

WALKING OUT OF DARKNESS:  
A STUDY OF THE CHARACTERS IN TURBULENCE AND THE OLD BOAT

By

ZHOU XIUYAN

B.A., Beijing Normal University, 1982

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
(Department of Asian Studies)

We accept this thesis as conforming to  
the required standard

.....  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 1992

© Zhou Xiuyan, 1992

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Asian Studies

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date September 21, 1992

## ABSTRACT

This M.A. thesis is a critical study of two contemporary Chinese novels: Jia Pingwa's Turbulence and Zhang Wei's The Old Boat. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the two novels' achievements and limitations in portraying the images of Chinese peasants in the reform era. Chapter One provides the synopses of these works and discusses their repercussions in China. It also gives a brief account of the authors' backgrounds and the two novels' social and literary milieu. Chapter Two discusses the thematic similarities and differences of these works, with an emphasis on the ideological breakthroughs demonstrated in the themes. Chapter Three and Chapter Four analyse four groups of characters, mainly from the social and historical perspective. The first group consists of the protagonists. Discussion concentrates on the characteristics of these protagonists as educated peasants and the conflicts between the opposing desires and values within their respective temperaments. The second group is made up of two characters who believe in "combating evil with evil". The complexities of their personalities and the meanings of their failures are explored. The third group comprises the villains. Attention is focused on the negative aspect of the peasant revolution and the influence of the clan system. The fourth group includes a few supporting characters.

Chapter Five deals with the artistic techniques employed by the authors in characterization. It examines how the two authors present the personalities and feelings of the characters by the reproduction of their speech and movement, or through the descriptions of the physical settings. This chapter also probes the functions of the symbols used in these works. Chapter Six draws some conclusions based on the above discussion. It points out the meanings of these works in the context of modern Chinese literature.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: THE THEMATIC CONTENT	15
CHAPTER THREE: THE CHARACTERS, I	39
CHAPTER FOUR: THE CHARACTERS, II	63
CHAPTER FIVE: STYLISTIC FEATURES	88
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS	112
GLOSSARY OF CHINESE NAMES, TITLES AND TERMS	117
BIBLIOGRAPHY	123

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Michael S. Duke, for his encouragement and guidance throughout my study. I would also like to thank Professors Catherine Swatek, René Goldman and Kenneth E. Bryant for their careful reading of this thesis and for their valuable comments. Thanks are due as well to Mr. Ray Kennedy for proofreading my work.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In late 1986 and the beginning of 1987, two novels published in Chinese literary magazines attracted extensive attention in China. One of the novels is Jia Pingwa's Turbulence (Fuzao); the other is Zhang Wei's The Old Boat (Gu chuan).<sup>1</sup> Both works are set in rural China during the reform years and the authors are both young writers of peasant origin.

In the first decade of the post-Mao era, about 1,000 novels were published in China, equal to 6 times the total number of novels produced during the period 1949-1966.<sup>2</sup> However, very few of these works received serious critical attention. Most of them fell into oblivion in a very short time. In this context, the reception accorded to Turbulence and The Old Boat can be considered quite unusual. Critical articles appeared shortly after their publication and continued to appear in newspapers and magazines during the following years. Some symposiums were also held to discuss these

---

<sup>1</sup>Turbulence was first published in Shouhuo no.1(1987) and then reprinted in book form. (Beijing: Zuoja Chubanshe, 1987). The Old Boat was first published in Dangdai no.5 (1986) and then reprinted in book form. (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1987).

<sup>2</sup>See Song Suiliang, "My Views on the Current Situation of Novel Creation", [Dui changpian xiaoshuo chuanguo xianzhuang de yidian kanfa], Wenhuibao September 1, 1986.

novels. Although critics have different opinions on certain points, it is generally agreed that these novels are superior to the vast majority of contemporary Chinese literary works. They are called "excellent novels", "panoramic works" and even "epic works". Some critics consider that these works have played a role in making the novel an important literary phenomenon in today's China.<sup>3</sup>

What is it in Turbulence and The Old Boat that arouses the interest of the critics and general readers in China? What is the thematic importance and the artistic merit of these works? In this thesis I will attempt some answers to these questions by way of analyzing a number of characters in the two novels. I will also discuss the authors' ideological limitations displayed in these works and try to link these limitations with some of the problems that have haunted modern Chinese culture in general.

Turbulence and The Old Boat are works closely related to social reality. And apparently, the authors are concerned with the social and intellectual issues being hotly debated in China. Consciously or unconsciously, they participate in the debates with their creative works. From the point of view that "artistic geniuses have very little

---

<sup>3</sup> These remarks can be found in many articles, such as Hu Weishi, "Zhang Wei's New Work The Old Boat Is Warmly Received by Literary Circles" [Zhang Wei xinzuo Guchuan, wentan fanying qianglie], Shanghai wenxue no.2 (1987):96; Zhao Zuhan, "At the back of the Karma" [Yinguo baoying de beihou], Wenxue ziyoutan no.5 (1989):87-94; Wang Lifen, "On the Thematic Evolution of the New-era Novel and Its Characteristics" [Changpian xiaoshuo zhuti yanbian tezhenq tantao] Wenxue ziyoutan no.5 (1989):27-34; Feng Lisan, "A Gloomy Look-back and a Joyful Look-forward" [Chenzhong de huigu yu xinyue de zhanwang], Dangdai no.1 (1988):221-232.



to say to a social-political analyst" and that true literature is "of no practical value whatsoever",<sup>4</sup> Turbulence and The Old Boat might not be regarded as masterpieces of "true Literature". There are two reasons why I want to make a serious study of these two works. First, realistic works have been the mainstream of modern Chinese literature. Today they still occupy a dominant position among literary products in China. Some of these works are very well written and they should not be neglected. In my view, the author's interest in the exploration of real social problems does not necessarily compromise the aesthetic value of his works. As C.T. Hsia once pointed out: "The more problems a work of literature explores, not merely social problems but also political and metaphysical; the more it is concerned with justice, not merely social justice but the ultimate justice of man's fate--the greater it is, provided in tackling these problems, the author is not merely applying ready-made solutions in the spirit of didactic simplification."<sup>5</sup> He also spoke very highly of some modern realistic novels, and called them "works of passion and insight, exploring a wide range of social and philosophical problems touching on man's fate".<sup>6</sup> In my view, Turbulence and The Old Boat belong to this category of literary work. They are not only superior to the great majority of the post-Mao literary products, but also can be rated among the most powerful works published since the May Fourth era. So I consider that they

---

<sup>4</sup>See Pierre Ryckmans "Forward", in Kam Louies Between Fact and Fiction. Victoria, Australia: Wild Peony PTY Ltd, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> C.T. Hsia, "On the 'Scientific' Study of Modern Chinese Literature-A Reply to Professor Prusek" in Jaroslav Prusek, The Lyrical and the Epic, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980:235.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.:235.

are worthy of a careful study. Secondly, Turbulence and The Old Boat can be regarded as revealing examples of good post-Mao literature. I hope the analysis of these two works will lead to a better understanding of the achievements and limitations of the whole new era Chinese literature.

Turbulence is a story about Shangzhou (Shanxi Province,) where a number of Jia Pingwa's works are set. The village Xianyouchuan is well known as "the hometown of cadres". The Gong clan and the Tian clan all have their members holding important offices at the township, county and prefectural levels. Other villagers are all regarded as second-rate people. Among them is the painter's son Jin'gou. He returns home as a demobilized soldier and starts a risky river transport business. At the same time he falls in love with the ferryman's niece Xiaoshui. When Jin'gou's business booms, the Party Secretary of the township Tian Zhongzheng gets into it. Tian reorganizes it into a transport team and he himself becomes a typical "good cadre" who leads the peasants to become rich. Jin'gou is very disappointed. At this time somebody from the prefectural newspaper comes to the county to recruit reporters. Jin'gou is well qualified, but Tian Zhongzheng wants to give these positions to his relatives. As Jin'gou is fighting in every way he can for the position, Yingying suddenly falls in love with him. Jin'gou does not love her, but he can not resist the temptation of sleeping with her. Soon they are engaged and Jin'gou gets the position. He feels guilty about his betraying Xiaoshui. Xiaoshui is heartbroken, but she forgives him. Jin'gou starts his new career as a reporter in the prefectural capital.

He works and studies very hard, trying to overcome his peasant consciousness. He goes to the mountains to interview the still impoverished peasants and writes a report covering this trip. But the report does not meet with the approval of the chief editor. Jin'gou has to send it to the People's Daily. In the meantime, he is more and more estranged from Yingying and starts an affair with Shi Hua, an attractive married woman. Jin'gou's report is published by the People's Daily, he becomes famous and also further realizes that he should never forget his duty to the peasants. He goes back to his home county as a resident reporter and finally breaks up with Yingying. But Xiaoshui has already married another young peasant named Fuyun.

Jin'gou's fellow villager Lei Dakong is a smart young man. He and Fuyun work together as raftsmen on the river. One day they catch Tian Zhongzheng trying to rape Xiaoshui. Dakong chops off one of Tian's toes as a punishment. For this Dakong is arrested. Jin'gou takes advantage of his capacity as a reporter to move among the officials. With his help Dakong is released. Dakong has learned a good lesson in the jail. Since he has no power, he decides to make more money to beat the Tian family. He starts a business with illegally obtained money. The business booms. Dakong becomes a famous "peasant entrepreneur". He bribes all his way through and associates with the officials from the Tian and Gong clans for protection. He does not pay attention to Jin'gou's warning, but he keeps a detailed record of the officials who take his bribes. In case anything happens to him, he will publicize the record.

To welcome the PLA commander from the provincial capital, the local Tian officials want some bear paws to prepare a banquet. They force Fuyun to join a bear-hunting team. Fuyun is killed by a bear. In extreme sorrow and anger, Jin'gou writes a report covering the whole story. By making use of the conflicts between the Tian and the Gong officials, he finally has the Tian officials punished. This creates a great sensation throughout the whole Shangzhou area. Dakong is thrown in jail again., this time for selling moldy tree seeds to another province. He confesses all his crimes, including the bribery and all the illegal activities involving high officials and their family members. He is murdered in prison, but the public is told that he commits suicide. Jin'gou is also arrested for his relation with Dakong and is accused of bribery. Under his instruction, Xiaoshui goes to the prefectural capital to seek help from Shi Hua. In order to rescue Jin'gou, Shi Hua sleeps with the son of the provincial PLA commander in exchange for the commander's looking into the case. Jin'gou is released. He resigns his job at the prefectural newspaper and goes back to his home village, where he marries Xiaoshui and starts a new business on the river.

The story of The Old Boat takes place in Walizhen, a small town in Shandong Province. For many years people in this town earn their living by making fensi<sup>7</sup> in addition to doing farm work. The Sui family owns a large fensi business. When the Land Reform begins,

---

<sup>7</sup> Vermicelli made from bean starch. For convenience the Chinese term "fensi" will be used throughout this thesis.

Sui Yingzhi is running the fensi business which he inherited from his father. He turns over most of his property to the Communist authorities and soon dies of a hemorrhage. His family suffers greatly in the subsequent Land Reform. Sui Yingzhi's wife commits suicide. His children Baopu, Jiansu and Hanzhang have gone through a very hard time on account of their bad class status. Baopu witnesses all the tragedies of the Land Reform, the Great Leap Forward, the years of famine and the Cultural Revolution. He becomes a reticent man. He spends a lot of his time reading The Communist Party Manifesto and pondering over the sad events that happened in the past, trying to find out the source of the suffering in the life of Walizhen's residents. He loves his wife Guigui, but she starves to death during the famine years. Then he falls in love with another girl Xiaokui, but she is forced to marry somebody else. Baopu does not even have the courage to get her back after her husband's death. Baopu's uncle Sui Buzhao is a strange person in the eyes of the locals. His greatest wish is to go to sea. He runs away from home as a child and returns to the town frustrated after many years, with a lot of stories about his adventure on the sea. In the reform years, the government encourages individuals to lease and manage the fensi factory in the town. People expect Baopu to take it. Jiansu especially hopes his brother can get the fensi business back in the hands of the Sui family. But Baopu is not interested in it. Consequently, the fensi factory is leased to Zhao Duoduo, who has persecuted the Sui family since the Land Reform and is their chief enemy. Jiansu is very disappointed. He decides to start his own business. He runs a small store in town. It turns out to be a success. Then he goes to the city

and sets up a store with somebody else. City life broadens his horizons and also makes him more ambitious. In order to make more money, he associates with some powerful people and engages in some illegal activities. But he is cheated and loses all his capital. His store is sealed up by the authorities. He himself suffers from an incurable disease and is taken back to his hometown by his brother Baopu. Besides the Sui clan, there are also the Zhao clan and the Li clan in the town. "Grandpa Four" Zhao Bing is the most powerful person in the Zhao clan as well as in the whole town. Whenever the town is in trouble, he is always the person who makes decisions and solves problems. But in most cases, he is also the one who causes trouble behind the scenes. He protects Baopu's sister Hanzhang from being violated by Zhao Duoduo, and takes her as his nominal daughter, but after a few years, he himself forces her to have sex with him and maintains the relationship for many years. Hanzhang finally decides to kill him but only wounds him. Hanzhang is arrested for attempted murder. Baopu writes a long statement to submit to the court, trying to help his sister. Zhao Duoduo's illegal activities in managing the fensi business are exposed. He is killed in a car accident while driving drunk. Baopu finally decides to take over the fensi business and to run it for the people of the town.

In order to better understand Turbulence and the Old Boat, it is necessary to have a look at the authors' personal experience as well as the social and literary background of the creation of the novels.

Jia Pingwa was born in a mountain village in Danfeng County, Shanxi Province in 1952. He received his high school education during the Cultural Revolution. Before graduation he left school to work in the fields. In 1972, he entered the Northwest University and studied in the Chinese Department for three years. He graduated in 1975. Since then he has been working in the editorial department of the magazine Wenxue shidai (Literary Times). He began to publish his fiction in 1973. His short story "The Full Moon" (Man yuer) won the Prize for Excellent Short Stories in 1978. Another story "January and December" (Zhengyue Layue) won the same prize in 1984. He is now one of the most prolific writers in China. Before Turbulence, a group of his works known as "The Shangzhou Series" had already received the attention of literary circles in China. A great number of his works have been reprinted outside of China and some of them have been translated into English.

Zhang Wei's experience is similar to that of Jia Pingwa. He was born in Huangxian County, Shandong Province in 1956, and was also brought up in the countryside. In 1980, He graduated from the Chinese Department of Yantai Normal College. Then he worked for more than four years in the administrative office and the archives of the Shandong provincial Party Committee. Since 1983, he has been working as a full-time writer in the Literary Creation Office of Shandong Province. He is also the member of the editorial committee of Shandong wenxue. His first story was published in 1980. His short stories "Sound" (Shengyin) and "A Pond of Clear Water" (Yitan qingshui) won the Prizes for Excellent Short Stories in 1982 and 1984

respectively. By the end of 1986, he had already published over fifty fictional works. The Old Boat is his first novel.

Jia Pingwa and Zhang Wei belong to a group of writers whom some critics described as "Nongyi Chengji" writers (city residents of peasant origin).<sup>8</sup> These writers were born in the rural areas after 1949. They were once down-to-earth country boys. So they know everything of the peasant life. Later, by one means or another, they "jumped out" of the rural areas and became residents of the city. But their families or relatives are still in the countryside. They maintain a "flesh-and-blood" connection with the peasants. Most of them keep going back to the countryside to help with the farm work. When they write about the peasants they write as insiders. It is true that these writers cherish a deep affection for the rural areas. Jia Pingwa once wrote: "I am a man from the mountains. ... When I was in the mountains, I loved the mountains. After I left them, I loved them even more.....whenever I had a chance, I went back to the mountains." (Here the mountains refer to his home village.)<sup>9</sup> But, despite all their love for rural life, the writers won't go back to the countryside to be peasants again. It is quite clear that they are not satisfied with the material conditions in the rural areas and the cultural level of the peasants. What the writers love is not the countryside in reality, but the countryside in their nostalgic dreams.

---

<sup>8</sup> See Li Xing, "On the Psychological World of the Writers Who Are City Residents of Peasant Origin" [Lun "nongyi chengji" zuojia de xinli shijie] Dangdai zuojia pinglun no.2 (1989):112-120.

<sup>9</sup> Jia Pingwa, "A Guide to the Mountains: Foreword" in Stories about The Mountains [Shandi bijil, Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980.



In these dreams they need only to deal with the bright side of rural life. During the Maoist years the power holders used to teach the ex-peasant writers to believe that their dreams were realities in Communist China. As a result, those writers created in their works a mythical picture of a healthy and optimistic rural society. The most important characteristic of the post-Mao ex-peasant writers lies in their critical attitude towards rural reality. They combine in their works the attachment of an ex-peasant to rural life with the critical perspective of an intellectual equipped with modern thought. In their creative works, the former accounts for their strong emotion and the latter contributes to their remarkable insights.

In a certain sense these writers are very lucky. If it were not for the great changes taking place in the reform years, Jia Pingwa and Zhang Wei could have been just another Zhao Shuli or Haoran. Only for the purpose of having their works published, they would have to write in conformity with the Party's line. In fact, Jia Pingwa's early prize-winning story "The Full Moon" looks very similar to some of Haoran's works. It is the political climate, social changes and literature development in the post-Mao era that emancipated the authors' minds and also provided them with the subject matter for the creation of novels like Turbulence and The Old Boat.

In the 1980s, the political and economic reforms brought far-reaching changes throughout China. These changes were especially great in the rural areas. First of all, with the implementation of the

household responsibility system, the land was controlled by individual peasant families. This greatly boosted the productivity of the peasants. As a result, the agricultural yields and the peasant incomes increased. As we can see in Turbulence and The Old Boat the material life of the peasants is much better than before.

Secondly, in order to solve the problem of the redundant labour force in the countryside, the government encouraged the development of industry, commerce and transportation services in the countryside. In 1986, there were about 15 million rural enterprises in China. They employed about 80 million workers who were still considered to be peasants but did not engage in cultivation. The fensi factory workers in The Old Boat belong to this category of peasants. The majority of rural enterprises involved collective property, but there were also private ones whose owners employed labourers and some of them made big profits, such as Lei Dakong's company in Turbulence.

Thirdly, economic and political changes naturally brought about the changes in the cultural sphere. Many concepts accepted in the Maoist era, such as "class struggle" and "the glory of poverty" were undergoing radical revision. Many traditional values were also shaken. Ideas like "acceptance of one's place", "Loyalty to authority", "absolute honesty and sincerity" all became questionable. Naturally, the changes of ideas also affected people's attitudes towards love, sex and marriage. As the reforms were deepening, problems began to emerge and continued to spring up, such as, the corruption among Party and government officials, new social injustice, and illegal activities of the "entrepreneurs". The Chinese people were in the process of an agonizing transition from the old to

the new social structure and moral values. Turbulence and The Old Boat are partly the reflection of the mental state of the Chinese people in this stage of history.

