of a novelist. He firmly believed that all novels, be they historical or romantic, should serve a pedagogical purpose and lead their readers onto the proper “boundary of morality.” For him, the value of a novel does not derive from its advocating the new over the old, but rather from its telling the good from the evil. “At such a moment of moral disintegration, we all hope to find a way to stop the general decline. We should then begin with nothing short of the novel.”¹²

As if to demonstrate his conviction of the novel as a means of moral edification, Wu Jianren published in October 1906, independently of *The All-Story Monthly* that had come out a month before, a short novel titled *Henhai* (The sea of regret). A carefully constructed romantic tragedy that illustrates the novelist’s understanding of the social content of human emotion and sentiment, the novel was an instant success. As A Ying documents in his pioneering study of late Qing fiction, its enormous popularity helped initiate and establish the subgenre of unfulfilled romance in modern Chinese fiction.¹³ The basic story line of *The Sea of Regret* itself was repeatedly adapted and rewritten for the greater part of the twentieth century, on stage and eventually in cinema.¹⁴ The sad tale of injured lives that unfolds in the novel conveys Wu Jianren’s belief in the healing power of votive attachment, but it also voices a deep-seated anguish over the disintegration of the social and cultural fabric of life, now threatened from both within and without. It is a seminal narrative because it goes to great lengths to explore the internal journal of a displaced individual, and in the process it represents the psychological consequences of a traumatic encounter with the modern world.

11. See Lu Xun’s discussion of Wu Jianren (Woyao), *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe* (A brief history of Chinese fiction) (Beijing: Beixin shuju, 1937), 334–39. For an English translation, see Lu Hsün, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1959), 377–81.

12. See Wu Jianren’s “Preface to *The All-Story Monthly*,” 321.

13. See A Ying, *Wan Qing xiaoshuo shi* (History of late Qing fiction) (Beijing: Dongfang, 1996), 202–06.

14. According to Wei, *Research Materials on Wu Jianren* (137–39), the plot of *The Sea of Regret* was remade for a theater production in 1914, then adapted into a silent movie in 1931, and again for the theater in 1947, the 1950s, and 1963.

The Writing of Passion

Contrary to the more confident, even militant, ethos of the reform-minded new fiction, Wu Jianren's first romance centers on the mental and emotional impacts of violent dislodging, depicting a subjectivity formed in fear. By means of exhorting devout passion as a stabilizing method in the face of a familiar world being shattered, *The Sea of Regret*, among other things, reclaims the writing of mythical pathos from the native literary tradition and turns it into a fundamental and yet equivocal theme for modern fictional discourse.

The immediate motivation for Wu Jianren to write *The Sea of Regret*, as Patrick Hanan suggests, was to counterbalance two contemporary texts of considerable impact.¹⁵ The first was *Joan Haste*, a sentimental romance by the then-popular English novelist H. Rider Haggard. In 1901, an abbreviated rendition of the novel, in semiclassical Chinese, was serialized in a translation journal from Suzhou and attracted much attention, especially among educated male readers, who found in Joan an ideal combination of bold love and self-sacrifice. For a while, Joan, together with Marguerite of *La dame aux camélias* (by Alexandre Dumas fils, translated into Chinese in 1899), deeply enchanted a male romantic, if curiosity-driven, imagination and was idolized as the perfect embodiment of an affectionate, maternal, and universal femininity.¹⁶ In the reformist elite culture at the time, the quiet infatuation with the sensual and emotional lives of these two fictional characters seemed to share the same intensity as the public and much-pronounced admiration for other heroic women figures, most notably Madame Roland of the French Revolution and Sofiya Perovskaya, the Russian anarchist.¹⁷

15. See Patrick Hanan, "Introduction," *The Sea of Regret: Two Turn-of-the-Century Chinese Romantic Novels*, trans. Patrick Hanan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 1–17.

16. For a discussion of Lin Shu's translation of *La dame aux camélias* and the masculine projection of a loving woman, see Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 71–75, 121–28.

17. Liang Qichao wrote a moving biography of Madame Roland for his *Xinmin congbao* (New citizen journal) in October 1902, while the first influential biography of Perovskaya, by a Chinese student studying in Japan, appeared under the pen name Ren Ke in *Zhejiang chao* (The tide of the Zhe river) in September 1903.