The first decade of the post-Mao era also witnessed the rapid development of Chinese literature. Immediately after the fall of the Gang of Four, the "Literature of the Wounded" emerged to expose the wrongdoings of the Cultural Revolution. Then the "Literature of Reflection" followed to expand the writers' critical retrospection of the Party's earlier historical wrongs. At the same time, some literary works specially dealing with the theme of the reforms made up the "Literature of Reform". In the years 1985 and 1986, cultural issues became the main subjects of the intellectual discourse. Correspondingly, the "Nativist Literature" came on the scene. With a number of successful literary works, this school attracted the attention of scholars and critics both at home and abroad. In addition to "Nativist Literature", the rise of the "Modernist Literature" is also noteworthy; writers of this category emphasize the emancipation of the thinking subject and the employment of non-traditional narrative techniques. The process of the development of post-Mao literature has been discussed at length by many scholars inside and outside mainland China.<sup>10</sup> Some of the characteristics of the new era literature will be discussed later in this thesis in combination with the study of Turbulence and The Old Boat.

---

<sup>10</sup> For example, see Tsai Yuanhuan, "The second Wave: Recent Development in Mainland Chinese Literature", Issues and Studies, no.8 (1989):11-28.

In 1986, the time was ripe for the emergence of mature novels created on the basis of the writer's individual aesthetic principles and their personal understanding of life. It seems to me that Turbulence and The Old Boat are among these mature works. In the next chapter I will examine the thematic content of the two novels.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE THEMATIC CONTENT

Turbulence and The Old Boat present a broad picture of Chinese rural life in the 1980s. (In the case of The Old Boat, because of the frequent flashbacks, the story actually covers a much longer time span, from Land Reform to the post-Mao reforms.) In this picture, the two works succeed in bringing out all of the basic features of present-day Chinese society. It is in this sense that they are called "panoramic works". The thematic contents of these works are very complex. The two novels share at least three major themes. The Old Boat has another theme which is absent in Turbulence; Turbulence also has some thematic messages one cannot find in The Old Boat.

One common theme of these two works is the exposure of the dark side of Chinese rural life. The two works both depict the peasants' material poverty. In The Old Boat, the description of famine is very striking. The implementation of the "ultra-left policies" in the Great Leap Forward causes the destruction of agriculture and results in widespread famine. The peasants in Walizhen have to eat chaff, bean dregs, wild herbs, tree leaves, dead birds, pet cats, earthworms, beetles, even bark and tender branches. Many die of starvation. The survivors are too weak to bury them.

In the reform years, there have been some improvements in the living standards of the peasants. A few peasants even have the title of "Ten-thousand-yuan household" (wanyuanhu); but in some areas people still live in extreme poverty. In Turbulence, the reporter Jin'gou visits a few mountainous villages in Dongyang county. The peasants there are short of food and clothes. Their bodies are swollen because of malnutrition. What is more terrible is the local officials' attitude toward the peasants' plight. Jin'gou is invited by the local government to visit Dongyang and cover the "excellent situation" in this county. The county Party Secretary is very eager to show Jin'gou all the newly rich peasants. At the same time he does his best to conceal from Jin'gou the true situation of the impoverished villagers. This reminds one of the tendency to exaggerate achievements and minimize difficulties in the Great Leap Forward, which was partly responsible for the subsequent famine years and has cost millions of human lives.

The depiction of extreme material poverty is no doubt of great human significance, but even more important is the exposure of the darkness in the peasants' spiritual life, a life without human dignity or freedom. The peasants live at the bottom of society. Their fate is under the control of those above them. Whenever they are mistreated by the power holders, the best way they can deal with it is to swallow it. In Turbulence, when the township Party Secretary Tian Zhongzheng uses his influence to acquire some houses in the village, the villagers are greatly indignant. But when Tian dismantles these formerly communal houses and uses the material to rebuild his

own house, most of the villagers give Tian presents and offer their labour. They fear that if they fail to do so, Tian will make things hard for them later.

The two novels also show that in rural China the peasants' personal safety is by no means guaranteed. In The Old Boat, the narrator frequently looks back to the Maoist years and tells about how power holders cruelly tortured and humiliated those peasants who had offended them. In the post-Mao period, individual human life is still accorded minimal importance. Fuyun, the young peasant character in Turbulence, is forced, despite his inexperience, to join a bear-hunting team and is killed by a bear, all this to satisfy a high official's liking for bear paws. The local officials try to settle this case by giving Fuyun's wife only two hundred yuan RMB, which is even less than the price of a cow.

Among the peasants, women and those with bad class background suffer more than others. Peasant women are always the victims of the power holders' sexual violence. In The Old Boat, nearly all the women working in the fensi factory have been sexually harassed by Zhao Duoduo, the head of the factory. These women do not complain about this for fear of losing their jobs. In Turbulence, the township Party Secretary Tian Zhongzheng once says with pride: "in the area under my control, no woman whom I was interested in ever disobeyed me."<sup>11</sup> People with bad class status do not have any

---

<sup>11</sup> Turbulence, Beijing: Zuoja Chubanshe, 1987: 279. Page numbers are subsequently given in the text.

kind of human rights, not even nominal rights. Among all the main characters in these two novels, no one has a more miserable life than Sui Hanzhang. She is a beautiful woman and at the same time is from a family with bad class background; thus she is doomed to be miserable. After she is violated by the powerful Zhao Bing, she decides not to go back to his house again. But soon her brothers are in trouble. She knows who is behind the scenes and that her relationship with Zhao Bing must be resumed. She never tells her brothers about this because she is fully aware of their inability to protect her owing to their bad class background. If they try to do anything against Zhao Bing, they can only be completely ruined.

It is also shown in the two novels that the peasants' attempts to change their situation prove futile in most cases. There is no way for the peasants to complain to the higher authorities about the local officials' wrongdoings. In Turbulence, when the Party Secretary of Dongyang county goes on an inspection tour, his car is surrounded by the peasants who come to make complaints to him. The local cadres yell at the peasants and drive them away. One old man lies under the wheels to stop the Party Secretary's car from moving away; the cadres haul him off the road. The Party Secretary is very upset about this and complains to Jin'gou that the peasants are too cunning and tough. (203) The road for the young peasants to move up in the social hierarchy is almost always closed. The local power holders deny all opportunity to the children of ordinary peasants. Jin'gou has to fight very hard to get the position of reporter, although he is the only qualified applicant in the whole township. The Party



Secretary Tian Zhongzheng takes these positions as his personal assets and wants to give them as presents to his relatives, despite their complete inability to write. It sounds ridiculous, but this kind of behaviour is very common among corrupt rural officials. In the reform years, it is true that some peasants have risen financially and socially, but for both subjective and objective reasons, these peasants' new status is very unstable. (I will discuss this in Chapter Three.) Many of them come to tragic ends. Both Turbulence and The Old Boat create images of "peasant entrepreneurs". Their stories are quite typical in present-day China.

The theme of exposing rural injustice is nothing new. In fact, this is a recurrent theme in modern Chinese literature. Since the situation of the peasants has not changed, this theme will continue to appear in Chinese literary works. In dealing with this theme, it is also the tradition of modern Chinese literature to depict the peasants as victims of the rural gentry, corrupt officials and above all, a bad social system. Turbulence in general carries on this tradition, and the narrator unmistakably points his accusing finger at the corrupt Communist bureaucracy.

Most modern Chinese literary works dealing with this theme also carry a clear message that in order to liberate themselves, the peasants should fight ruthlessly against their oppressors, and that in doing so violence is unavoidable. Even mature and sophisticated writers like Mao Dun and Wu Zuxiang also favor violent struggles against the oppressors, not to mention the ultra-left writers such as

Jiang Guangci. This tendency of resorting to violence to correct social injustice can be traced back to pre-modern Chinese literature. The famous classic novel Outlaws of the Marsh (Shuihuzhuan) is well known for its tendency to promote violence. Turbulence basically follows this track. Tian Zhongzheng tries to rape Xiaoshui, so Lei Dakong chops off one of Tian's toes to teach him a lesson. This action is accepted and even praised by the other peasants, including the educated protagonist Jin'gou. Xiaoshui's uncle Han Wenju throws the chopped-off toe to a dog and later regrets this only because in doing so he has lost the evidence. (Tian tries not to mention his attempt to rape Xiaoshui; so he accuses Lei Dakong of beating him and smashing his toe in the field. Xiaoshui needs the chopped-off toe to prove that Tian is lying.) The overtone in the narration about this episode is "it serves him(Tian) right".

The Old Boat, however, breaks away to a great extent from the above-mentioned tradition, and has an important theme which is absent in Turbulence. It questions the meaning of the struggle between the rich and the poor. And when exploring the source of the peasants' suffering, it is not satisfied with the simple political answer, but goes deeper to seek an answer in the dark side of human nature. The Old Boat also takes a negative attitude towards violence, including the violence against the oppressors. These ideological breakthroughs have been highly acclaimed by the Chinese critics.

Through the recollections of both the narrator and the protagonist Sui Baopu, The Old Boat describes in detail the bloody

fighting between the rural gentry and the poor peasants led by the Communists during the Land Reform. This "class struggle" causes numberless tragedies on both sides. Finally, the peasants win the struggle. They beat the landlords, kill them, distribute their land, and rush into their houses to grab the "fruits of victory" (shengli guoshi, a term commonly used in the Land Reform to refer to the landlords' property). The peasants take great satisfaction in these activities, which reminds one of Ah Q's high spirit when talking about the "revolution". The power switches into the hands of some people who were once at the bottom of society. This was the dream of many modern Chinese writers. But when this dream came true, the great majority of the peasants did not achieve the better life they expected. The new rulers turned out to be as greedy and cruel as their defeated predecessors. The Old Boat uses a lot of space to describe how Zhao Bing, Zhao Duoduo and other power holders cruelly oppress the people in Walizhen. The only difference is that the former gentry and their families have traded places with some of the oppressed peasants. For most people, the struggle they have gone through has not done them any good and thus proves to be a tragic mistake. Now if they fight the new oppressors in the same old way, history will repeat itself. The peasants' situation won't improve in general.

This is the conclusion reached by the protagonist Baopu after experiencing and witnessing the fighting going on through forty years. In The Old boat, Baopu has a long talk with his brother Jiansu, who is very anxious to fight Zhao Duoduo and get the fensi

business back into the hands of the Sui family. Baopu tells him a story about a group of people looking for gold in the mountains. One of them sees a big piece of gold and does not want to share it with the others. So the rest of the group have to stone him to death. Baopu said to Jiansu: "I thought there would not be so much suffering and blood any more. But later, I realized this is only a dream, because there are still people like you in our town. You are not the only one. How can the people get rid of the suffering? A person like you will put his arms around the gold and won't share it with the others. Then there will be someone to drop the stone on you and you will bite back. Thus there will be blood again."<sup>12</sup> Obviously, Baopu views the greedy element in human nature as the source of human suffering. This is also the voice of the implied author.

In The Old Boat, there are many descriptions of violence. Most modern Chinese literary works only deal with the violence imposed on the oppressed peasants by the gentry and bad officials. Even those writers who advocate violent class struggle usually avoid describing in detail the violence used by the peasants. One thing quite unique in The Old Boat is that it explores the violence used by both sides in the "class struggle". In the Land Reform, the landlords' "return home corps" buries forty poor peasants alive after stringing them together with an iron wire going through their collar bones. Among the victims are old people and babies. The peasants, in their turn, literally cut a piece of flesh off a landlord's body when

---

<sup>12</sup> The Old Boat, Dangdai no. 5, 1986:86. Page numbers are given subsequently in the text.

"struggling" against him. More than a dozen "return home corps" members rape a peasant woman cadre before killing her and her baby. Soon after that, a group of peasant militiamen rapes a landlord's young daughter. She dies the next day. The peasants tie her body to a tree and sexually mutilate it. The then seven-year-old protagonist is so badly shocked by this horrible scene that it haunts him for the rest of his life. Twenty years later, when he buries his wife after she starves to death, the protagonist keeps digging and digging, trying to bury her as deep in the earth as possible. The descriptions of violence in The Old Boat are very real and sometimes highly detailed; thus they often leave an unforgettable impression on the reader's mind. All these descriptions serve one purpose: to lay bare the extreme ugliness of violence; thus to bring the readers' attention to the necessity of fighting against it.

Sui Baopu does a lot of thinking in The Old Boat, trying to find out the source of the peasants' suffering. But when he gets the answer, it does not lead to any solution. On the contrary, he finds himself in a more hopeless impasse. His agony is also the agony of Lu Xun. It is relatively easy to kill a tyrant, to overthrow a political power or to change a social system, but it is extremely difficult to change the national character and almost impossible to get rid of the evil elements in human nature. Baopu feels lost and does not know what action he should take to improve this world. The implied author is critical of Baopu's lack of action, but he is at the same time very sympathetic with him, for he can not see the way out either. This problem, however, is dealt with in Turbulence. I will return to

this topic later in this chapter and also in Chapter Three. In terms of thematic achievements, The Old Boat and Turbulence to a certain extent complement each other. That is one of the reasons why they are often discussed together.

The second major theme common to Turbulence and The Old Boat is the pro-reform theme. In the 1980s, writing about reforms became a fashion in Chinese literary circles. And almost all works that address the reform theme take a pro-reform attitude. Some of these works are produced merely to respond to the changes in Party policies; so they can only be regarded as propaganda materials. Some other works were written seriously, and because they touched certain sensitive social issues, or they went ahead of the Party's reform steps, these works once created some social sensations. A typical instance is Jiang Zilong's "Manager Qiao Assumes Office" (Qiao changzhang shangren ji).<sup>13</sup> However, these works share a common symptom of being overly simplistic. They generally give the idea that China's problems will be solved by the implementation of certain new policies, which can be completely compatible with the socialist system and Marxist theory. The plots and characters of these works are also stereotyped. The protagonists are always open-minded cadres with good abilities and honest personalities. They will be in trouble with their conservative colleagues and superiors, but have the full support of even higher superiors. Their reformist

---

<sup>13</sup> For an English translation, see Lee Yee ed., The New Realism -- Writing from China after Cultural Revolution, New York: Hippocrene Books Inc., 1983: 56-85.

measures prove to be effective and they are welcomed by the majority of the ordinary people.

The pro-reform overtone is very obvious in Turbulence and The Old Boat. It is intimately related to the first theme we discussed above and is based on the authors' concerns with the fate of both individual Chinese and China as a nation. The basic idea is that things in China can't go on like this; changes are necessary and urgent. So when we say these works are pro-reform, here the concept of "reform" means much more than its official definition. In dealing with the theme of reform, Turbulence and The Old Boat not only have gone beyond the scope of political and economic reforms envisioned by the Communist Party Central Committee, but also have reached a depth that could be frowned on by the Communist authorities. When commenting on the works published in modern China, one has to take the political climate and the limit of the writers' freedom of speech into consideration. Blaming the writers' ideological conservativeness too much is often not fair. Compared with other works, the two novels have also broken away from the ready model of "reform literature" and showed artistic sophistication. They are especially successful on two points.

First, the two works have successfully brought out the true mental state of the Chinese people in the reform years, that is, the mood of "fuzao". ( Here the Chinese word "fuzao" does not seem to have an English equivalent. The word "turbulence" can hardly cover all its meanings. It is a mixture of impetuosity, restlessness,

imprudence and perplexity. In this thesis sometimes I will use the Chinese word fuzao instead of "turbulence" for the sake of accuracy.) In the preface to Turbulence, Jia Pingwa talks about the Prefectural River, which is apparently a symbol of Shangzhou in Shanxi Province or even all of China: "Turbulence is not the virtue of the Prefectural River, but it is the unique characteristic of this river.....The Prefectural River is only a part of the upper reaches of a big river. It has a long way to go to the Yangzi River and finally to the Sea. It will get deeper and stronger while flowing through the land." (Preface, page 2). This statement has been criticized for being too idealistic.<sup>14</sup> But if we interpret it as the idea that there is more hope in a turbulent river than in stagnant water, it will be exactly the basic tone of these works when dealing with the reform theme. In these two works, the fuzao mood is presented mainly through the actions and psychology of the educated peasants, the "peasant entrepreneurs" and also some other characters.

The protagonists of these two novels, Baopu and Jin'gou, are educated peasants. Actually they have the characteristics of both peasants and intellectuals. Compared with other peasants, they tend to do more thinking. Under the Maoist control, the whole nation could only have one thought-- Mao Zedong thought. Independent thinking was actually not allowed. With Mao's death and the conclusion of the Maoist era, the Communist Party's ideological control has been to a considerable degree relaxed. If people's

---

<sup>14</sup> See Liu Huo, "On Jin'gou" [Jin'gou lun], Dangdai zuojia pinglun no.4 (1989):67-77.



freedom is still limited in speech and actions, they at least have the right to think. As educated young peasants facing many social and individual problems, the protagonists try very hard to seek a way out for both themselves and their fellow peasants.

But the more they think, the more they feel anxious and perplexed. One reason is their lack of modern knowledge. Baopu always sticks to two books: Questions to Heaven (Tian wen) and The Communist Party Manifesto. Jin'gou is a high school graduate, but he receives his education in the Cultural Revolution and after that he can hardly find time to do serious reading. Another reason is that the problems they attempt to explore are too big and complicated. These problems have haunted Chinese intellectuals for generations. Some of the problems have even agonized the world's greatest thinkers.

Another indication of the fuzao mood is the protagonists' lack of a stable mind. They are always pushed by the events happening around them and emotionally affected by those people who are inferior to them in terms of morality and education. In The Old Boat, Sui Baopu expresses more than once his admiration to his brother Jiansu for his daring spirit, although at the same time he is strongly opposed to Jiansu's venture. Finally he decides to take over the fensi business in fear that it will drop into the hands of some greedy person like Zhao Duoduo. Although the people in Walizhen have laid their hopes on him, because of his personality and moral values, he is unlikely to be a good entrepreneur. Therefore this action can be

regarded as another indication of his fuzao. In Turbulence, after Jin'gou is exposed to Lei Dakong's large-scale bribery, he can not help admiring Lei Dakong's adventurous spirit. He knows very well the nature of Lei's behaviour, but he still thinks that in the present situation, only people like Dakong can do something.

The emergence of the "peasant entrepreneur" is one of the most controversial phenomena in China during the reform years. Lei Dakong in Turbulence, Sui Jiansu and Zhao Duoduo in The Old Boat are all so-called "peasant entrepreneurs". In fact, this title itself is the result of the fuzao mood in today's China. It gives one an impression that the gap between a peasant and an entrepreneur can vanish in one night. On the one hand, these peasants dare to defy the gap between the countryside and the city, or between peasants and cadres. They seize the opportunity to rise rapidly in the social hierarchy. Their struggle to change their fate is of great significance. On the other hand, they are completely unqualified for the role of a modern entrepreneur. The three "peasant entrepreneurs" in these two novels all rely on bribery and cheating. Their businesses are little more than castles in the air. (Zhao Duoduo's fensi factory is a little different, but is still not managed normally). They also tend to overestimate their own ability. They often think that they have used the corrupt cadres, but finally find out that they are used by the officials. None of the "peasant entrepreneurs" in these two works can avoid meeting a tragic end. It is not that they are not aware of the risky nature of their career. Lei Dakong's life philosophy is quite typical: "I know that I am walking on the edge of a knife. One slip

and I will be finished. But I don't care. I have neither wife nor children. I have nothing to worry about when I die." (321) He believes that "The daring man has a full stomach; the coward starves." (311) The rapid rise and fall of the "peasant entrepreneurs" are manifestations of the fuzao mood in the reform years.

These two works also show that the fuzao mood is spreading among the ordinary peasants. In Turbulence, the ferryman Han Wenju says that Jin'gou has stirred the hearts of the young people. It is true. The young villagers have been encouraged by Jin'gou's success in the river transport business and all try to improve their financial condition by risking their lives on the Prefectural River. The peasants of the old generation can not calm down either. Han Wenju is always worried that the Party's reform policies might change. Jin'gou's father, the honest but timid painter, is reluctantly pushed into the struggles. In The Old Boat, the young peasants of Walizhen put on jeans, dance disco and become crazy about foreign movies. They are very eager to accept indiscriminately everything new from the outside world.

Another success of these two works in dealing with the reform theme is the profundity and insight displayed in their exploration of social problems. Other "reform literature" works also explore social problems, but most of them just stick to minor problems such as hiring practices or management style. And when dealing with these problems, they tend to provide a ready-made solution. Turbulence and The Old Boat have broken this convention. In The Old Boat the

search for the source of human suffering is, as we have mentioned above, well recognized by the critics as having reached a new depth. Baopu realizes that the evils in human nature are the root of all the problems, so he pins his hopes on moral improvement. He has to admit that this idea is hardly practical but he cannot see any other way out.

In this respect, Turbulence has made some breakthroughs. Turbulence also pays much attention to the negative side of human nature. But unlike The Old Boat, it recognizes the position of human desires. Instead of attempting to change human nature, the novel emphasizes controlling and using the evils in human nature. In my view, the conflicts between the Gong cadres and the Tian Cadres are deliberately designed by the author. Almost all of Jin'gou's successful fights against the corrupt bureaucracy are accomplished by using those conflicts. Readers can hardly miss this message. In addition, when Jin'gou is the head of the river transport team, he knows that the other two team heads Tian Yishen and Cai Da'an are both greedy persons. Instead of fighting to expelling them, which is impractical, Jin'gou deliberately keeps these two men in conflict. So, in order to defend their own interests, Tian Yishen and Cai Da'an watch each other and expose each other's wrongdoings. This strategy works very well. I think we have reason to suggest that the author is implying a possible approach to cope with the evils of human nature--to establish a system in which the persons in power can watch each other (albeit for their own interests), thus to prevent them from abusing their power. This is a sensitive political issue, for

it can lead to the idea of a multi-party system. So the message can only be conveyed obscurely. To date I have not seen any critical article published in China that mentions this message in Turbulence. This is probably for political reasons.

The third common theme of these two works is an implied acceptance of determinism. In Turbulence and The Old Boat, a notable phenomenon is the recurrence of episodes concerning predictions. These predictions are made in three ways. The first way is through some special figures. Some of them have supernatural power to foresee the future. In Turbulence, such a person is the monk, and towards the end of the novel, also the geomancer (yingyangshi). The monk is frequently consulted by the villagers about things happening in their lives. After Jin'gou is arrested, Xiaoshui goes to the monk to ask about Jin'gou's future. The monk analyzes a Chinese character hui (return), which Xiaoshui has picked up randomly. The monk predicts that not only will Jin'gou come home safe but also he will have a son soon. When Xiaoshui mentions the fact that Jin'gou is not even married and expresses her doubt about the prediction, the monk says: "I myself am confused by this, but it is what this character means." This episode shows that the monk can only tell what is predestined and has no control over it. At the end of this novel, Xiaoshui goes to the monk again to ask about the result of Jin'gou's plan to buy a new motor boat. The monk is not home, but he has foreseen her coming and has left a message to recommend her to the geomancer in another village. When Xiaoshui gets there, the geomancer, who is very popular in this area,

says in this case he has to consult the "three veterans"--Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Zhu De-- instead of the usual deities. We can see how powerful the images of the former Communists leaders are in the minds of the ordinary people. They even believe that after the Communist leaders die they still have the power to control the people's lives. After consulting the "three veterans", the geomancer tells Xiaoshui that Jin'gou's business has earned the approval of the former leaders.

In The Old Boat, the person with supernatural power to foresee the future is Zhang Wang Shi. One interesting thing in The Old Boat is that the narrator does not tell what the prediction really is. Only the reaction of the characters concerning the prediction gives the readers a clue to its content. This helps to create a more mysterious atmosphere. Before the Land Reform, Zhang Wang Shi goes to borrow some money from Sui Yingzhi. She offers to tell his fortune in return. Sui's wife Huizi is from a very wealthy family in a large city and has a very strong sense of superiority. She does not believe Zhang Wang Shi, thinking that she is just swindling her husband out of his money. But when Zhang Wang Shi says that Sui Yingzhi must have two moles on his left shoulder, Huizi, who is eating her dinner, drops her soup spoon in shock. After Sui Yingzhi tells Zhang Wang Shi his "eight characters" (birth date and time), she runs away instead of telling him the result. The reader can infer from her action that she has seen something really terrible. Sui Yingzhi tries every way he can to avoid a tragic end. He turns in almost all of the family's property to the new Communist authorities, but he still dies

a miserable death. Huizi has to believe Zhang Wang Shi's power and one day she herself goes to Zhang Wang Shi's place. When she is back, she does not mention anything about Zhang Wang Shi's prediction. Later, as the situation gets pressing, she commits suicide to avoid further humiliation. But in the last moment of her life, she is still insulted by Zhao Duoduo .

Another person in The Old Boat who can predict the future is "Grandpa Four" Zhao Bing. In the novel, Zhao Bing is the embodiment of all evils. But he is not a simple evil person like Zhao Duoduo. He has a very good knowledge of Chinese culture and also a keen insight into matters. Zhao Bing often talks about "the end" (jiegua). Zhao Duoduo is his favourite henchman, but he predicts that Zhao Duoduo will not have a good end because he has broken the "rule" (guiju) and what he has done is "too much." Zhao Duoduo finally dies a terrible death. Zhao Bing also predicts his own "end": his relationship with Hanzhang will finally cause Hanzhang to kill him. Powerful as he is, he can not avoid this end. When Hanzhang tells him that she will not come again, he replies: "I know what you are talking about. This matter is going to have an end soon." Hanzhang, shivering at his remarks, asks him what "the end" refers to. He answers calmly: "Your killing me." Then he continues, "I can not avoid this end. Sooner or later, it will come. I was waiting for you. Before you came I thought I was lucky: you had made up your mind not to come again; you would let me go. But I heard the door and you are here again. Now I have realized that it is unavoidable." To Hanzhang, the "end" is also unavoidable. She has no choice. Although the idea of

killing Zhao Bing has been haunting her since the first night he violated her, she has never had the courage to make this decision at the conscious level. Towards the end of the novel, she decides to hang herself instead of killing Zhao Bing. She tries to get a rope, but pulls out the scissors at the same time. She does not remember putting them together. Still, she closes her eyes to reach the rope, but can not help grabbing the two things together. She has no freedom to make a choice. She has to go and kill Zhao Bing.

Other kinds of predictions are made through dreams. In Turbulence, when the ferryman Han Wenju is taking a nap in his ferryboat, he sees two dogs talking on the bank, which in Chinese tradition can be interpreted as symbolizing a Chinese character yue (jail). Soon Lei Dakong is arrested for chopping off Tian Zhongzheng's toe. If in this case one can argue that Han Wenju's worry about Dakong and Fuyun, plus his knowledge of traditional Chinese fiction, may have some impact on this dream, then Jin'gou's dream about Xiaoshui is simply an omen. Jin'gou dreams of Xiaoshui in mourning. This kind of idea has never happened to him before. He thinks about this dream again and again but can not understand what it can possibly mean. Later it proves to be an omen of Fuyun's death which leaves Xiaoshui a widow.

The third way to make predictions is through some mysterious events. In Turbulence, the floods of the Prefectural River are always omens of some great events in the life of the people in this area. In The Old Boat, the missing of a lead tube containing a grain of radium



has cast a shadow over Walizhen's future. This tube will cause some incurable diseases or deformed infants. The people in Walizhen try every way possible to search for it, but all their efforts are in vain. Even the using of a Geiger counter-- a symbol of modern technology -- can not help. This mysterious incident worries the peasants, but the peasants can not do anything about it. It is out of their control.

The theme of determinism was forbidden in China during the Maoist years. The Communist power holders believed that they were strong enough to control any force (human, natural or supernatural) in the universe. Under their influence, the whole nation was unrealistically optimistic. This trend reached a peak in the Great Leap Forward and again in the Cultural Revolution. "The more courage men have, the more grain the land has to yield" and "when we oil workers are yelling, the earth cannot help shaking" are typical mottoes of those times. This confidence in men's ability to control their life subsided at the end of the Cultural Revolution. After experiencing ten years of bloody struggle, the Chinese people witnessed a turbulent year of 1976, when the earth literally shook in Tangshan, the highest Communist leaders died one after another, and the "gang of four" fell overnight. Things seemed really beyond men's control. A feeling of powerlessness began to spring up quietly among the ordinary people. It continued to grow in the reform years. When the country opened its doors, the Chinese people were exposed to a highly advanced world. They realized how ridiculous their former megalomaniac attitude was. To solve China's problems, reform seems to be the only solution, but the people also see too many

barriers in their way. Writers, as the most sensitive and sentimental group in the society, started to express their feeling of frustration in their works. Around the middle of the 1980s, the message of fatalism and determinism emerged in Chinese literature. This kind of message is, however, not welcomed by the authorities. In China, the writers have to take the authorities' attitude into consideration. As a result, in Turbulence and The Old Boat, this theme of determinism is not as clearly presented as the other major themes. Also, the idea of determinism is quite general. The novels only imply that human life is governed by certain inexorable laws of cause and effect. People do not have much freedom in making choices. The two works have not specified the possible determining force. It could be fate, God's will, the action of natural law, or the operation of various details in daily life.

Because the presentation of the message of determinism is quite obscure in these novels. The episodes of predictions discussed above could be interpreted as only reflections of rural religious life. Jia Pingwa and Zhang Wei are well-recognized Nativist writers. They both have written about the religious customs and practices in rural China. For instance, in Turbulence the boatmen worship a snake as the river god; in The Old Boat, the peasants seriously perform the funeral rites. However, these religious customs do not affect the fate of the characters, while the mysterious predictions we discussed above always prove true in the characters' life, and there is no indication in the narration that this is merely the result of coincidence; so I believe that these episodes of predictions are not

only the presentation of the peasants' religious life, but also important thematic elements. It may also be argued that these episodes are but narrative techniques used for the purpose of giving clues to the plot development or creating a mysterious atmosphere. But there are many techniques that can serve this purpose. We can not say that the reason why the writers choose to use these mysterious predictions has nothing to do with their ideological attitude.

Turbulence and The Old Boat are works set in the Chinese countryside, but their thematic significance has gone beyond rural life. This is probably because of the peasants' important position in China. China is an agricultural country, a great majority of its population are peasants. The urban inhabitants are basically ex-peasants or their second and third generations. A more important fact which affects the situation in present-day China is that China's aged ruling circle is generally of peasant origin and the PLA is composed of peasants' sons. In 1989, a symposium was held in Gansu to discuss the problems concerning peasants in both real life and literature. The scholars and critics attending the meeting called the peasants the "Grandpa" in China; and to emphasize the influence of peasant consciousness in China, they also pointed out that in a broad sense, "peasants" can include any person with peasants' ideas.<sup>15</sup> In modern Chinese literature, works about peasants and rural life have made more achievements than those addressing other

---

<sup>15</sup> Wenxuebao, January 5, 1989: 1.

subject matters. In the next two chapters I will analyze a series of peasant characters created in Turbulence and The Old Boat, and further examine the thematic significance shown by these characters.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE CHARACTERS, I

Although peasants play important roles in Chinese society, they did not appear as main characters in Chinese fiction until the May Fourth era. Since then peasants, as well as intellectuals, have become the most important images in Chinese literature. The peasant images in modern Chinese literature possess both positive and negative traits. In general, on the positive side, they are honest, simple, diligent and tenacious; on the negative side, they are narrow-minded, selfish, cowardly, rude, sometimes even cruel. Most modern Chinese writers emphasize the positive side in the character of Chinese peasants. Because of the Chinese peasants' plight, modern Chinese writers usually have too much feeling for them to disclose their negative side. Only great writers like Lu Xun probed with true insight into the negative side of Chinese peasants' character. During the Maoist years, writing about the peasants' bad traits was a risky job. If some writers had to deal with this subject, they would display some bad traits in peasant characters with the class status of "middle peasant" (zhongnong). To write about a "poor peasant" (pinnong) with serious shortcomings was not allowed, not to mention creating the image of a poor peasant as the embodiment of peasant vileness. It is in the post-Mao era that the writers are able to explore at a

deeper level the negative side of Chinese peasants' character and present it in their works. In this respect, we can say that Turbulence and The Old Boat are both very successful.

Turbulence and The Old Boat create a gallery of interesting characters, ranging from high officials of peasant origin to ordinary poor peasants. It is the stories of these characters that make the novels so readable. In certain aspects the two works make important breakthroughs. In this chapter, I will discuss the protagonists in Turbulence and The Old Boat.

Jin'gou and Baopu are the respective protagonists of these two novels. Both characters have received much critical attention in China. It seems to me that the critics' interest in Baopu is to a great degree due to the ideological ideas represented by this character. As a literary image Jin'gou is more successfully portrayed than Baopu. Therefore, in the following discussion on these two characters, I will centre on Jin'gou and discuss Baopu mainly in comparison with Jin'gou.

Jin'gou and Baopu are both educated peasants. Jin'gou is a high school graduate. This is quite a high level of education for a peasant boy. Baopu receives an early education before the Communists take power and continues to study by himself during the Maoist years. He has a very good reading ability and can also write very well. At the end of the novel he writes without difficulty a very long statement to submit to the court. The image of educated peasants is

absent in May Fourth literature, but can be found in the post-1949 fictional works. However, educated peasants as heroes of literary works did not appear until the post-Mao era. In Maoist literature educated young peasants are always described as vulnerable to the attack of "the consciousness of the exploiting class." They are always in the danger of losing their good peasant qualities or "class consciousness". Their urgent need is to receive a "class education" from the Communist party and the "poor and lower middle peasants" (pinxiazhongnong). The knowledge they have received in school is often viewed as impractical. It is only under the guidance of the Party and the "poor and lower middle peasants" that they can make a limited use of this knowledge. In short, they are far from ideal young peasants. In Maoist literature, one important and common thing in the backgrounds of ideal young peasants is experience in the army. Education is not important. In the post-Mao era, with the change in the whole nation's attitude towards education and culture, the position of educated peasants has been recognized in Chinese literature. Famous post-Mao works like Zheng Yi's The Old Well (Lao jing) and Lu Yao's Life (Rensheng) all have educated young peasants as protagonists.

In Turbulence and The Old Boat, it is very clear that the educated young peasants Baopu and Jin'gou are the heroes. They enjoy a very high reputation among the peasants. The latter view them as their hope and their leaders. In Turbulence, the peasants admire Jin'gou so much that they even believe that Jin'gou is not an ordinary human being but the reincarnation of a mysterious bird

named kanshan'gou. Because of Jin'gou the peasants start to worship the bird and its price goes up rapidly in the market. In The Old Boat, the peasants also take it for granted that Baopu should be the leader of the town's fensi business, its principal industry. Even the negative characters in the two novels have to admit the strength of the heroes. In Turbulence, Tian Zhongzheng often teaches his relatives and henchmen that they should not neglect the influence of Jin'gou on the villagers. In turn, Tian himself is warned in the same way by his superior Tian Youshan, the county Party Secretary. In The Old Boat, even Zhao Duoduo, the rude and cruel enemy of the Sui family never dares to neglect Sui Baopu. To attach such importance to the educated-peasant heroes is something not very often seen in modern Chinese literature.

Baopu and Jin'gou are not only heroes in the eyes of the peasants but are obviously also ideal peasants in the implied authors' view. However, the protagonists are not perfect in terms of personal qualities. We say they are ideal peasants because they represent the highest level ever reached by the peasants; we say they are not perfect because they are presented not as the simple embodiment of certain ideals but as flesh-and-blood human beings, and no human being is perfect. In fact the authors have done their best to create the protagonists as three-dimensional characters.<sup>16</sup> The two works, especially Turbulence, successfully bring out various

---

<sup>16</sup> I do not agree with the criticism made in the Book Review in the New York Times (September 22, 1991), in which the critic evaluates the characters in Turbulence as "merely two-dimensional figures."



aspects in the heroes' personalities and the conflicts in their temperaments.

Although the heroes of the two novels have many things in common, such as their educational level and their obsessive concerns with the situation of Chinese peasants, they are apparently of different temperaments. A comparison between their characters will make clear the success and failure of these works in creating the protagonists.

One important characteristic in Jin'gou's personality is his ambition and pride. In the Maoist years, individual ambition is an unacceptable quality and can not be found in the heroes of the literary works. Even in the post-Mao era, a lot of writers still hesitate in describing their heroes' individual ambitions. But in Turbulence, the narrator shows Jin'gou's ambition in a completely positive light and shows that Jin'gou's individual ambition is combined with his ambition to improve the peasants' lives.

In the beginning of the novel, the narrator tells about the history of Jin'gou's family, which implies some inherent reason for Jin'gou's ambition and pride. Although Jin'gou's father is a timid painter, Jin'gou's grandfather was the leader of a rebellion of boatmen and was killed by the authorities. Jin'gou's strong competitive streak has been with him since childhood. On one New Year's eve, the Gong and Tian households all hang large lanterns at the doors of their houses. Jin'gou and Xiaoshui, then both small

children , are sitting in a boat watching the lanterns. Xiaoshui admires the lanterns of the Gong and the Tian houses. Jin'gou is not willing to give up. He goes home and, with the paper his father has bought to put on the windows, he makes a large lantern. Then he goes to the Gong and Tian houses to compete with the children there. His lantern is very good. As he yells excitedly over his victory, his father comes over to stop him. The painter does not like his son to be so wild as to compete with the Tian and the Gong families. But Jin'gou won't listen; his father gets angry and gives him a slap in the face. This happens in the presence of the Gong and the Tian children and badly wounds Jin'gou's pride. For this he hates his father and even refuses to accept the New Year gift money from him. In this episode Jin'gou's personality is put in sharp contrast with his father's. The painter is a typical obedient peasant who has accepted his place at the bottom of society. but Jin'gou dares to compete with those above him and has the confidence to win.