In 1905, however, Lin Shu, the prolific translator of *La dame aux camélias* fame, outraged the reading public by putting out a full translation of *Joan Haste*, only the second half of which had been grudgingly divulged in the first rendition.¹⁸ This new and complete translation caused a righteous uproar because it revealed that Joan, whom one commentator had adored as a “celestial fairy in the realm of passion,” apparently had sexual intercourse with her lover, was impregnated sans marriage, and disgraced herself further by miscarrying. All these bodily details had been judiciously edited out by the two initial translators. Yet the outcry of disillusionment at the scandalous revelation had less to do with Joan’s descending to the reality of human weaknesses and suffering than with the realization that she behaved improperly. The same commentator who worshipped the first immaculate Joan was compelled to bitterly denounce the new Joan as slutty, indecent, shameless, and selfish—in short, “a fraud in the realm of passion.” The difference between these two incarnations, according to him, was that one Joan has pure passion (*qing*) but no lust (*yu*), and the other has mere lust in the guise of passion. After banishing the lustful Joan for good, the critic turned to inveigh against the meddling Lin Shu, accusing him of posing as a novelist and of churning out licentious translations that “bear the least benefit to society.”¹⁹

Another critic, writing in the journal *New Fiction*, which by now had been relocated to an increasingly metropolitan Shanghai, seized the occasion to expound on the relationship between romantic fiction and the new society. Acknowledging the formative influence of fiction, Jin Songcen postulated that the various genres in new fiction, best represented by translations such as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Heinu

18. A common misunderstanding is that the 1901 translation by Yang Zilin and Bao Tianxiao contains the first half of the original. The fact is that they started paraphrasing the text halfway through the novel, omitting unsavory details as they went along. See Wang Xuejun, “Ye tan *Jia’in xiaozhuan* liangzhong yiben: dui xinban *Lu Xun quanji* yitiao zhushi de buchong dingzheng” (Also on the two translations of *Joan Haste*: amendments to a note in the new edition of *The Complete Works of Lu Xun*), in *Lu Xun yanjiu dongtai* (Trends in Lu Xun studies), no. 4 (Beijing: 1988): 62–64. In addition, see Chen Xizhong, “Guanyu *Jia’in xiaozhuan* de liangzhong yiben” (On the two translations of *Joan Haste*), in *Wenxian* (Textual documents), no. 20 (Beijing, 1985): 255–58.

19. Yin Bansheng, “Du *Jia’in xiaozhuan* liang yiben shu hou” (After reading the two translations of *Joan Haste*), *Youxi shijie* (Playful world), no. 3 (1907); collected in Jian Yizhi et al., eds., *Selections From Early Modern Chinese Literary Criticism*, 526–28.

yutian lu) and Jules Verne's *Deux ans de vacances* (Shiwu xiao haojie) and *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* (Bashi ri huanyou ji), would have a positive impact on society because they erected new role models. "Therefore I am pleased to read today's new fiction, but I am terrified to read today's romantic fiction." The popular romances that caused his grave concern were none other than *La dame aux camélias* and *Joan Haste*, reckless foreign novels that, in his view, would only mislead the young and impressionable. The customs and mores suggested by these tales, he warned, would aid and abet rampant Europeanization and result in people abandoning their jobs and studies to frequent dance halls. In the end, the fearful society that became imaginable in light of romantic fiction meant not only the loss of a valuable national heritage, but, more disturbingly, a veritable disarray in social order and boundaries.²⁰

Also in this essay, Jin Songcen found it necessary to generalize about romantic passion (*qing*) as part of human nature and a universal principle. The prevalence of *qing* explains why the expression of love and sentiment always occupies a key position in literature, be it Western or Eastern. "Given the difference and lack of communication between these two societies, it is the literary people's unavoidable duty to take advantage of the power of fiction to bring them together, employing passion as the common source." Since some novelists had failed to fulfill their obligation, and, worse, because romantic fiction now threatened the future of the country, the critic saw no option but to deny and demonize passion altogether. Evoking a central myth of Chinese culture, Jin Songcen argued that he would sooner see the heaven of passion remain broken, and any passionate awakenings be smothered with the help of Nüwa's stone, than witness what was bound to degenerate into unbridled carnality.