Jin'gou has a strong desire to get a better life than that of the peasants like his own father. And to achieve his goal he fears nothing in the world. When he is only a child, he wants to go down the Prefectural River with the boatmen to start a risky but profitable career, but his father stops him from doing so. When he is grown up, he goes to join the army, not for the purpose of defending his country (always the heroes' motivation for joining the army in Maoist fiction), but for the purpose of getting out of the countryside and having a better life. He wishes there were a war so he could have a chance for fast promotion--he is not afraid of death. But

there is no war at that time; so he plans to apply to the military college, hoping that after graduation he can become a PLA officer. Just then he is demobilized and has to return to the countryside. At that time, the climate in rural China is conducive to money-making; so Jin'gou starts a river transport business.

As a peasant's son, Jin'gou closely combines his individual ambition with his ambition to improve the peasants' lives. When his river transport business is booming, the township Party Secretary Tian Zhongzheng suggests reorganizing it into a transport team. Jin'gou agrees to this suggestion out of the consideration that this will help the other peasants make more money. When Jin'gou learns that there is an opportunity to become a reporter, he is excited and very eager to go. The reason is twofold: on one hand, journalism is a very respectable occupation in China and is a way for a country boy's ambitious dream to come true; on the other hand, since a reporter has the ability to get his articles published in the newspaper and often has access to the higher officials, he can speak for the peasants whose voice is always neglected in China.

Intimately related to Jin'gou's ambitions is his pride as a peasant's son. His reaction to insults about his family background is unforgettable to the reader. Jin'gou's father is a painter. In the Shangzhou area the painters have a very low social status. They like to moisten the paint pen on their mouths, so their mouths look funny when they are working. People like to laugh at them. On two occasions Jin'gou loses his temper over disrespectful attitudes

towards painters. One time he throws the paint bowl on the wall when the Tian family members say something insulting about the painters. Another time he pounces on the desk and breaks the desk top glass in anger when his mistress Shi Hua speaks contemptuously of painters.

Another impressive episode showing Jin'gou's peasant pride is in Chapter 12, when he first enters the prefectural capital to work as a reporter. He asks his way to the newspaper office. The city residents laugh at him. At first he blushes in embarrassment; then he also laughs and says in his heart: "You city residents think that this city is yours? But the man Gong Baoshan who leads this city is from the countryside. Now I am coming. You wait and see." Gong Baoshan is one of the Gong officials whom Jin'gou does not like at all, but when it comes to the question of the dignity of peasants, Jin'gou can not help being proud of him. This episode is very interesting in revealing Jin'gou's peasant psychology. Later, Jin'gou encounters a group of city residents bullying some peasants who are driving horse carts in the street. Jin'gou is very angry at this. When he tries to interfere, a man yells at him and says something derogatory. They have a quarrel, which ends up with Jin'gou hitting the man in the face. When the man threatens to complain to the newspaper, Jin'gou laughs with pride: "Ok, when what you write comes in, I will correct your wrong characters for you." This reveals his status as a reporter and the city men run away. Jin'gou then berates the horse cart drivers: "When you come to the city, come in a dignified way. If you

look down upon yourselves, no one here will treat you like human beings." (165)

Jin'gou's ambition and pride as an individual young man and as the son of a peasant make up the basic motivation of most of his actions in the novel. The description is so realistic and the motivation is so convincing that this character looks very vivid to us.

Compared to Jin'gou, Baopu has no individual ambition at all. He always tries his best to avoid attracting any attention. One reason we can find in the narration is that Baopu always feels pressure from the Communist power holders like Zhao Bing and Zhao Duoduo, who constantly watch him and his family. If he shows any trace of ambition, they will not hesitate to eliminate him. In the novel, Zhao Duoduo keeps repeating one phrase: "Do away with him (gandiao ta)," a symbol of the Communist terror during several decades. Understandably, Baopu has to be very careful.

In the novel there is a more important reason for Baopu's lack of ambition. That is his view of human desire for power and wealth as the roots of all the evils in the world. This makes him naturally dislike any personal ambition. However, Baopu has a very serious commitment to changing the peasants' lives. In his mind the cure will be moral improvement. But he realizes that to put his idea into practice, he needs the power to prevent people from doing evil things and he also needs the power to promote moral education. Therefore, he is faced with a constant dilemma: to play an active part

in the world (rushì) or to retire from it (chushi). This is a dilemma which has tortured the Chinese intellectuals for thousands of years. Baopu is tormented by this dilemma throughout the whole novel. In this sense, we can say that the image of Baopu is more successful as an intellectual than as a peasant.

Neither Baopu nor the implied author realizes, however, that Baopu's pondering whether to take action or remain in retirement is actually of no great significance because he won't make a success even if he decides to serve the public. He finally makes up his mind to come out of his old mill house and manage the fensi business for the people in the town. But as I will discuss below, the result of this action can only be a failure. Then his best choice could be to retire from the world again. As Confucius said thousands of years ago, if his doctrines made no way, he would "put to sea on a raft."<sup>17</sup>

Another noticeable characteristic demonstrated in Jin'gou is his political finesse. Although political games have never stopped going on in Chinese society, generally it is the Chinese literary tradition not to view politicians as ideal heroes. Most literary works tend to describe the heroes as honest and pure. In any case they won't resort to dishonest political tactics. Usually, persistent loyalty and absolute honesty are the qualities most celebrated. This tradition continues in Modern Chinese literature including the post-1949 literature. In the post-Mao literature, images of new politicians began to emerge. Li

---

<sup>17</sup> Lau, D.C. trans. The Analects, Book V, New York: Penguin Books, 1979:76.

Xiangnan in Ke Yunlu's famous work New Star (Xinxing) is a controversial image of a politician and he is generally well accepted by Chinese readers. It seems to me that Jin'gou is a more successfully created image of a new politician than Li Xiangnan. The latter has more repercussions in China mainly because of the T.V. opera based on the novel. Li Xiangnan, whose father is a high official in Beijing, has some personal political background to support his fight with the corrupt officials and his conservative opponents. Jin'gou is only the son of a peasant. His success in fighting the corrupt bureaucracy is the result of his personal ability and political tactics.

Jin'gou has a strong sense of justice and is honest to the common people. This is an important difference between Jin'gou and Lei Dakong. But when Jin'gou is dealing with the corrupt officials and other bad persons, he never hesitates to play political games. Sometimes his tactics can be viewed as dishonest and even mean.

In the first part of Turbulence, Jin'gou learns that the prefectural newspaper is going to recruit two reporters from his county, but Tian Zhongzheng has already decided to give one position to his niece Yingying and the other to his mistress Cuicui's brother. Jin'gou goes to Tian Zhongzheng's sister-in-law, who is also having an affair with Tian. Jin'gou deliberately tells the woman of Tian's relationship with Cuicui and adds that Tian intends to marry Cuicui and also will help her brother to become a reporter. Jin'gou's words arouse the jealousy of Tian's sister-in-law. She then threatens Tian

that she will disclose all his wrongdoings if he does not break up with Cuicui. Tian has to give up and marry her instead of Cuicui. Cuicui dies in shock and sorrow. Of course, Tian will no longer recommend her brother, who is too stupid to be a reporter anyway. So Jin'gou gets the chance to compete for this position.

After Jin'gou becomes a reporter, he continues to use his tactics to get things working for him. When he goes to Dongyang County, he needs the materials which can show the true situation of the peasants' impoverished life. He knows that it is impossible for him to get these materials honestly. So he tells the Party Secretary that he needs some concrete information to write a report covering the "good" situation in this county. The official is pleased and says he will let the people in his office give Jin'gou any materials he needs. Then Jin'gou goes to those office clerks and asks for the material he wants. After he obtains it, "Jin'gou is sort of proud of his tactics. He has learned how to beat the unhealthy social tendency by dishonest means." (211)

In Fuyun's case, Jin'gou deliberately joins hands with the prefectural leader Gong Baoshan, whom Jin'gou dislikes as much as he hates the Tian officials. Jin'gou knows the conflicts between the Gong officials and the Tian officials. So he goes to Gong Baoshan and implies that Fuyun's case is a good opportunity for Gong to beat the Tian officials. Gong Baoshan gladly takes up this case. The Tian officials who are responsible for Fuyun's death are punished. So by



helping Gong to beat his political rivals Jin'gou has succeeded in claiming justice for Fuyun.

After Jin'gou is arrested, the Tian officials are excited that they have eliminated a really tough enemy. Now the Gong and The Tian officials both hate Jin'gou and want him to be finished. The situation looks so hopeless that the reader can not imagine this time how Jin'gou can get himself out of jail. But Jin'gou is not at his wit's end. He makes use of his relationship with Shi Hua to get himself freed. Jin'gou has already broken up with Shi Hua after a long affair, partly because of his sense of guilt and partly for fear that this affair will someday ruin his career. But he knows Shi Hua is still madly in love with him and she will do anything for his sake. He sends out a note to Xiaoshui, asking her to contact Shi Hua in the prefectural capital. Jin'gou knows that Shi Hua has connections at the provincial level and she is admired by some powerful men. At this moment he is practical enough to neglect the moral issue in this matter. Shi Hua goes to the son of a high official for help. She agrees to sleep with him; in return he will ask his father to look into Jin'gou's case. After Jin'gou is released from jail, he never tries to contact Shi Hua and he does not want to know how she managed to get him out. He is fully aware that there has to be something untoward involved in this case.

These things will definitely not happen to a hero in Maoist literary works. It takes the author a good deal of courage to describe Jin'gou in such a realistic way. However, the novel also shows that Jin'gou does not do these things without inner conflict. Sometimes he

blames himself for being too cunning and tells himself that cunning is not supposed to be the quality of a peasant's son. He is constantly obsessed by the question whether he is right in doing so. When the peasants are having a dinner party to celebrate the correction of Fuyun's case, the ferryman Han Wenju says in an admiring tone that he knows how Jin'gou managed to win the case: "On the one hand, you fight the officials, on the other hand, you try to please them." (306) Jin'gou blushes immediately and keeps drinking without a word. He later confesses to Xiaoshui that what Han Wenju said is right and that it touches the sore spot in his heart. He feels humiliation in playing these games. It is against his will, but what is interesting is that despite all his inner conflicts he does not stop using those tactics in practice. He knows if he wants to win, he has to play political games with the officials. Jin'gou is not as naive as Sui Baopu; the latter believes only moral improvement is the cure for this dark world.

Jin'gou is more of a doer, while Baopu is more of a thinker. A thinker can be concerned only with the issue of what is right and what is wrong. He does not have to be worried about whether or how his belief can be put into practice. But a doer is different, he has to consider the result and he has to win. For this purpose sometimes he has to compromise. Baopu might be a very successful literary image if he is viewed as an educated peasant thinker, but the author obviously wants to depict him as a potential leader who can someday lead the peasants out of the darkness of their lives. This is a mistake.

This mistake is common in Chinese society. The Chinese tradition always regarded the scholars as potential officials. This idea was mainly caused by the civil service examination system, which was an important channel for the government to choose officials. The scholars all expected to assume office someday. If a good scholar failed in the examination and was not chosen through other channels to be an official, he complained. The scholars often didn't seriously examine themselves to see whether they, despite their literary talent or academic knowledge, did have the qualities for political careers, such as skills in dealing with people and abilities to adapt quickly to changing circumstances.

In Baopu's case, he can become neither a politician nor an entrepreneur. First of all he hates to compete. Secondly, he judges everything by his moral standards and has no tactical skill at all. Despite the strong objection of Jiansu, Baopu does his best to save the spoiled starch in Zhao Duoduo's fensi business, thinking that in doing so he will save the people of the whole town from suffering a great loss and he can also secure fame in the specialty of this town. He even considers the reputation of China, as the fensi produced in Walizhen is popular on the international market. But things do not work out the way he hopes. Zhao Duoduo takes all the profits from the fensi factory and, as he gets stronger, he becomes more arbitrary. He abuses the workers and uses a large amount of bad quality starch in making fensi, thus destroying the reputation of the fensi produced in Walizhen. When Zhao Duoduo's lease contract expires, the fensi

factory is open for lease to the people in the town. It is a good chance to take it away from Zhao Duoduo. But Baopu considers it is immoral trying to get the fensi business back into the hands of the Sui family. As a result, the fensi business falls into the hands of Zhao Duoduo again.

To be fair, we should mention that in the novel Baopu does realize his mistakes and decides to take over the fensi business towards the end of the novel. But this has not changed his way of thinking and doing at all. This is evident in his attitude towards Hanzhang's case. After Hanzhang is arrested for attempting to kill Zhao Bing, Baopu goes to visit Hanzhang in prison and learns of everything between Hanzhang and Zhao Bing. In order to help Hanzhang, Baopu writes a long statement to submit to the court. At first this statement includes the history of the Sui family for the past forty years. On the advice of Jiansu and other people, Baopu agrees to single out the part concerning Hanzhang to submit to the court. He believes this can rescue Hanzhang, and what he should do is to wait for the court to pass sentence. Baopu lives in a society ruled by completely corrupt bureaucrats. The novel has displayed this very clearly through what has happened in Walizhen and through Jiansu's experience in the city. Zhao Bing's sons, who are cadres in the cities have come back home and have required the court to punish Hanzhang "severely and quickly". It is very unlikely that Baopu's statement will improve Hanzhang's fate at all. If Hanzhang had a brother like Jin'gou, things might be different. We can hardly imagine that with such an idealistic and naive attitude, Baopu will be

able to deal with the complex situation in a business in today's China. It is regrettable that the novel fails to show this problem and instead, it demonstrates full confidence in Baopu's future as a "general manager."

Another point I will discuss is the protagonists' relationships with women. Both Baopu and Jin'gou have extramarital relations with women. Baopu's relationship with Xiaokui is an old fashioned story. They are lovers, but Xiaokui is forced to marry someone else. Because of Baopu's bad class background, he is not in a position to compete for Xiaokui. After Xiaokui is married, her husband leaves home to work in a coal mine. One night, Baopu breaks into Xiaokui's house from the window and the two spend a happy night together. Soon Xiaokui's husband dies in an accident in the mine. Baopu feels guilty and after this he keeps Xiaokui at a distance. Baopu's relationship with Xiaokui is based on true love, although it does not conform to the social norm. This kind of relationship is not new in Chinese literature. Usually it can be accepted by the readers even in pre-modern times. Baopu's strong sense of guilt does not seem well grounded. Actually, the death of Xiaokui's husband has nothing to do with his relationship with Xiaokui. If, as some critics have mentioned, Baopu's estrangement from Xiaokui is due to his fear of persecution from the powerful Zhao clan (Xiaokui's natal clan), it would be more reasonable. But unfortunately, the narration shows that it is Baopu's moral consideration that accounts more for his deserting Xiaokui. Baopu's hesitation not only destroys his life, but

also makes Xiaokui miserable. The implied author holds a critical attitude towards his behaviour, but it is not strong enough.

Compared with the relationship between Baopu and Xiaokui, Jin'gou's extramarital relationships with Yingying and Shi Hua are better designed. They serve successfully the purpose of displaying the hero's complex character. Jin'gou's relationships with the two women are not based on love but on sex. Jin'gou and Xiaoshui are deeply in love, but Xiaoshui is quite conservative and to her premarital sex is impossible. Jin'gou is not satisfied with her attitude. He has sex with Yingying partly because he can not resist her sexual appeal, partly because he wants to punish Xiaoshui. He does not love Yingying at all.

Shi Hua is a very attractive woman. She is married and her husband is Jin'gou's good friend, who respects and admires Jin'gou. Shi Hua's marriage is a happy one, but she is fascinated by Jin'gou's talent and manliness. Jin'gou does not mean to enter into an affair with her, but he fails to control himself. He never says he loves Shi Hua; however he is attracted by her charming personality. He also wants to satisfy his thirst for sexual love after he loses Xiaoshui and breaks up with Yingying. The adultery of a hero can not be found in Maoist literature. Even in the post-Mao literature where sexual life is no longer a forbidden area, adultery is described in a positive way only if it is based on true love. So it is quite remarkable that the novel describes sex as a serious concern in the hero's life and to a certain extent it rationalizes the hero's affairs with women. Here

Jin'gou is treated as a real human being with weakness shared by all the human beings. We can say that in this respect the novel breaks through another forbidden area in contemporary Chinese literature.

The novel does not neglect the description of Jin'gou's guilt and remorse for some of his relationships with women. In his relationship with Yingying, Jin'gou feels guilty for betraying Xiaoshui. After Jin'gou has sex with Yingying he realizes that "Xiaoshui is a goddess and Yingying is a little animal. Men respect goddesses but are attracted by little animals." At the spiritual level, Jin'gou loves Xiaoshui; at the physical level he feels satisfied with Yingying. However, physical attraction only lasts a very short while and spiritual love is always there. Jin'gou is tortured by guilty feelings for all the years before he finally marries Xiaoshui.

Jin'gou's relationship with Shi Hua also brings a lot of agony to him. First of all he feels guilty for cheating Shi Hua's husband. Once Shi Hua's husband mentions that he never doubts her faith to him. Jin'gou's face turns red and he dares not look him in the eye. Secondly, he is always in fear that their affair will someday be disclosed. In a society which can sometimes be very harsh to adulterers, exposure would definitely ruin his career, especially when Jin'gou has so many rivals and enemies waiting for any chance to get rid of him. Moral concern is very important to Jin'gou. His career as a reporter means even more. To Jin'gou this position is not only a respectable job but also his means to fight the corrupt officials and speak for his fellow peasants. However, the novel shows that for

quite a long while, the physical pleasure he feels in his affair with Shi Hua means so much to him that it outweighs his moral and career concerns. Although he is fully aware of the potential danger, Jin'gou still can not stop seeing Shi Hua. The narrator describes him in this way: "Jin'gou is just like a drug addict. A drug addict knows that the drug will ruin his life, but he still finds a great satisfaction in using it." (335) It is quite unusual that the author puts the hero in such a situation. In most Chinese literary works, a hero is supposed to have a strong will to resist any temptation and always put his career first.

It is also worth noticing that in Turbulence, Jin'gou's sexual agony is fully displayed, sometimes even in a way reminiscent of the protagonists in Yu Dafu's fictional works. After Jin'gou finally decides not to see Shi Hua again, he works very hard during the day, trying to forget her. But at night he often dreams about her. When he awakes from the dreams, he can not go back to sleep. Sometimes he has to get up and walk to the dark places outside the city. He tortures himself, swears at himself, pulls his hair and slaps himself in the face. These descriptions fully exhibit the emotional pains of a hero and are not often found in other literary works published in mainland China.

The endings of these two novels, especially the future of the two protagonists are topics often discussed by Chinese critics. Some critics pointed out that both Turbulence and The Old Boat have too



idealistic endings.<sup>18</sup> I agree with the criticism about the ending of The Old Boat. I have already said that the optimistic future of Baopu as a successful entrepreneur is not convincing. But it seems to me that the ending of Turbulence is not that simple.

At the end of Turbulence, Jin'gou is released from jail. The Tian and Gong officials' influence has been greatly frustrated, but they are still strong enough to influence the leaders of the newspaper office. As a result, Jin'gou is asked to stop being a reporter and work in the reference room, where he is unable to do anything significant. In this situation, Jin'gou quits his job and returns to his home village to resume his river transport business. This action suits Jin'gou's personality. In this way he can make much more money than a reporter's salary and, being out of the immediate watch of the officials, he has more freedom to do things he wants to do. Jin'gou is doing very well in his business after he returns home. We can not call this an idealistic ending because he was successful in the transport business in the first part of the novel, and he is the well known good boatman on the river. So his success is understandable.

Despite his success as a boatman, the novel does not, in my view, predict a bright future for Jin'gou. Xiaoshui's dream toward

---

<sup>18</sup> For examples, see Zhao Zuhan, "At the Back of Karma--A Rambling Talk about 'Fuzao' and 'Guchuan' [Yinguobaoying de beihou--Guchuan yu Fuzao manyi], Wenxue ziyou tan no.5 (1987):87-94. and Wang Binbin, "The Traumatized Avengers in Contemporary Chinese fiction" [Dangdai xiaoshuo zhong de chuangshang baofu xing renwu], Wenyi pinglun no.2(1988):37-41.

the end of the novel is interesting. In Xiaoshui's dream, Jin'gou has bought a new motor boat, as is his plan in reality. This is the first motor boat ever to sail on the Prefectural River. Xiaoshui is also told in the dream that Jin'gou is going to run for mayor of the county. But as Jin'gou, Xiaoshui and their friends are sailing happily in the boat, they suddenly fall into the water. When Xiaoshui emerges from the icy cold water, she can not find Jin'gou any more. (487) As I have discussed in the preceding chapter, the dreams in Turbulence are always prophetic. This dream implies that the future of the protagonist is far from ideal. The last paragraph of the novel is: "Now this is the fifth day before the coming of the flood, the second one of the two largest in the Prefectural River's history. It is in the depth of night." This can hardly be interpreted as the prediction of a bright future.

However, the criticism of the ending of Turbulence is not completely groundless. Besides the success of Jin'gou's transport business, some remarks made by Jin'gou in the last part of the novel also sound like an indication of an optimistic tone. Towards the end of the novel, Jin'gou has a long speech voicing the implied author's opinions: "...Economic betterment runs hand in hand with cultural progress. ... And only when the people reach a certain cultural level will the foundation that bureaucratism requires collapse. ... " (479) I do not think that this statement is completely wrong in content, but it does give the reader an impression that there is a simple solution for the problems in China: material wealth leads to a high cultural level and then the corrupt bureaucratic system will automatically

change. Moreover, to let the character speak directly for the implied author in a flavourless speech is at least an artistic defect and reflects the limitation of the author. This episode is criticized by critics both in China and abroad.<sup>19</sup> But this speech can not take the place of the basic ideas presented in the novel, and we can not judge the ending of the novel only by this single statement.

The significant ideological limitation reflected in the images of Jin'gou and Baopu is, in my view, the ideas of "rule by persons" (renzhi), which is opposed to the ideas of "rule of law" (fazhi). Consciously or unconsciously, the implied authors show in the novels the belief that changing the unsatisfactory situation of the peasants depends on certain individuals with good personal qualities. This is also called the idea of "incorruptible officials" (Qingguan). In Turbulence, the peasants view Jin'gou almost as their saviour. There is the rumour that Jin'gou is the reincarnation of a strange bird "kanshan'gou". The peasants worship the bird for the sake of admiring Jin'gou. After Jin'gou is arrested, the peasants lose their hope, Han Wenju laments: "We are finished." In The Old Boat, the people in the town are all worried when Zhao Duoduo controls the fensi business. As soon as Baopu finally agrees to stand out and take over the fensi business, they all feel relaxed. We have to admit that in reality, good officials are better than bad officials and it is understandable that the peasants hope they can have more good

---

<sup>19</sup> See "Book Review" in New York Times, September 22, (1991) and Zhao Zuhua, "At the Back of Karma--A Rambling Talk about 'Fuzao' and 'Guchuan'" [Yinguobaoying de beihou--Guchuan yu Fuzao manyi], Wenxue ziyou tan no.5 (1987):87-94.

officials to help them. In this sense, the novels do give a true representation of the peasants' mental state. The problem is that there is no strong critical message in the narration about the peasants' ideas of "rule by persons". The novels fail to show that this kind of idea is harmful in the process of democratizing China. In this regard, the authors seem to have as limited a view as the peasants.

As educated young peasants, the protagonists represent the ex-peasant authors' ideas about Chinese society in a more direct sense than the other characters in the two novels. However, the other characters are also of thematic importance, and some are very well portrayed. I will discuss them in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CHARACTERS, II

In this chapter, I will study some other interesting characters in Turbulence and The Old Boat. My discussion will concentrate on the co-protagonists and the villains. The woman characters and the old peasant characters will also be concerned.

The co-protagonists I wish to discuss here are Lei Dakong in Turbulence and Sui Jiansu in The Old Boat. I call them co-protagonists because of their important roles in presenting the major themes, and also because of their effects on the development of the protagonists' characters. These effects are especially noticeable in The Old Boat. Although Baopu is opposed to Jiansu's ambition, he at the same time constantly admires Jiansu's courage. Jiansu serves as a foil. In contrast with Jiansu, Baopu sees his own weakness. It is after drawing on the daring spirit of Jiansu that Baopu finally decides to take active steps. In Turbulence, Lei Dakong's behavior also affects Jin'gou's thinking and actions. At one point Jin'gou even wishes he could be as bold as Lei Dakong.

The two co-protagonists are peasants whose lives have undergone dramatic changes in the reform years. They are initially

at the bottom of society, materially impoverished and spiritually oppressed. Lei Dakong's parents die early. He lives all by himself and there are hardly any utensils in his house. He does everything to make a living. For several yuan, even in cold weather, he will carry a woman on his back to wade across the river. Sui Jiansu's situation is even worse. He was born in a wealthy family but brought up in extreme poverty. His parents die in the Land Reform and the Communist authorities take away all the family property. Because of his bad class background, anyone can bully him if they want to. During the Cultural Revolution, Jiansu, then a young boy, is brutally tortured by the "revolutionary rebels". In the reform years, the new government policy brings great opportunities to these characters. They leave the land and start doing business. In a very short time, they rise like new stars with their financial success. Lei Dakong sets up a company and becomes the general manager. Sui Jiansu is the manager of stores in both Walizhen and the city. Everybody in the city calls him "Mr. Sui". they associate with the people of high social status in the city and become regular customers of high class restaurants.

People like Lei Dakong and Sui Jiansu are called "peasant entrepreneurs" in China. The dazzling changes in their lives attract much attention and generally receive the applause of the Chinese media. Their stories are naturally good subject matter for literary works. "Peasant entrepreneurs" are frequently found in post-Mao literary works. Most of these works follow the tone of the Party and the media. In these works "peasant entrepreneurs" are portrayed as

model Chinese peasants. Their success is attributed to the Party's reform line. Only a small number of serious writers attempt to probe in depth the complex character of these "peasant entrepreneurs" and present the negative side of their characters. Those works demonstrate a good deal of true insight and artistic courage. It seems to me that Turbulence and The Old Boat are among these works.

The "peasant entrepreneurs" Lei Dakong and Sui Jiansu believe in the principle of "combating evil with evil." These kinds of characters are called "traumatized avengers" by some Chinese critics.<sup>20</sup> Turbulence and The Old Boat convincingly show the reasons why these characters take the road of "combating evil with evil." First, as they were once at the bottom of society, they have a strong hatred for those who oppressed them. They think that to those evil people, nothing is too much for punishment. So Lei Dakong chops off Tian Zhongzheng's toe; Sui Jiansu wants to spoil a great quantity of starch in Zhao Duoduo's fensi factory and also contemplates killing Zhao Duoduo with a chopping knife in Zhao's office. Second, these characters are influenced by the corrupt practices of the society and learn from the officials who are supposed to be their examples. Lei Dakong always talks about the behavior of the people in power and thus he rationalizes his own actions. In the first part of Turbulence, Lei is found selling false rat poison in the

---

<sup>20</sup> See Wang Bin Bin, "The Traumatized Avengers in Contemporary Chinese fiction" [Dangdai xiaoshuo zhong de chuangshang baofu xing renwu], Wenyi pinglun no.2 (1988):37-41.

city. In response to the criticism of one old fellow villager, Lei said, "This is a time when people cheat each other. I am an ordinary peasant, so I only cheat for some small money. What about those officials? Unfortunately, you are illiterate. If you could read the newspapers and see what they have been doing, you would feel so bad that you might hang yourself. But those officials get no punishment for what they do. If they become too notorious to stay in one place, they will be transferred to another place and hold new offices." (84) But although Lei Dakong thinks it is alright to follow the evil example of the officials, he fails at first. He tries to traffic in silver dollars, but is caught on the train. All his money is confiscated and he gets a good beating from the police.

It is in jail that Lei Dakong learns from one of the inmates how to make good in this society. When Lei is released, he decides to do big business. His first step is to get a big amount of money as capital. To try the means he has just learned in jail, he bribes a village credit cooperative cadre with the seven yuan he has received in compensation for being wrongly jailed; thus he gets a loan of seventy yuan. Then he gives this seventy yuan to the cadre of the township credit cooperative and gets a loan of seven hundred yuan. Again he gives this amount of money to the cadre of the credit cooperative at the higher level, ... in this way he raises seventy thousand yuan in two days. This proves what he has learned from his fellow prisoner and since then he clings to the way of "combating evil with evil".



Sui Jiansu's being affected by the corrupt society is not presented as clearly as in Lei Dakong's case. But his experience in the city, especially his association with powerful people does teach him what the people in power are doing. During his first seven days in the city he loses several hundred yuan in dealing with the officials of various government departments. Later, he meets a clerk of the Yihua company, a company with a lot of power but dubious background. Through this clerk, he meets the assistant manager of this company and starts to do some business with these people. They give him old clothes imported from abroad to sell, which is illegal. One day by chance he sees the general manager of the company. This general manager is only nineteen years old and has some unusual background which, in the clerk's word, would "shock" Jiansu if he told him. It is quite clear that this young general manager is the relative of a very high official. Jiansu finds out soon that the nineteen-year-old general manager is well known for philandering with beautiful women. These things have opened Jiansu's eyes and when thinking about his life in Walizhen, he talks to himself in a critical way: "people in the Sui family think too much about others."

By showing the reasons why the two co-protagonists choose the way of "combating evil with evil", the implied authors blame the Communist power holders rather than the two peasant characters for the latter's wrongdoings. But we still can see in the narration a condemnation of the way of "combating evil with evil". Through the experience of the co-protagonists, the novels succeed in showing that

the way of "combating evil with evil" is not acceptable because under the name of "combating evil", these two characters are actually hurting innocent people and doing harm to the whole society rather than fighting the evil officials.

Almost all the business of Lei Dakong's company relies on bribery and cheating. A typical example described in the novel is the deal in steel products. Steel products are in short supply in China. Lei Dakong does not have any. But he enters into a contract for the sale of steel products. His purpose is to cheat money out of the buyer. When the buyer demands to have a look at the steel products, Lei Dakong takes him to the warehouse of the county's construction bureau whose guard Lei has bribed. Lei Dakong shows the buyer the steel products there to convince him that this deal is reliable. In their contract, Lei stipulates that if the buyer fails to get the money to the seller within a certain time, there will be a penalty on the buyer equal to twenty percent of the price; if the seller fails to deliver the product after he receives the money, he has to pay the buyer the same amount of money as penalty. This sounds fair. Then Lei Dakong flies to the buyer's city and bribes the people in the bank and post office there; so they will hold the money and not let it arrive in Lei's company in time. This way Lei gets a huge amount of money from the buyer as penalty and also gets an excuse for not selling the steel products, which he does not have in the first place. Lei Dakong makes a huge profit by doing these illegal things and he uses the money to bribe the officials. It is clear that the victims of Lei Dakong's evil deeds are not the officials but the innocent ordinary

people. Because eventually it is the general population who will have to pay for the loss of the state-owned corporations that have done business with Lei Dakong.

Sui Jiansu does not go so far as Lei Dakong does, but his desire for revenge on Zhao Duoduo makes him prevent his friend from improving the equipment in the fensi factory. For the same purpose his girlfriend helps him to spoil a great quantity of starch in the fensi factory leased to Zhao Duoduo. This will make Zhao Duoduo suffer some loss but will also affect the lives of all the people in the town. In order to get as much money as possible to rebuild the Sui family's business, Sui Jiansu also associates with the people in the bureaucrat-sponsored Yihua Company and sells low quality goods to the public.

The two novels also show that the co-protagonists, driven by their desire to get money and power, will sometimes go so far as to join hands with their sworn enemies; so the claim that they are fighting evil is nothing but self-deception. Lei Dakong hates the Tian Officials, but he offers bribes to the county Party Secretary Tian Youshan. He also hates the Gong officials, but in order to seek the protection of the powerful people, he is ready to make his business a subsidiary company of the corporation supported by Gong Baoshan. It is only with Jin'gou's strong opposition that he cancels this plan. In The Old Boat, when Zhao Bing sees that his henchman Zhao Duoduo is going to be finished, he offers to help Jiansu obtain the fensi factory. Then he can have control over Jiansu. Jiansu is very eager

to get the fensi factory into his hands, but his brother Baopu is opposed to his plan. Jiansu needs support from some very powerful person, so he is ready to accept Zhao Bing's offer. As he later confesses to Baopu: "At one point, I was so stupid that I was even ready to stand together with somebody in the Zhao family to fight you." (131) This episode is designed to show that the ploy of "combating evil with evils" is a complete failure.

The true danger of these co-protagonists lies in the fact that to satisfy their personal desire, they can do everything without any concern for morality or a sense of justice. This is an important reason why they are in constant conflict with the protagonists. The latter will not do anything that will harm the whole society and the ordinary people. If Lei Dakong and Sui Jiansu are provided with the right climate, they will probably become another Tian Zhongzheng, Zhao Bing or Zhao Duoduo. In this sense, they are no better than the negative characters. However, in Turbulence and The Old Boat, Lei Dakong and Sui Jiansu do not look so bad in the eyes of the peasants. Especially in Turbulence, Lei Dakong is loved by the peasant characters and is viewed as a victim of social injustice. This has much to do with their attitudes towards other peasant characters in the novels.

Lei Dakong has a principle: "A rabbit does not eat the grass near its own hole (Tuzi bu chi wobian cao)." That means even though he can cheat people in other places, he will not harm his fellow villagers. He also shows loyalty to his true friend Fuyun and Xiaoshui. When

he is still a poor peasant, he goes to jail for Xiaoshui's sake. After he gets rich, he treats Fuyun and Xiaoshui with luxurious dinners, gives them presents, and offers them well-paid jobs. He also values his fraternal relationship with Jin'gou. Once he is at a dinner party with Xiaoshui, Fuyun and Jin'gou. After he is drunk, he asks Jin'gou to put in the newspaper a statement that Lei Dakong has nothing to do with these three friends. He says: "When I make big money, we enjoy together; if there is something wrong, let me take all the punishment." (321) This is his idea of brotherhood, and this makes him appear benevolent to both the characters and the reader.

Sui Jiansu has a deep feeling for his family. His main purpose in fighting is to rebuild the wealth and fame of the Sui family and seek revenge on the family's enemies. For this purpose he will do anything in the world, including risking his life. In the Cultural Revolution, the "revolutionary rebels" harass Hanzhang. Baopu tries to protect Hanzhang and is beaten by those men. To help Baopu, Jiansu jumps on one of the men and bites his hand. He won't let the man go until those people pry his mouth open with an iron bar. All this gives him the appearance of a very good person.

It is understandable that the narrow-minded peasant characters will judge the co-protagonists by their personal feelings and fail to see the dangerous nature of these "peasant entrepreneurs." The problem is whether the implied authors can rise to an intellectual level higher than the peasants and take a critical stance towards the co-protagonists. In this aspect, The Old Boat does better than

Turbulence, Baopu's condemnation of some of Jiansu's behaviour is strong and this is unmistakably also the voice of the author. In Turbulence, the protagonist Jin'gou has too much sympathy for Lei Dakong. It is true that sometimes he blames Lei for his behavior, but most of this blame is only out of concern for Lei's safety and advantage. Jin'gou's evaluation of Lei Dakong is fully displayed in his memorial speech made before Lei's coffin. In this speech he describes Lei Dakong as "very smart and very able." He thinks Lei Dakong is "worthy of respect" because Lei is "like a moth knowing that the flame is ahead but not afraid to dart into it." Jin'gou asks with pride: "In thousands of years, where can we find another peasant like you(Lei)?" (471) Jin'gou fails to see that Lei Dakong only follows the road of thousands of peasants in Chinese history, including the Communist officials whom Jin'gou is fighting today. In the narration we can not find the implied author's different opinions of Lei Dakong, so it is safe to say that Jin'gou's evaluation of Lei Dakong represents the view of the implied author.

Despite all their sympathy for the co-protagonists, the authors do not allow these characters good ends. Lei Dakong is murdered in jail by the bureaucrats to prevent him from exposing their bribery. Sui Jiansu's business suffers great losses due to his being cheated by the bureaucrat-supported company and other businessmen. He himself suffers from an incurable disease. Although he is still alive at the end of the novel, his ambition and dream are shattered. It is also shown in the novels that the tragic fates of the co-protagonists are inevitable.