A fantastic figure in creation mythology, the goddess Nüwa is believed first to have given life to men and women in the world. Then, in the wake of a fierce agon between the gods of water and fire, which caused the vault of heaven to collapse, she, as a caring mother, mended the broken sky with colorful stones that she painstakingly melted and fused.²¹ In the

20. Jin Songcen (Jin Tianyu), "Lun xieqing xiaoshuo yu xin shehui zhi guanxi" (On the relationship between romantic fiction and new society), in *New Fiction*, no. 17 (1905); collected in Jian Yizhi et al., eds., *Selections From Early Modern Chinese Literary Criticism*, 522–25.

21. For a modern narration of Nüwa's great deeds and identification of textual

folkloric tradition, Nüwa is usually associated with the themes of mothering, fertility, and healing,²² but also with the spirit of dedication, even romantic devotion, in a despairing situation. Since the late imperial age, Nüwa has functioned persistently as a symbol of extraordinary dedication and endeavor, in no small part because of the wide-reaching impact of *Shitou ji* (The story of the stone; also known as *Honglou meng* [Dream of the red chamber]), particularly when Nüwa was paired with another mythical feminine spirit, the bird Jingwei.²³ Drowned in the eastern sea, the young daughter of the god of fire came back to life as a bird named Jingwei and was determined to fill up the sea with stones and twigs that she carried from the western mountain. In their Sisyphean efforts to mend heaven and fill up the sea, Nüwa the Ur-mother and Jingwei the faithful daughter are believed to have committed themselves to a passion that is at odds with reality. When Jin Songcen proposed to disrupt the heaven of passion so as to prevent men and women from engaging in dangerous free interaction, he was pointedly reversing the popular myth and viewing romantic passion as an ominous threat. It is significant that his endorsement of new fiction went hand in hand with his radical denunciation of new romances, for the unconscious anxiety preoccupying an elite-reformist social discourse at the time was precisely how to regulate the antihierarchical tendencies of sentiment and emotional exchange that would conceivably break loose when the dynastic order was done away with. Liang Qichao's initial exposition on the positive relationship between fiction and social governance, from this perspective, had hap-

sources, see Yuan Ke, *Zhongguo gudai shenhua* (Ancient Chinese myths) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1951), 54–60.

22. For a review of these dimensions of the Nüwa myth, see Jing Wang, *The Story of Stone: Intertextuality, Ancient Chinese Stone Lore, and the Stone Symbolism in "Dream of the Red Chamber," "Water Margin," and "The Journey to the West"* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 44–57.

23. Here is how the narrator in *The Story of the Stone* describes the heroic effort of Nüwa at mending a broken heaven: "Long ago, when the goddess Nüwa was repairing the sky, she melted down a great quantity of rock and, on the Incredible Craggs of the Great Fable Mountains, moulded the amalgam into thirty-six thousand, five hundred and one large building blocks, each measuring seventy-two feet by a thousand and forty-one feet square." Translation by David Hawkes, *The Story of the Stone: A Chinese Novel by Cao Xueqin in Five Volumes* (London: Penguin, 1973), "The Golden Days," 1:47. Also see Hanan, "Stones in the Sea," in *The Sea of Regret*, 21–22 n.1.

pily envisioned literature as an unproblematic technology for advancing modernity. A blind spot in this agitating vision had been the messy and ambiguous status of romantic sentiment and longing, which Liang conveniently dismissed as a harmful legacy of traditional literature.

Not surprisingly, Jin Songcen's dismay with the romantic rendering of the Nüwa myth also found its explicit literary expression in at least two novels belonging to the contemporary political new fiction. Haitian du-xiaozhi's *Nüwa shi* (The Nüwa stone, 1904–05) and Qiu Jin's *Jingwei shi* (The stones of Jingwei, 1906, in the form of an incomplete *tanci* script) both advocate women's emancipation and revolutionary action, and in both narratives the mythological figures offer an edifying parallel to the dedication of the heroines to their respective political causes.²⁴ Yet while Nüwa and Jingwei are incorporated here as symbols of heroic perseverance in these texts, they more often are called upon to serve as accepted images of an individual's romantic devotion or, even, destiny. A number of novels written during this period evoke the myth of either Nüwa or Jingwei to highlight this mythical reinscription.²⁵

Both the political and romantic appropriations of the mythical figure seek to elevate a human course of events and action. The mythical association consecrates an extraordinary dedication of the will, or of self-sacrifice, as, in and of itself, an admirable and therefore virtuous act. Once mythologized, even neurotic obsession has the potential of turning into a virtue, although the pathological origins of such a virtuous dedication are swiftly forgotten or repressed. The intent and structure of hagiographical narratives determine that a traumatic condition be overcome and turned into the source of sainthood rather than insanity or neurosis. For this reason, *The Sea of Regret* is all the more intriguing a literary

24. Catherine Gipoulon's French translation of Qiu Jin's text in *Pierre de l'oiseau Jingwei: Qiu Jin, femme et révolutionnaire en Chine au XIXe siècle* (Paris: des femmes, 1976) offers a contextualizing study, especially of the choice of *tanci* as the preferred medium (14–20).

25. For example, Zou Tao (Sixiang jiuwei)'s *Haishang chentian ying* (Shadow of the dusty sky in Shanghai, 1904) closely imitates *Dream of the Red Chamber* and evokes both Nüwa and Jingwei. Other titles include Fei Min's *Hen hai hua* (Flowers in the sea of regret, 1905), Xin Meizi's *Jingqin tianhai ji* (Story of Jingwei filling the sea, 1906), Wahun's *Butian shi* (Stones for mending the sky, 1906), and Wanshi's *Qingtian hen* (Regret of the passionate sky, 1906). Several popular pen names used by authors, such as "Wanshi" (Tough stone), "Wahun" (Spirit of Nüwa), and "Lian shi" (Welding stone), also refer to the stone myth.

text because it harbors as intensely a hagiographical intention as it does a pathographical narrative. Between the book's ideological statement or message and its narrative content, a persistent tension develops, revealing an incongruity that bespeaks the impossible task of making full sense of an overwhelming experience. This incongruity between hagiography and pathography is unconsciously explored in the novel and thereby endows the text with a deep ambivalence that is symptomatic of the Chinese experience of modernity. The same structural ambiguity can be found in two other, lesser texts that immediately preceded Wu Jianren's story.

Toward a Tragic Passion

The text that Patrick Hanan believes to have directly provoked Wu Jianren into writing *The Sea of Regret* was a slim volume, published in May 1906 by a certain Fu Lin under the suggestive title of *Qin hai shi* (Bird, sea, stone; translated as *Stones in the Sea* by Hanan).²⁶ The titular reference of this so far obscure novel is obviously to the Jingwei myth; its second chapter also refers to Nüwa in describing a happier moment: "The Heaven of Passion is repaired, as predestined lovers meet far from home" (317; 29).

Not much has been learned about the novel's author, Fu Lin, although the significance of his first-person narrative is widely recognized, even to the extent of being recommended as "the first true 'I-novel' in Chinese literature, a few years before the genre came into vogue in Japan."²⁷ Indeed, the nostalgic tone and confessional structure of the novel clearly emit all the generic signs of an intensely personal narration. Supposedly speaking from his deathbed, the mortally ill hero, Qin Ruhua, tells of his ultimately unfulfilled romance, recollecting, not without pride, his youthful

26. Hanan also determines that the first edition of *Stones in the Sea* came out in May 1906, a few months before Wu Jianren's *Sea of Regret*. See his "Introduction," *The Sea of Regret*, 1. The Chinese edition used here comes from *Qing bian* (Passion transformed) (Shanghai: China Eastern Normal University Press, 1993), a volume in the recent anthology of modern Chinese romantic fiction. In the following discussion, page references for *Stones in the Sea* and *The Sea of Regret* are included in the text, with the first page number referring to the Chinese edition of *Passion Transformed* and the second to Hanan's translation.

27. Hanan, "Introduction," *The Sea of Regret*, 10.

ingenuity at becoming intimate with his first and only love. Of the same age and in love since they were ten, the “predestined lovers” meet again in Beijing, where their two families happen to share the same residential compound. After much scheming and hand-wringing, including timely sickness, they get their fathers to agree to a marriage, although Ruhua’s generally inattentive father stipulates that the wedding ceremony not be held until the groom turns sixteen.