One reason is that the co-protagonists live in a society without a legal system that will guarantee the rights of the people and limit the power of individuals. It is extremely hard for a peasant to climb up the social hierarchy. The bureaucrats will, for certain purposes, let the peasants' situation get a little better, but they will not allow the peasants to equal them or surpass them in social status. It seems that sometimes the officials give room for the co-protagonists to develop, but this is only for the officials' own interests. As Jin'gou warns Lei Dakong: "for their own interests, they (the officials) can raise you to the sky; also for their own interests, they can throw you into Hell." (373) In Turbulence, the cadres at various levels all receive money from Lei Dakong. The county Party Secretary Tian Youshan makes Lei Dakong a typical model of "enriched peasant" under his leadership and thus claims credits for himself. The Gong officials want to turn Lei Dakong's business into a subsidiary company of their corporation, so they can infiltrate their influence into this county which is now under the control of the Tian Officials. In The Old Boat, Sui Jiansu's store in the city is used by the bureaucrat-supported Yihua company to sell their low quality goods. When the officials are in trouble, they also need the "peasant entrepreneurs" to serve as scapegoats. In Turbulence, Lei Dakong is arrested and murdered to cover the illegal activities of the officials and their relatives. In The Old Boat, Sui Jiansu is fined and his stock is confiscated for selling shoddy goods which he has got from the Yihua company.

Another reason for the co-protagonists' failure lies in their own qualities and personalities. First, their greed drives them to risk illegal business or to associate with the officials. In doing so they give the officials a chance to use them. And because they are always at the front of the stage, it is easy to make them scapegoats for the officials' evil activities. Secondly, the co-protagonists' limited knowledge and poor judgement also determine their failure. Before they go to the city they hardly know anything about economic activities and they are ignorant of the true complex situation in contemporary Chinese society. Sui Jiansu does not know that selling imported old clothes is illegal until his store is sealed by the authorities. Lei Dakong underestimates the power of the Gong officials and he reveals the officials' illegal activities to the police, which costs his life. Thirdly, their peasant consciousness is also responsible for their tragic fate. The co-protagonists both have a strong sense of inferiority. In order to maintain psychological balance, they tend to seek satisfaction in overestimating their own abilities. To Sui Jiansu, his once wealthy family is his pride. He often thinks that a person with the blood of the Sui family can win a foothold in the city. When he is dealing with the officials he thinks about his surname and feels he is equal to them in social status. This is unrealistic and reminds the reader of Ah Q's words: "We used to be much better off than you! Who do you think you are?"<sup>21</sup> Sui Jiansu's surname does not help him and he is cheated and drops out of the

---

<sup>21</sup> Lu Xun, "The True Story of Ah Q" [Ah Q zhengzhuan], in A Collection of Lu Xun's Fictional Works [Lu Xun xiaoshuoxuan], Vol.2, Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1952:96.



city. Lei Dakong always thinks that he can outwit the officials. When he is used by the officials, he thinks that he is beating the officials at their own game." He is also satisfied with a superficial triumph. He goes to a luxurious restaurant and enjoys the idea that the Tian officials can not afford to dine there. After the meetings he always starts his car before the county Party Secretary so that he will be ahead of the Secretary in the street. If the Party Secretary is going to a theatre, Lei will buy all the tickets in the front ten rows and leave them unoccupied. These extravagant acts do not have much meaning in fighting the corrupt officials but will arouse jealousy and resentment against him. This partly accounts for the tragic end of Lei Dakong.

Turbulence and The Old Boat also create a group of villains. In Turbulence, these characters are the Gong and Tian officials; in The Old Boat, these characters are Zhao Bing and Zhao Duoduo. After the death of Mao and the downfall of the Gang of Four, literary works started to portray Communist villains. In the first several years, most works put the villains in the background of the Cultural Revolution, giving one an impression that the Cultural Revolution was the only thing to blame for the emergence of those villains. Later, Communist villains also appear in works set in the earlier period of Communist China, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Anti-rightist movement in the 1950s. Compared with these works, Turbulence and The Old Boat go even further. Although they are set in the reform years, they trace the roots of these villains back to the

pre-1949 years and portray the characters from both political and historical perspectives.

These two works suggest that the villains' roots lie in two areas of Chinese tradition. One is the negative side of the peasants' rebellious goals and the other is the ideas and practices of the Chinese clan system.

The villains of these two works are all of peasant origin. They used to be very poor peasants. In Turbulence, the now powerful Tian family members were mere boatmen in the 1940s. One family member joined the Communist Party and organized the extremely impoverished peasants, most of whom were from the Tian clan, to rebel against the local gentry. The Gong family were hunters for generations and they were oppressed by the mayor of the town. One young man in the family led the other family members to burn the mayor's house and to become outlaws in the mountains. The Gong and Tian forces later joined together and formed a guerilla detachment under the leadership of the Communist Party. They were very active along the Prefectural River, killing and robbing the local gentry. After the Communist Party took power, some Gong and Tian family members became leading cadres at the county and prefectural levels. Their relatives and friends, who had fought side by side with them in the guerilla team, all got positions in the new government.

In The Old Boat, the evil "Grandpa Four" Zhao Bing is from a poor peasant family. His father died when he was still a child. It was only with the help of his father's friend that he received a few years of old-fashioned education. Another villain Zhao Duoduo was an orphan. In his childhood he often went hungry. He was timid and afraid to watch the killing of pigs, but he had to go to the slaughter house for some pig entrails that people threw away. In the slaughter house he was often bitten by a dog. He finally killed the dog with trembling hands. Gradually his heart became more and more callous. In the Land Reform he is the most brutal peasant "activist" in the town.

In recalling the past of the villains, the novels show sympathy for the rural rebels and legitimate their resentment against the gentry, but the works also question the goals of the peasant rebellions. In Turbulence, the Gong and Tian guerilla force often come back from combat with silver dollars and the heads of the gentry. Their slogan is: "Break the city wall of Shangzhou and everybody gets a girl student." In The Old Boat, Zhao Duoduo hides jewelry from the gentry's houses and gives it to his women. Zhao Bing enjoys the exquisite utensils from the former rich households. It is clear that their purpose in taking part in the "revolution" is not, as they often claim, to liberate the "labouring class", but to improve their individual financial situation and social status. In this sense, there is no difference in nature between the Communist revolution and the many peasant rebellions in Chinese history. The Communist rebellion is still based on the traditional rebellious idea "everybody

could be an emperor; maybe it is my turn next year." (Huangdi renren zuo; mingnian dao wojia.) This explains why the peasant rebels turn into new rulers and oppressors of the ordinary peasants after they seize political power.

It is noteworthy that the villains all take women as part of the "fruits of victory". This is especially true of the villains in The Old Boat. Zhao Duoduo's attempt to possess Huizi and Zhao Bing's relation with Hanzhang both have a meaning beyond sex. It is a way for the peasant power holders to assert their equality with the former gentry. Huizi is the wife of the once most wealthy man in the town. Moreover, she has an obvious sense of superiority over people like Zhao Duoduo. In her presence, Zhao Duoduo can not help feeling inferior, even when he is in power and she is in distress. Only by sexually conquering her can Zhao Duoduo feel equal to her. When Huizi refuses to give him this kind of satisfaction by committing suicide, Zhao Duoduo feels so frustrated that he vents his anger by insulting her dying body in a beastly way.

This peasant psychological weakness is more clearly displayed in Zhao Bing's relation with Hanzhang. Zhao Bing tells Hanzhang that he will not have a good end on account of his relation with her, but he continues: "I have no regret for what I have done. I am fully satisfied. Who was I? A poor man in Walizhen. And who were you? You were the young lady in the Sui family, and extremely beautiful. I can die without regret." (67) Zhao Bing is the most powerful person in the town, but at the bottom of his heart lies a deep-seated sense

of inferiority. To have sex with the daughter of the once richest man in the town means he is even with, if not superior to, the gentry. For this satisfaction he can die without regret.

The villains also, as shown in Turbulence and The Old Boat, have their roots in the traditional Chinese clan system. It is interesting that the influence of the clan system is made very clear in the beginning of both novels. The first chapter of Turbulence gives a detailed outline of the conflicts between the Tian and Gong clans and also the conflicts between the two powerful clans and the peasants with other surnames. In The Old Boat, there is an earthquake episode in the beginning. That happens in the middle of the night. Seized with panic, people run out of their houses. Even at this moment, they do not forget which clan they belong to. In the darkness, the peasants automatically form into three groups according to their surnames.

The power of the villains is closely related to their positions in the clan. In Turbulence, Tian Zhongzheng holds the position of the township Party Secretary mainly because he is the nephew of the county Party Secretary Tian Youshan. For the same reason he is always under the protection of Tian Youshan. When he is accused of a series of wrongdoings by two other township cadres, at first he is worried and has to behave more carefully. But his uncle Tian Youshan soon transfers the two cadres to other places and promotes Tian Zhongzheng from vice Party Secretary to Party Secretary. This encourages Tian and he becomes even more evil than before.

In The Old Boat, the power of Zhao Bing is intimately combined with his status in the Zhao clan. He is the one who belongs to the oldest generation in this clan. It is interesting that in the narration he is always referred to as "Grandpa Four" rather than his name Zhao Bing. This reminds the reader continually of his power as the head of the clan. Because the political power and the clan power are in the hands of one person, it is sometimes difficult to tell one from the other. This gives the power holder an advantage in using them. Whenever it is not convenient for Zhao Bing to take an action as the Party Secretary, he will do it as "Grandpa Four." Once a group of people come to Walizhen, trying to pull down the old wall around the town. "Grandpa Four" orders the peasants to break the leg of the man in the lead. As a Party Secretary, he is not in a position to give such an order, so he does it as the head of the clan. Xiaokui's engagement with Li Zhaolu can not be renounced because "Grandpa Four" has nodded approval. As a Party cadre, people's marriage is none of his business, but as a clan leader his will should be respected in all aspects of the clan members' personal lives.

Although the negative characters have their roots in the same soil, they are by no means stereotyped figures. Each of them has his own characteristics. Among the villains in these two novels, Zhao Bing is the most complex and interesting character.

Just like the protagonists, Zhao Bing is an educated peasant; he has a very good knowledge of classical Chinese philosophy and

literature. He also has good insight into human nature. He uses these advantages to serve his own evil purposes. He is the most successful puppeteer in Walizhen. For forty years, he successfully manipulates the peasants and controls everything in the town. Zhao Bing is as shameless as Tian Zhongzheng and as cruel as Zhao Duoduo, but he always wears a mask of righteousness. People trust him very much, so he is in an advantageous position to fulfil his evil plans.

He saves the fourteen-year-old Hanzhang from being violated by Zhao Duoduo and takes her as his nominal daughter. He protects her for a few years. Hanzhang is so grateful to him that she never suspects any danger from him. Actually he is waiting for Hanzhang to grow up, so he can fully enjoy the pleasure of having sex with her. To maintain a nominal father-daughter relation can make his intimate association with Hanzhang look quite natural in the eyes of the people in the town.

In the Great Leap Forward, the clever and honest peasant Li Qisheng exposes the cadres' "high-yield crop" fraud. For this he is tied up and put in prison by the cadres. That night Zhao Bing secretly sends some people to hang him up and torture him. Zhao Bing himself calls a mass meeting to talk about this incident. Soon Li's wife runs to the meeting to seek help, saying that her husband is dying from the torture. Zhao Bing rushes to the scene to rescue him, showing the people how fair and kind he is. At this moment somebody comes to tell him that his sick wife is dying too. Zhao pretends to put Li's matter first, saying that he can not return to her

until he rescues Li. Everybody is moved by his pose, but actually Zhao is already tired of his wife and wants her to die as soon as possible.

In The Old Boat, Zhao Bing has a strange disease. In the words of an old Chinese doctor, "there are few people in the world who are as poisonous as you (Zhao Bing). Any woman who has sex with you will be poisoned and at least get sick, some will die soon." (48) This disease is a symbol of Zhao Bing's personality. He is "poisonous". Anybody who touches him will die. On another occasion, Zhang Wang Shi, the woman who has some supernatural power, sees a snake inside Zhao Bing's stomach. This also symbolizes Zhao's evil inner world.

However, the novel does not portray Zhao Bing simply as an evil person who maintains his power only by oppressing and fooling people. On some occasions, Zhao Bing stands out as a leader protecting his people, as long as this action will not conflict with his own interests. For this reason his reputation is well grounded. In the famine years after the Great Leap Forward, the people in the town are dying of hunger. The then mayor of the town fails to obtain any relief grain from the county government. Zhao Bing gives him a slap in the face and tells him to go back to the county to argue. At the same time he learns that the peasants in another village have received a cart of turnips from the government because they have connections in the county. Zhao Bing leads a group of starving men to wait at the roadside. When the cart comes, he is the first to jump



out and stop the cart. After an almost life-and-death struggle, they get half a cart of turnips, which saves the lives of the people in the town. It is also interesting that Zhao Bing does not take the whole cart of turnips but only half. This shows that he is reasonable even at such a moment.

In his relationship with Hanzhang, Zhao Bing also demonstrates some qualities not usually found in negative characters. Although he rationalizes his relationship with Hanzhang in his plausible Taoist-like theory, he also realizes that what he has done to Hanzhang and the other Sui family members is "too much" (*tai guo*). He is not without inner conflict. He predicts that someday Hanzhang will kill him. Powerful and evil as he is, he could stop Hanzhang from doing it, but he will not. Even when Hanzhang finally goes to kill him, he does not try to escape. He only asks her to finish him quickly. Zhao Bing does push Hanzhang to the ground, but this is only because he is irritated by her lack of strength and confidence. After pushing her, he blames himself for being too rough. I suggest that this means Zhao Bing is also tortured by his own conscience, especially when he is getting older. He wants to be freed by death from his feeling of guilt.

The image of Zhao Bing has some special meaning. The educated peasant villains could be more evil than the uneducated ones. The latter are often used and manipulated by the former. This is an important fact in Chinese history, but it is often neglected in modern

Chinese literature and criticism. In this sense, the image of Zhao Bing represents a new type of Communist villain image.

Besides the main characters, the other characters are also interesting. I wish to make two points here concerning respectively the female characters and the old peasant characters.

Turbulence and The Old Boat demonstrate a strikingly traditional attitude towards women. The ideal female characters are all old-fashioned. Xiaoshui is obviously the most ideal woman in the eyes of all the male characters in Turbulence. She is also the ideal woman in the view of the implied author. She is pure, good hearted, loyal to her love and filial to the elders. In short, she has all the virtues a traditional woman is supposed to possess. She is often put in contrast to a world full of desires and evils. In Jin'gou's mind "In this world, only Xiaoshui is a pure goddess." (336) In The Old Boat, the personalities of Hanzhang, Guigui and Xiaokui are similar to that of Xiaoshui in Turbulence. Baopu once says to Jiansu about Xiaokui, "Xiaokui is the woman who has the best personality in this world. She always lies quietly in her man's arms. If occasionally she is happy, at most she cries a little." (87) Baopu's view of women is typically traditional and in the narration we never find any differing opinion from the implied author.

In order to be fair, we need to mention that the authors do try to create some female characters with new ideas, such as Yingying and Shi Hua in Turbulence and Naonao in The Old Boat. However,

their new ideas are limited to a superficial level. The three all like to wear some fashionable clothes that Xiaoshui and Xiaokui don't have the nerve to touch. They also hold more liberal attitudes towards love and sex. Yingying and Shi Hua dare to run after the men they like and have extramarital sex with them. The implied author's attitude towards these two female characters is apparently critical. Naonao dares to fall in love with Baopu, who is about twenty years older than she and is a widower. Her love will be unusual in the eyes of the conservative peasants and will probably cause some gossip in the town. In other more important aspects, these three female characters are as traditional as other women in the works.

One highly important thing common to the female characters in these two novels is their lack of a sense of independence. They all place their hopes in men. Xiaoshui encourages Jin'gou to compete for the position of reporter, even after he has to break up with her. She believes that he will become a person with power and will be able to do something for the peasants. She is willing to sacrifice herself for him because he is of more importance. She says to Jin'gou in her heart: "I am only a girl. I don't expect to be as ambitious as you are. I can help you only in mundane matters." (124) Yingying loves Jin'gou because he is very able and, being a reporter, he will someday bring her an even better life. She says to Jin'gou: "You are a man. A man should go out to make a career. Only when the man is successful, can a woman have something to rely on." ( 131 ) Naonao believes Baopu is the strongest man in the town, both mentally and physically. He is the only man she is afraid of; therefore she loves

him. None of the female characters in the novels ever expresses a desire to change her life on her own. The narrators praise the positive female characters for their support for the men, but they never show any regret for the women's lack of confidence in themselves. This reflects the limitations of the ex-peasant authors. While many other Chinese literary works try to deal with the question of women's roles in society from a new perspective, it is surprising that the authors of these two novels still cling to the very old-fashioned view of women.

The attitudes of these two novels towards the old generation peasants are generally critical. This is also worthy of some notice. In Turbulence, there are three types of old peasants. Jin'gou's father, the painter, has accepted his place at the bottom of society and never dares to fight. Han Wenju, the ferryman, complains all the time but never takes actions. Qi Laohan, a boatman, puts his hope in religious activities. None of these old peasants can be compared with the young peasants like Jin'gou and Lei Dakong in spiritual strength.

In The Old Boat, the most important old peasant character is Sui Buzhao. He is Baopu's uncle, and in the eyes of the peasants in Walizhen he is "the most controversial person in the town, whose credits and wrongdoings are hard to judge." (138) Sui Buzhao is always eager to know the outside world. He leaves home as a teenager and has a life on the sea for many years. But he is not successful and has to return to the town in distress. Among the other old peasants, he is the only one who has the nerve to defy the

traditional restrictions; he is also the one who has real enthusiasm in learning new things and introducing them into the life of the town. But unconsciously, he is also limited by the traditional ideas. He always talks about Zheng He, the eunuch who led a sailing fleet in the Ming dynasty. And what Sui Buzhao sticks to is a worn book about sailing called HaiDao Zhenjing. In The Old Boat, as I will discuss in the next chapter, symbolism is prominent in the narration. The sea in Sui Buzhao's mind is the symbol of the outside world. It is attractive, yet full of danger. Sui Buzhao is a representative of the open-minded older generation of peasants. They are eager to look for a new way of life, but the instruments they rely on are out of date, so they are doomed to fail. In the novel, Sui Buzhao finally dies in an accident. In an attempt to rescue a young peasant technician, he is smashed by the new machine just installed in the fensi factory. Sui Buzhao's death implies that although the old generation of open-minded peasants fail in their own lives, they do open the door, with their blood and their lives, for those who follow. The image of Sui Buzhao is of thematic importance, but artistically speaking, Sui Buzhao is not very successfully portrayed. One has the impression that this figure is produced as a symbol rather than a full-fledged character.

So far I have studied mainly the thematic meaning of the characters in these two novels. In the following chapter, I will examine them from an artistic point of view.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### STYLISTIC FEATURES

In this chapter, I will discuss the artistic value of Turbulence and The Old Boat. My study will centre on the characterization techniques employed by the two authors.

Turbulence and The Old Boat have in common at least three stylistic features. First, both authors characterize the figures by the careful reproduction of their speech and movement. Second, the two authors both succeed in creating the proper settings to help present the characters' thoughts and feelings. Third, symbolism is the modern narrative technique shared by the two books. The two works also have some differences in style.

To characterize the figures by their speech and movement has been the method used throughout the whole history of Chinese fiction. Both Jia Pingwa and Zhang Wei make good use of this traditional technique in their works. There are many impressive examples in this respect in Turbulence and The Old Boat.

In the first chapter of Turbulence, the narrator tells us that when Jin'gou and Xiaoshui were both children, they often sat in the

ferryman's boat and argued whether the sun in the sky and the sun in the water were the same one or two different ones. A few years later, Jin'gou is sixteen years old. One day, when he is in the ferryman's boat, the Party Secretary Tian Zhongzheng comes into the boat to cross the river. After asking Jin'gou's age, Tian says that at the age of sixteen Jin'gou should have some ideas about a future wife. Tian asks Jin'gou if his father has already engaged him to some girl. Looking at the river at sunset, Jin'gou shakes his head without a word. The narrator then does not proceed to tell us what is on Jin'gou's mind. Instead, he lets Jin'gou make a remark on the sunset: "Gee, it is true that there are two suns in the world." (15) A careful reader can infer from this sentence that Jin'gou is not as indifferent to Tian's words as he looks. What Tian said makes him imagine his future marriage. At this stage, Jin'gou's relation to Xiaoshui is mere friendship, but in his subconscious, his love for her is budding; so at this moment, Xiaoshui naturally appears in his mind. The idea about Xiaoshui reminds him of their arguing whether there is one sun or two suns in the world. That is why Jin'gou, perhaps unconsciously, makes the remark on the sun. If the narrator described directly what passes through Jin'gou's mind, it could take a whole page. But he uses only one sentence to disclose the character's feelings. This indirect description is not only succinct but also effective in adding a veiled beauty to the sixteen-year-old boy's awakening love.

In chapter 16, Jin'gou wants to break his engagement with Yingying. The two young people have a quarrel in Jin'gou's house. Jin'gou's father, the painter, is worried and does not know what to

do; so he goes to seek help from Tian Zhongzheng, who is not only the Party Secretary but also Yingying's step father. Tian agrees to go to the painter's house and see if he can improve the situation. But, "As soon as he walks out the door he asks the painter to go first. Before he follows the painter, Tian looks around to make sure nobody else is there." (242) This movement, "looking around", effectively reveals Tian's complex psychology. On the one hand, he likes to have Jin'gou as his son-in-law, because now Jin'gou is a reporter who has some influence Tian does not have; on the other hand, he still looks down upon Jin'gou's family. If he walks with the painter, he will look equal to the painter in the eyes of the villagers, especially when Jin'gou wants to cut his connection with Tian. Tian views this trip to the painter's house as a shame and he does not want anybody to know.

Many more examples can be found in Turbulence to show the successful employment of characteristic details. After Lei Dakong is arrested for chopping off Tian Zhongzheng's toe, Fuyun goes to complain to the county Public Security Bureau. The policemen there want to drive him out. Fuyun refuses to leave by "holding on to the door-frame." It takes five or six policemen to drag him out. The author catches the salient feature of Fuyun in this small movement "holding on to the door-frame." A big man like Fuyun has to resort to this almost childish movement. It vividly displays Fuyun's anxiety to rescue Lei Dakong and also his lack of power.



In Turbulence, the language used by the characters is very individualized. From their speech, the reader can see the personality of the speakers. Jin'gou and Lei Dakong are both ambitious. But there is a difference in the language they use to express their ambition. One night, while Jin'gou is sitting at the riverside with Yingying; they see the full moon in the sky. Yingying wants Jin'gou to compare the moon to something. After the mention of some common things, Jin'gou suddenly blurts out:

"if I had a seal as big as the moon, I would stamp the sky and the whole sky would be mine." (130)

When Lei Dakong comes back from Guangzhou with all his money confiscated, he is in absolute distress. He does not even have a proper pair of pants to wear. But he is still ambitious. He says to Xiaoshui:

"Do you know what I wore in Guangzhou? I even wore a suit jacket. Because I was out of luck, I had to sell it. But you wait and see, I will save some money as capital and start my business again. Then I won't look as I do now. On my birthday, I will set eight or ten dinner tables to treat my guests. I will live like another Tian Zhongzheng." (252)

Jin'gou's words show his great political ambition. In China, "official seal" is almost synonymous with "power". The moon and the sky all suggest Jin'gou's high goals. But Lei Dakong is interested only

in making more money and he is satisfied with the superficial triumph. He envies Tian Zhongzheng and his goal is to live a life like Tian.

In The Old Boat, the same technique is employed in characterization. Sui Jiansu is one of the most successfully portrayed characters in the novel. Here I will discuss one episode to give an idea how the author delineates Jiansu's psychology with simple but powerful descriptions of his movements and speeches.

During Jiansu's stay in the city, he makes the acquaintance of Xiaofan, a clerk of the Yihua Company. Jiansu asks Xiaofan to introduce him to the assistant manager of the company. The assistant manager agrees to see him in a high class hotel. Xiaofan takes Jiansu to the lobby of the hotel and gets him a drink. Then Xiaofan leaves to get the assistant manager. Jiansu waits in the lobby and drinks the "liquid in the colour of orange". This description of the drink is from Jiansu's point of view. At that time he is still a bumpkin and does not know the name of the drink served in this high class hotel. He keeps sucking the straw and soon he finishes the drink. Instead of saying that "Jiansu finishes the drink", the narrator says "soon the straw makes a noise." This is a vivid description. It implies that Jiansu is so nervous and preoccupied that he hardly pays any attention to what he is drinking. He is still sucking when the drink is finished. Also, to make such a noise with the straw is not acceptable in this place; so it also shows the peasant Jiansu's clumsiness in this high class hotel. Then the

narration goes on: "He (Jiansu) regrets that he finishes the drink too fast. He looks towards the counter and strikes upon an idea that he should have the courage to order another one by himself." To buy another drink is a very common thing. But to Jiansu this is something that requires courage. This shows his peasant's sense of inferiority and also his determination to adjust himself to this new environment. Other peasants might not have the courage to make this move. Jiansu goes to the counter and says to the waitress there: "Another drink please, Comrade." As he is from the countryside and not used to the new situation in the city, especially in this hotel, he uses the old fashioned Communist term "Comrade". For this he gets a very cold reception from the pretty waitress. "She turned around slowly to get a glass and at the same time sticks out one finger" (also very vivid description). "Jiansu knows she is asking for money. But one yuan? or one jiao (ten cents)? Jiansu decides that he would rather take it as one yuan. And he is right." When receiving the drink, Jiansu notices a name tag on her chest. It reads "Miss Zhou Yanyan." Jiansu smiles and says to her "Thank you, Miss Zhou (Zhou Xiaojie). This time she gives him a big smile. Jiansu's quick change from calling her "Comrade" to addressing her as "Miss" suggests that he is smart and has the ability to adjust. Soon he sees Xiaofan walking out of the elevator with a well-dressed man. He knows this man must be the assistant manager. He "wants very much to stand up and meet them, but he sits there still." This shows his pride and also his peasant's inferiority complex, for he fears that if he stands up and reveals his eagerness to meet the assistant manager, this man will look down upon him. But no matter how

hard he tries to maintain his dignity in this situation, he can not conceal his peasant background completely. The narrator shows this with a powerful detail. After Jiansu shakes hands with the assistant manager, the manager invites Jiansu to go and have a talk in his room. Before they leave, "Jiansu makes a small movement which he will regret for all his life--he gives a glance to the half glass of drink left on the table. The assistant manager follows the line of Jiansu's sight and sees the drink, he smiles: 'let's go, Mr. Sui.'" We can not help admiring the author's talent for picking up the most revealing details and use them to bring out the character's inner world. Sui Jiansu is a peasant. Although he is from a once wealthy family, he is brought up in poverty. He naturally feels uncomfortable at wasting a half glass of drink. Despite his efforts to seem as generous as the men he is dealing with, unconsciously he still acts like a peasant, something he is ashamed of. (99-101)

The second stylistic similarity of these two novels is the successful creation of settings most effective to present the personalities and feelings of the characters.

In the preface to Turbulence, Jia Pingwa calls the novel "another story on the river". So it is clear that the novel's main setting is the river and the places along the river. Jia Pingwa admits that in real life there is no Prefectural River in Shangzhou. But in his design, there should be such a river and this river should be the only big river in the Shangzhou area. (Preface,1) In Jia's imagination this river should be the most turbulent river in China. But, like the other

rivers in the Shangzhou area, this river should be sometimes clear and quiet and sometimes wild and turbulent. (preface: 2) It is obvious that the river is not presented for its own sake. The features of the river are designed to present the personalities of the characters.

On the one hand, the Prefectural River is a clear and quiet river. The descriptions of the scenes along the river call to mind the peaceful setting of Shen Congwen's The Border Town. In Turbulence, the charming scene along the river is very similar to that in The Border Town. The reader can not miss this similarity and can easily tell the influence of Shen Congwen on Turbulence. The peaceful settings are created to present the bright side of human life. In Turbulence, some of the characters and the relations among the characters are also strikingly similar to those of The Border Town. In The Border Town, there is a ferryboat on the river, the ferryman has an orphan granddaughter and a dog. In Turbulence, there is also a ferryboat on the river, and the ferryman Han Wenju has an orphan niece Xiaoshui and also a dog. Even the ferryboats are of the same type. There is an iron cable going over the river. Sometimes the ferryman pulls the cable hand over hand to move the boat across the river. The two girls, Xiaoshui in Turbulence and Cuicui in The Border Town, are also similar in character. Nurtured by the beautiful scenes, they are both as pure as the clear waters and as healthy (spiritually and physically) as the green hills. Even their names show their close relation to the settings. The Chinese character cui in Cuicui's name means "green", and the character shui in Xiaoshui's

name means "water". Jia Pingwa sometimes uses the same words Shen Congwen uses in describing the girls, such as "little creature" (xiao shou). We have reason to say that Jia Pingwa admires the atmosphere in Shen Congwen's fiction, including the peaceful setting and the harmonious inter-personal relationships. Although Turbulence is set in southern Shanxi instead of Western Hunan, Jia Pingwa creates a similar atmosphere to present the beautiful side of human nature and human relationships.

However, anyone who has read both Turbulence and The Border Town can tell the difference in their basic tones. This is because Jia Pingwa is not satisfied with only presenting the bright side of the life along the river, although he loves it. In Turbulence, he presents another side of the Prefectural River: its wild and turbulent features and correspondingly the similar traits of the people living in this setting.

Shen Congwen also realizes the river has an unpleasant facet, so in The Border Town he lets Tianbao die in the river. But Shen Congwen loves the pastoral atmosphere too much. He avoids directly writing about the cruelty of the river. Tianbao's death is told to the reader through the mouth of other characters. Turbulence is different. Although Jia Pingwa admires the beautiful side of the scenery and human nature, his main purpose in writing the novel is to present the turbulent life of the people living along the Prefectural River. Therefore, he does not avoid describing the wild and

sometimes cruel features of the river. He uses this river as the background of the peasants' turbulent life.

In Turbulence, the river gives the characters hope and opportunities to earn a better life, but at the same time it exacts a high price from them. In the first chapter of the novel, Jia Pingwa describes the boatmen's life on the river. He tells how easily the river devours the lives of the boatmen and how people, driven by their desire for money, continue to risk the river transportation business. If one boatman dies in an accident, soon another man will marry his widow and work on the river in a new boat. In half a year, seven or eight newly built shuttle-shaped boats have been destroyed on the river. This is really frightening and frustrating, but these people are not afraid of death as long as they can make money.

The river also serves as a harsh background on which the protagonist exhibits his heroic traits. Many of Jin'gou's brave actions take place on the river. If there were not the river, there would not be Jin'gou. When Jin'gou is still a child he is already a good swimmer. He dares to jump into the water from the height of about seven meters. He pesters the boatmen to take him to the cities far away. Tired of his pestering, a boatman knocks him into the river with a punt pole. After quite a while, Jin'gou still does not emerge from the water. As the adults get worried and several men jump into the water to look for him, Jin'gou surfaces on the other side of

the river and makes funny faces at the boatmen. Everybody at the scene is amazed by Jin'gou's wonderful diving skill. (8)

In Chapter 11, Jin'gou is on the raft with Fuyun and another old boatman. When they get to a dangerous shoal, the raft strikes a tree stump. Jin'gou goes under the water to saw the stump. He works there for quite a while. Finally, the problem is solved. As he is washing his feet in the water and almost ready to get back onto the raft, Fuyun, who at this moment hates Jin'gou for his betraying Xiaoshui, cuts off the vine serving as a mooring rope. The raft goes rapidly downstream. Jin'gou is left in the water. At first he is very angry, but he understands Fuyun's feeling and soon he calms down. Later, Jin'gou is picked up by another boat and catches up to Fuyun's raft. He sees Fuyun being pulled into the torrent by a fallen wire across the river. Jin'gou jumps into the water to rescue Fuyun. After he pushes Fuyun onto a boat, he himself is drawn into a whirlpool and his body is stuck in the crack of a submerged rock. Another boatman pulls him out, but Jin'gou's arm is dislocated. In this episode, Jin'gou's moral qualities and temperament are well displayed in his confrontation with the wild river.

The general setting in The Old Boat is also well designed to effectively present the mood of the characters. Walizhen is "enclosed with a low but thick mud wall." "The wall rises suddenly at the corner and there are bricks outside the mud. The colour of the bricks has become like that of iron." (4) There is also a river going by Walizhen. "The water flows quietly and seems pale in the narrow



river bed. The mill houses stand along the river one by one, looking like old castles. There are green vines climbing up the stone base of the mill houses. Most of the mill houses are out of use. Only a few of them are still working. They make a big noise from morning till night. Inside the mill house, moss grows anywhere the feet of the ox do not touch." (6) This description of the setting at the beginning of the novel generates an atmosphere both boring and oppressive, just like the life going on in the town for many years. The reader shares the mood of the characters living in this setting before he reads their stories.

Not only the general settings of the two novels are well created; many particular settings are equally good. Jia Pingwa demonstrates his good foundation in traditional Chinese literature when he uses very succinct phrasing to vividly create a particular setting.

In Chapter 10, after Jin'gou sleeps with Yingying, he feels very sad about his now having to break up with Xiaoshui. It is in the depth of the night. Across the village, between the two huge rocks at the entrance of the valley, there are two lanterns moving around. One voice is calling: "Are--you--back--?". Another voice responds: "Ye--s, I--am--back" This is somebody summoning the soul of a newly dead person. (138) This description corresponds with the protagonist's sorrow for losing his true love forever, and it evokes the same feeling from the reader.

Towards the end of the novel, Jin'gou is released from jail. He and Xiaoshui go up the mountain to see Lei Dakong's coffin, which is not buried yet. After offering the sacrifice and making the memorial speech, Jin'gou stands up and gazes far afield. In his eye, "the mountains seem dark green and the Prefectural river looks like a long ribbon. The setting sun that floats on the river is in the colour of blood." (472) Since Jin'gou is sad about Lei Dakong's death and is determined to take revenge for Lei on the corrupt officials, this magnificent scene very well reflects his strong emotion.

In The Old Boat, particular settings are also well designed. For example, the author arranges the old mill house as the working site of the protagonist Baopu. Life in the mill house is very dull. Everything repeats endlessly in the same old way. It is a good environment for the protagonist to contemplate. The mill is also the embodiment of the nature of Baopu's contemplation. It goes around in circles, with no end in sight.

Sometimes, a particular setting is created to provide a sharp contrast with the character. In the beginning chapter of The Old Boat, there is a description of the happy working scene at the beach, where people dry fensi in the sun. The bright sun, the blue sky and the silvery white fensi make up a beautiful picture. The girls are combing the fensi with their long fingers and the children are picking up small pieces of fensi dropped on the sandy ground. People are chatting, joking and laughing. Then all of a sudden, Zhao Duoduo, the manager of the fensi factory, appears. Upon his arrival, the

atmosphere of the site changes immediately. Zhao Duoduo yells at the children, kicks their baskets upside down and scolds the workers. The contrast of the scenes before and after Zhao's appearance suggests the ugly character of Zhao Duoduo.

The third stylistic similarity of the two novels is the frequent use of symbols. This feature is more prominent in The Old Boat than in Turbulence.

Some Chinese critics have already noticed the employment of symbols in Jia Pingwa's works.<sup>22</sup> In Turbulence, many things have symbolic meanings. As I have mentioned in Chapter Two of this thesis, the turbulent Prefectural River is the symbol of the situation in the Shangzhou area and even in the whole of China. In the novel the survey man (kaocharen) should not be regarded as a character. He is the symbol of modern cultural consciousness. The bird Kanshan'gou symbolizes the unusual qualities and strength of the character. The floods signify the big events in the characters' lives. Some critics believe that even the image of Jin'gou has a symbolic meaning.<sup>23</sup> His experience from the Prefectural River to the prefectural capital and then back to the river suggests the possible road the new generation of peasants will take. Jin'gou's fuzao mood is the symbol of the mental outlook of the Chinese nation in the reform era.

---

<sup>22</sup> For example, see Han Luhua, "The Aesthetic Mode: Reflection, Expression and Narration, [Shenmei fangshi: guanzhao, biao xian he xushu], Dangdai zuojia pinglun, no.2 (1990):109-115.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

In The Old Boat, symbols are used more extensively and effectively than in Turbulence.

In the narration of The Old Boat, we can often see a rusty chopping knife. It is the symbol of the violence involved in the "class struggle." In the Land Reform, Zhao Bing suspects that his enemies among the gentry are going to assassinate him. He tells Zhao Duoduo about his suspicion and that night Zhao Duoduo volunteers to sleep in Zhao Bing's room. He puts the chopping knife beside the pillow. At midnight it is true that one man sneaks into the room. Zhao Duoduo pretends to be asleep. When the man gets close to him, Zhao Duoduo wields the chopping knife and kills him. This is the first man he has killed in his life. So from the beginning, the chopping knife is the weapon used by the Communist peasant rebels to break down the resistance of the defeated gentry. After that night, Zhao Duoduo always keeps this chopping knife with him and every time he kills his class enemies, he uses the same chopping knife. After the Communist Party's political power is consolidated, it is still Zhao Duoduo's habit to place the chopping knife beside his pillow every night. Even in the reform years, when Zhao Duoduo becomes the manager of the fensi factory, he still keeps the chopping knife in his office. To Zhao Duoduo, the chopping knife symbolizes the power of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

To Sui Jiansu, the chopping knife symbolizes revenge. Every time he goes to Zhao Duoduo's office, he can not help looking at the

chopping knife. In Chapter 15, Jiansu walks into Zhao Duoduo's office. Zhao Duoduo is not there. At first Jiansu stares at the chopping knife, which makes him nervous. He tries to look elsewhere, but then he sees the pillow with Zhao Duoduo's head print on it. Jiansu imagines that if the chopping knife drops on the pillow, the pillow will get wet..... (78) It is clear that Jiansu has in his subconscious the desire to kill Zhao Duoduo with the chopping knife. At the end of the novel, Jiansu learns from his brother Baopu the truth of his mother's death. This helps him make up his mind to kill Zhao Duoduo. But Zhao Duoduo is already killed in a car accident. When Jiansu arrives at the scene, Baopu finds that Jiansu has the chopping knife under his jacket. It is clear that Jiansu was going to kill Zhao Duoduo with this chopping knife.