What causes this almost frivolous love story to take a tragic turn is the violent intrusion of historical processes. Just when all that the precocious Ruhua needs is some patience waiting for his sixteenth birthday, despite the prevailing wisdom of the time that recommended twenty as the earliest marriageable age for men,²⁸ the turbulent Boxer movement spreads to Beijing, and, in the face of sweeping turmoil, the two close families go their separate ways. A specific reference to calendrical time is offered at this juncture, although the disturbing events in 1900 that lead to the ransacking and occupation of Beijing by a multinational army are described in an oblique, hearsay fashion. Yet the terror of a misguided rebellion is concrete enough for Ruhua’s father, who deems it prudent to move the family south. After a tearful farewell with Aren his betrothed, whose father sees little threat in the virulently antiforeign and pro-Qing Boxers, Ruhua follows his own father and flees the capital; no sooner do they reach Shanghai than Ruhua spots a newspaper headline about the fall of Beijing. Tormented by an absence of news about Aren stranded in the north, Ruhua becomes depressed and withers away. When he finally sees her again, in a dingy Shanghai inn, Aren, accompanied only by her distraught mother, is dying. Her health is badly damaged when she swallows three drams of opium so as to avoid being sold into prostitution. Upon seeing Ruhua, she dutifully reports that she is still a virgin and, after voicing the belief that “so long as my dedicated spirit [*jingcheng*] re-

28. In a mock petition to the Qing court, an anonymous essayist at the time, citing Herbert Spencer and listing all of the social problems caused by hormonal urges, argued that it was inhuman to require a young man to reach twenty-four before he married. The proposed adjustments, however, were still age twenty for men and seventeen for women. See “Xini qingnian shang zhengfu qing chi jin zaohun shu” (A mock petition by a youth to the government to demand a relaxation of the ban on early marriage), collected in *Biji xiaoshuo daguan: wubian* (Grand exhibit of notation book fiction: collection five) (Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1974), 3875–76.

mains intact, there's a chance we may meet in the next life," she chokes and expires (369; 96).

Sensing that he may soon follow Aren to the afterworld, Ruhua concludes that the lack of a free marriage system has done them in. The conclusion of the narrative, usually reserved for a moralizing message, turns into a bitter attack on the Confucian tradition, in particular its outmoded marriage customs.

However, I blame neither Father nor the Boxer bandits for my ruin. Instead I hold Mencius responsible. But for his stale formula "by the parents' command and through the good offices of a go-between," I would long since have joined Aren in a free marriage. No matter how much turmoil the Boxers caused, she and I would still have been able to travel south together. . . . I hope above all else that one day this China of ours will change its marriage system and grant people their freedom, before the City of Wrongful Death claims countless more millions of aggrieved and anguished souls. That would be a beneficence of unimaginable, incalculable proportions. (371; 99)

Such an antitraditional protest is not entirely unexpected at this moment, for the narrator from the outset accuses the insensitive Mencius (311; 21–22), but his plea for a liberal marriage system undercuts itself when he refuses to link the cause of his demise to any specific historical agents. In his insistence that even war and social upheaval will not derail true love or personal happiness, there surfaces a juvenile willingness and need to believe in a given cause. Ruhua's resolution to advocate personal freedom and individual choice reveals its ideological nature since his experience obviously exceeds his rationalization or comprehension. Experience in excess of discursive capacity, conversely, indicates a general crisis and fragmentation. A degree of neurosis becomes discernible when the narrator steadfastly attaches himself to one piece of reality and invests in it all his psychic energy, resulting in what Freud describes as a neurotic ignoring of reality or a flight from it.²⁹ This neurotic obsession entails certain narrative content, even emotional appeal, but the subsequent claim to social

29. For Freud's discussion of neurosis and its difference from psychosis, see "The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), 19:183–87.

pertinence or even political protest appears markedly delusional. As one critic remarks, this eager transference of the causes for personal unhappiness onto some inimical but abstract external political force was common in late Qing fiction.³⁰

The metaphysical force that justifies such an obsessional narrative, Fu Lin writes in a brief preface, is the mythical “passion” (*qing*) with which the universe is created and held together as a whole. He posits “passion” as a more comprehensive concept than “benevolence,” which the late Qing philosopher Tan Sitong set forth as the ultimate meaning of nature as well as of the human world.³¹ Fu Lin goes on to argue that although amorous attraction between the sexes is but a minor expression of such a cosmic principle, yet, since humans are the supreme beings in the universe, an obsession with passion, even to the extent of disregarding life and death, ultimately agrees with the true purpose of creation. The task of a good romance writer, therefore, is to closely depict all the emotional excitement caused by love in order to reveal the creator’s secrets. Supported by this belief, Fu Lin recommends his own “romantic fiction” (*yanqing xiaoshuo*) to all those endowed with passion. In keeping with the proto-political sentiments of his times, he goes on to urge his readers to develop a love for their race and country, which will supposedly be a logical extension and fulfillment of their instinctual sexual yearnings (373; cf. 9).

Although the emphasis differs, in a concise preface to *The Sea of Regret*, Wu Jianren proposes the same *qing* as the fundamental principle that his novel is to illustrate. This much-discussed preface reflects Wu Jianren’s deep interest in the human capacity for passion, and it lays the thematic foundation for his own tales of passion as well as subsequent popular romantic novels of the early Republican era.³² As A Ying once

30. See Yuan Jin, *Yuanyang hudie pai* (The mandarin duck and butterfly school) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1994), 27.

31. For a bilingual text of Tan Sitong’s philosophical treatise with an extensive background introduction, see Chan Sin-wai, *An Exposition of Benevolence: The Jen-hsiueh of T’an Ssu-t’ung* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1984).

32. In Wu Jianren’s 1909 novel *Jie yu hui* (Ashes after the catastrophe), the narrator arranges for the virtuous widow, Zhu Wanzhen, to be rescued so as to hear an old nun expound on the difference between passion, lust, and desire. It is an offense to the all-embracing Buddha, according to the philosophical nun, to even claim that one has seen through passion, for that would only indicate a confusion of sexual desire with true passion. See *Ashes After the Catastrophe*, collected in *Passion Transformed*, 158.

commented, the philosophical foundation of Wu Jianren's fictional world was firmly laid in this novel.³³ Apparently fraught with ambiguity and couched entirely in traditional metaphysical concepts, Wu Jianren's discourse of passion is self-consciously concerned with maintaining social order and cultural continuity.³⁴ Passion, according to the authorial voice, "is something that we possess from birth, well before we know the meaning of the human world." This innate quality of passion or emotional attachment, moreover, "can be applied to any sphere of life, the only difference being in the manner of its application." In fact, the four cardinal virtues (loyalty, piety, parental love, and friendship) "all derive from passion" (5; 103). To convince the reader that much thinking went into the writing of the story, Wu Jianren reaffirms the hierarchical order of passions: the virtuous, the infatuated, and the lecherous. While the virtuous passion affirms the socially legitimate and foundational human relations, lechery is a self-indulgent abuse of one's emotion. As if anticipating accusations that the passion he promotes through the central character Dihua borders on "infatuation" or even "lechery," Wu Jianren singles out the case of chaste widows, arguing that "the occasions on which the widows remained unmoved were precisely those on which their passion was at its height" (5; 103–04). He stops short of naming which passion his romantic tale will exemplify, but he promises that it is definitely not about lechery or obsession.

Here the nun repeats the same understanding of passion as the foundation of social relations between father and son, husband and wife, emperor and subject. Wu Jianren's unfinished last novel, *Qing bian* (Passion transformed), also examines the force of passion in a changing and haphazard world. For a discussion of this text in terms of Wu Jianren's development as a novelist, see Mugio Tomie, "Go Kenjin no 'Kinjunen no kaigenjo' to 'Johen' ni tsuite" (On Wu Jianren's 'Strange things in the past ten years' and 'Passion transformed'), in *Shinmatsu shoseitsu kenkyu* (Late Qing fiction studies), no. 5 (1981): 60–70.

33. A Ying, *Xiaoshuo santan* (The third collection of essays on fiction) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1979), 170.

34. For a commentary on, and also an example of, the confusion that Wu Jianren's discourse of passion may cause, see Mao Zonggang, "Lun Wu Jianren de wenxue xieqing yishi" (On Wu Jianren's literary awareness of describing passion), *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* (Ming and Qing fiction studies), no. 4 (Nanchang: 1988): 234–43. See also Zhao Xiaoxuan, "Wu Jianren 'Xieqing xiaoshuo' de qinglun yu daodeguan" (On the discourse of passion and morality in Wu Jianren's "romantic fiction"), *Zhongwai wenxue* (Chung-wai literary monthly) 21.11 (Taipei: 1990): 148–79.