From a realistic point of view, Jiansu's wanting to kill Zhao Duoduo with the rusty old chopping knife is not very convincing. If Zhao Duoduo's habit of placing the chopping knife in his office as a weapon can be explained as the result of his nostalgic feeling about this "heroic" experience in the Land Reform, then why does Sui Jiansu also want to use the same chopping knife? The rusty chopping knife is obviously not an efficient weapon. If Sui Jiansu wants to kill Zhao Duoduo, he can at least find a sharp knife. Smart as he is, he would not fail to see this point. So his resorting to this chopping knife can only be understood in a symbolic sense.

The rust on the chopping knife suggests the long history of violent struggle among human beings. The chopping knife as a

weapon is also the symbol of the primitive mode of this struggle. In the novel, it is made clear that Zhao Duoduo deserves his punishment, but instead of letting Jiansu kill him with the chopping knife, the implied author lets Zhao Duoduo bring about his own destruction. This device can be interpreted as the author's disapproval of violent revenge.

In The Old Boat, there is another symbol that frequently appears. It is the flute music of Bosi, the cripple. The first time this music appears in the novel is in Chapter 2. Listening to it, Sui Jiansu suddenly realizes that "We are the bachelors in the town. Bosi's high-pitched flute music is a song for bachelors." (13) In the novel, this flute music is sometimes full of happiness and sometimes permeated with loneliness. It depends on the mood of the bachelors. In Chapter 16, the villagers are surprised when Bosi's flute music suddenly sounds very cheerful. Soon they find out that Xiaokui has agreed to marry Bosi. He will no longer be a bachelor.

Bosi's flute music can be viewed as a symbol of sexual love. In the novel, there is an episode about the death of one young man in the Sui clan. He is a soldier and is killed in the war with the Vietnamese. The novel also includes his love story with a peasant girl in the village where he is stationed. Because of his relationship with the girl, he is harshly punished by his superiors in the army. Shortly after this, he dies in combat. The people in Walizhen all go to his funeral. At the funeral there is a band of classical music players. At first everybody is fascinated by the charm of the

classical music. But at midnight there comes the sound of Bosi's flute. It is like a spell; even the classical music players are attracted by the flute music and stop playing. If here the classical music symbolizes the traditional social norms and rites, then in this episode, the traditional norms and rites are defeated by the legitimate desire for sexual love.

In the same episode, the narrator introduces another symbol of force. "Grandpa Four" Zhao Bing comes to the funeral, followed by the Party and government leaders in the town. This group of people are the embodiment of the political power in the town. When they arrive, the classical music players all stand up to show their respect and Bosi's flute music also suddenly stops. This gives the reader an impression that not only do the traditional rites and norms have to submit to the current political power, but the natural human desire for love and happiness is also oppressed by the same force.

In The Old Boat, the central symbol is the colour red. The Chinese critics have noticed that writers from Shandong Province tend to use red in their works.<sup>24</sup> As we know, red is the symbol of communism, and in mainland China, red is supposed to be the best of all colours. In The Old Boat, the red colour permeates the text. What does the red colour mean in the novel? In the narration it is always associated with blood. I suggest that it is the symbol of the suffering

---

<sup>24</sup> See Hu Weishi, "Zhang Wei's New Work The Old Boat Is Warmly Received by Literary Circles" [Zhang Wei xinzuo Guchuan, wentan fanying qianglie], Shanghai wenxue no.2 (1987):96.

and misfortune brought about by the wrongdoings of the Communist power. In the beginning of the novel, the old temple in the town is struck by lightning and is thus set on fire. "The flame reaches out like a red finger." (6) This description foretells the coming of a hard time in Walizhen.

The red colour is first of all associated with the suffering of the Sui family under the Communist power. When Sui Yingzhi decides to turn his property over to the Communist authorities, "he gets on his old red horse and leaves home." (20) "When he comes back, his face is shining and red." (20) He shows his family a document "with a red stamp" on it. (20) His wife Huizi is so angry with his giving away their property that she pounces on the table and breaks one of her fingers. "Red blood splashes out." (20) Sui Yingzhi's action has not saved him from being regarded as the object of "struggle", so he has to leave home again. This time he never returns. Only the red horse comes to the door. It neighs sadly and shakes its mane, shedding a few drops of red blood. (21) The horse leads the Sui family to a field of red sorghum. (21) The red horse goes into the forest of the red sorghum and people follow it. On the way they see red blood stains on the stalks of the sorghum. (21) At last, the red horse stops. Sui Yingzhi is lying on a bank of dry earth between two sorghum fields. Around him is the red grass. (21) "Sui Yingzhi nods to his family" and "another stream of red blood comes out of his mouth." (21) He dies in the field of red sorghum.



After Sui Yingzhi's death, misfortune falls on his family. The symbolic image of Sui Yingzhi's red horse on a red background reappears in the minds of the Sui family members during times of emotional strife. The day Sui Jiansu is going to compete with Zhao Duoduo for the lease contract of the fensi business, he dreams of the red horse. In the dream he is walking on the sandy beach of the river. The sand under his feet is dark blue. It is very quiet around and he feels lonesome. All of a sudden, he sees a small red spot far ahead. At first he thinks it is the sun, but the red spot leaps towards him and becomes bigger and bigger. Soon Sui Jiansu finds out that it is the red horse. When the red horse stands before him, he hugs it and cries. He then jumps onto the horse and rides away on the seemingly endless dark blue sandy beach. (80) Sui Jiansu is eager to get the fensi business back to the Sui family. As the son of former gentry class, he makes this decision not only for financial considerations but more importantly for emotional reasons. It means a lot to him. The moment before the competition, he is very nervous and the dream is the reflection of his feelings about the Sui family's bitter experience. It is also the symbolic omen of suffering because this time Sui Jiansu is doomed to fail in the competition.

Towards the end of the novel, Hanzhang decides to kill Zhao Bing. Before she takes the action, she remembers her father riding on the red horse and galloping down the sandy beach. She also remembers the red sorghum field and the red drops of blood from the mane of the horse. After she tries to kill Zhao Bing but only wounds him, Hanzhang runs towards the riverside. The red scene

appears again. "The rays of the sun dye the streets in red." "The willows at the riverside are swaying in the breeze. Everything is in blood red." "A girl with dishevelled hair is leaping forward among the red willows. That is Hanzhang. She is red all over. She runs and bounces, like riding on the horseback." (141) Although this time the horse does not appear, Hanzhang is described as if she were riding a horse. She is facing a future life in jail. This red scene again symbolizes the suffering of the Sui family members.

The red colour not only symbolizes the suffering of the former gentry, but is also associated with the misfortunes of other peasants under Communist control.

During the Great Leap Forward, the local cadres always maximize the industrial and agricultural yields in their areas. The numbers get bigger and bigger. They "are printed in red in the provincial newspapers." "later, people get to know that this is an unusual omen. It is the colour of blood." (46) In the Great Leap Forward, one peasant Li Qisheng is tortured for exposing the cadres' "high yield crop" fraud; Zhao Bing calls a meeting to discuss this incident. At the the meeting, "people are thinking of the red numbers. The candle is flickering. One moment it is red and another moment, the red flame is circled with a ominous blue colour." (47) After Li Qisheng is "rescued" by Zhao Bing, he implements a series of innovations for the town. The cadres are very much pleased because this makes them look good in the eyes of their superiors. So they

decide to award Li Qisheng with a red vest. This red vest does not bring good luck to Li Qisheng; instead, it makes Li Qisheng go insane.

The symbols in the The Old Boat form a framework in which the themes are developed and the characters are presented. Apart from these symbols we can not get a good understanding of the whole novel.

The two novels also have some stylistic differences. It is obvious that Turbulence advances much faster than The Old Boat. This has something to do with the different temperaments and situations of the main characters. As I discussed in the preceding chapters, Jin'gou is a doer. The focus of the narrator's interest is on his actions and their outcomes. So the novel has to develop at a quick pace. Baopu is a thinker. In the the novel, he is thinking nearly all the time and can hardly find any solution for the problems. His thoughts linger around the history of the Sui family and the town. The narrator introduces long passages of retrospection to present the stream of the protagonist's thought. This contributes to the sustained development of the novel. The co-protagonists Lei Dakong and Sui Jiansu are eager to take action. However, Lei is from a poor peasant family and he has nothing to lose. He never hesitates much before taking action. But Sui Jiansu is from a family with bad class status. His bitter experience teaches him to be very careful in every step. Any mistake he makes will cause a disaster to his family and himself. Before he takes an important step, he has to think it

over and over and get himself fully prepared. This also causes the slow development of the novel.

The narration of The Old Boat has a satirical tone which we can not find in Turbulence.

As an example of the novel's satirical manner, we may look at an episode in Chapter 10. During the great famine caused by the leftist policies of the Communist leaders, many peasants die of hunger. Once, after they bury the body of a starved-to-death woman, the peasants sit around and talk about "Communism." They have heard from the cadres that Communism is coming soon and will bring happiness to them. They can not help calling: "Communism, you kind grandpa, please come quickly, otherwise we people in Walizhen won't be able to see you." One young man tries to explain to them that Communism is not a human being. The peasants all get angry. They retort immediately: "How dare you say that Communism is not human? You are really reactionary!" (55) The peasants are serious when they say so. They sincerely believe that Communism is the name of a certain person who can save them from starving. In their miserable situation, the peasants' sincere belief in the political ideal of which they are so ignorant is ridiculous, but the reader can only laugh with a bitter taste in his mouth.

Sometimes the narrator uses an assertive tone to describe the absurdities of life, thus achieving an ironic effect. For example, in Chapter 8, the narrator tells about the new turbulent situation in the

reform years. One peasant 'specialized household' (zhuanyehu) offers a high annual salary of 8000 yuan to hire a secretary. After learning this news, a poet can not go to sleep for three nights in a row. He ponders whether he should remain a poet or take the position of secretary. As a result of his hesitation, he loses his chance. He regrets and resents so much that he becomes a sick man. Here we can not see the attitude of the narrator at the explicit level, but the ironical implication is clear.

Artistically speaking, the two novels also share one defect. The two authors both add some redundant figures to the novel for the purpose of voicing certain ideas. In Turbulence, such a figure is the "survey man" (kaocharen); in The Old Boat, they are the PLA soldier Dahu and his girl friend. Through the mouth of the "survey man", the implied author of Turbulence gives his opinions on many social problems. Through the story of Dahu and his love for a peasant girl, the implied author of The Old Boat tries to show his ideas about another big theme--the relationship between war and human nature, but his attempt fails. These defective elements, however, can be easily overlooked in these works; therefore they do not reduce the artistic value of the two novels in general.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS

In the appendix of A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, C. T. Hsia points out that what distinguishes modern Chinese literature from traditional literature and Communist literature is "its burden of moral contemplation: its obsessive concern with China as a nation afflicted with a spiritual disease and therefore unable to strengthen itself or change its set ways of inhumanity."<sup>25</sup> He also says that "the literature actually produced in Communist China shares nothing of the fiery critical temper of the twenties and thirties and is justifiably designated a new phase of Chinese writing."<sup>26</sup>

When C. T. Hsia made the above points in 1969, his view of the fundamental difference between modern Chinese literature and literature produced in Communist China was no doubt correct. However, since the death of Mao, literary works published in Communist China have undergone a profound change. Many of the post-Mao works demonstrate more connection with the May Fourth literature than with the Maoist Communist literature. It seems to me

---

<sup>25</sup> C.T. Hsia, "Obsession With China: The Moral Burden of Modern Chinese Literature", in A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971: 533.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.: 534.

that the authors of Turbulence and The Old Boat show as strong an "obsessive concern" with China's spiritual disease as the May Fourth writers did and that the two novels display a more "fiery critical temper" than the works of the twenties and thirties. In this sense, Turbulence and The Old Boat are the continuation and development of the May Fourth literature.

These two novels show the persistence of the May Fourth tradition. Their strong critical attitudes towards the darkness in Chinese rural life calls to mind the critical May Fourth realistic works. Under thirty years of harsh Communist control over Chinese cultural life, the Chinese writers had in general given the world an impression of being docile propaganda instruments used by the Communist Party to maintain its rule. The birth of mature works like Turbulence and The Old Boat tells the world that the "fiery critical temper" of modern Chinese writers could be repressed under high pressure but never stifled. In the reform years, this tradition of criticizing the dark social realities not only revived but also evolved. The authors of Turbulence and The Old Boat are of peasant origin. When they speak out and claim human rights for the peasants, they are in the position of insiders. This is something we can rarely find in the May fourth literary works. In these two books the indictment against the evil doings of the ruling political power is stronger than that in most of the works we have read since the May Fourth era, This is one reason why the two novels were acclaimed by the Chinese critics and the general readership.

The meaning of the May Fourth literary spirit lies not only in the writers' courage in exposing the darkness in Chinese life, but also in their persistent search for the way out of darkness. The May Fourth writers' anti-traditional attitude in their exploration might be too extreme, but their daring spirit to challenge the authorities in all fields did liberate the minds of a whole generation. However, this tradition of exploration did not develop after the May Fourth movement. The primary reason, I believe, was the emergence and worship of new authorities, in both political and literary fields. Any exploration beyond the scope and direction set by the authorities would naturally be regarded as heretical. This situation exerted not only political pressure but also, and more importantly, psychological pressure on the Chinese intellectuals. It fettered to a great extent the courage and imagination of the writers, and was responsible for the thematically and stylistically mediocre works produced in Maoist years. The worship of authorities reached its highest point in the Cultural Revolution, when politically one man had the absolute authority and literarily there were only eight "model plays" in the whole of China. As the Chinese saying goes, "Things will develop in the opposite direction when they become extreme" (wu ji bi fan). Since the death of Mao, the Chinese intellectuals have adopted a new anti-authoritarian attitude. I believe in this new attitude lies the hope of both Chinese literature and China as a nation.

In the preface to Turbulence, Jia Pingwa says, "Every period of time has its own literary works. ... This is not a time for the emergence of authorities. There will not be another Mao Zedong in



the political field, and there will not be another Tolstoi in the literary field." (preface: 4) Turbulence and The Old Boat both depict the protagonists' independent exploration for a way out of darkness. Here I use the word darkness to mean both the ideological predicament of the educated protagonists and also the situation of the peasants who live spiritually and materially impoverished lives. It is safe to say that in these two works, the protagonists' exploration is also the authors' exploration. As I discussed earlier in this thesis, the protagonists of the two works have different temperaments and their views of life also differ. Correspondingly, the two authors express different opinions through their creative works. Whether their opinions are right or wrong is not the most important question. The value of their exploration is not that they can find a solution for the problems of the Chinese peasants' lives, but that each of them views the problems from a new perspective and their explorations have reached a new depth. This is another reason for the attention the two works have received in China. It seems to me that Turbulence and The Old Boat very well represent the new trend of ideological pluralism in Chinese literature.

It also seems to me that the two works show the authors' freedom in borrowing both traditional and modern techniques. In the history of modern Chinese literature, there has always been a tension between tradition and modernity. When Turbulence and The Old Boat were published, the discussion concerning the subject of literary modernism and tradition was still going on. The success of Turbulence and The Old Boat points to the fact that the traditional

narrative techniques are still full of vitality in presenting modern life. The authors of the two novels, especially Jia Pingwa, have obviously benefited from their reading of traditional Chinese literature. Modernistic techniques are compatible and can be blended with traditional techniques. A Chinese writer does not have to sever his ties with Chinese literary tradition to create successful modern literary works.

As writers born and educated in Maoist Communist China, Jia Pingwa and Zhang Wei both show in their works too much concern with the political and social problems in China. This concern sometimes affects the authors' artistic commitment. Most modern Chinese writers share the same problem. This situation is understandable in the sense that writers of moral integrity can hardly avoid being distracted from exclusive artistic pursuits while they are witnessing the suffering of the people and facing so many social problems in China. With the improvement of China's political and economic situation, it is my hope that the Chinese writers will be able to maintain a more stable mind in their artistic exploration and create works that have even more aesthetic value than Turbulence and The Old Boat.

GLOSSARY OF CHINESE NAMES, TITLES AND TERMS

Bosi	跛四
Cai Da'an	蔡大安
chushi	出世
cui	翠
Cuicui	翠翠
Dahu	大虎
Danfeng	丹凤
Dongyang	东阳
fazhi	法治
fensi	粉丝
Fuyun	福运
Fuzao	浮躁
gan diao ta	干掉他
Gansu	甘肃
Gong	巩
Gong Baoshan	巩宝山
Guangzhou	广州
Guchuan	古船

Guigui	桂桂
guiju	规矩
Hai dao zhen jing	海道针经
Han Wenju	韩文举
Haoran	浩然
Huangdi renren zuo; mingnian dao wojia	皇帝人人做; 明年到我家
Huangxian	黄县
Huizi	茴子
Hunan	湖南
Jia Pingwa	贾平凹
Jiang Guangci	蒋光慈
Jiang Zilong	蒋子龙
jiao	角
jieguo	结果
Jin'gou	金狗
kanshangou	看山狗
kaocharen	考察人
Ke Yunlu	柯云路
Lao jing	老井
Lei Dakong	雷大空
Li Qisheng	李其生

Li Xiangnan	李向南
Li Zhaolu	李北路
Lu Xun	鲁迅
Lu Yao	路遥
Manyuer	满月儿
Mao Dun	茅盾
Mao Zedong	毛泽东
Naonao	闹闹
Nongyi chengji	农裔城籍
pinnong	贫农
pinxiazhongnong	贫下中农
Qi Laohan	七老汉
Qiao changzhang shangren ji	乔厂长上任记
qingguan	清官
Rensheng	人生
renzhi	人治
rushi	入世
Shandong	山东
Shangzhou	商州
Shanxi	陕西
Shen Congwen	沈从文
Shengli guoshi	胜利果实

Shengyin	声音
Shi Hua	石华
shui	水
Shuihu zhuan	水浒传
Sui Baopu	隋抱朴
Sui Buzhao	隋不召
Sui Hanzhang	隋含章
Sui Jiansu	隋见素
Sui Yingzhi	隋迎之
tai guo	太过
Tangshan	唐山
Tian	田
Tian wen	天问
Tian Yishen	田一申
Tian Youshan	田有善
Tian Zhongzheng	田中正
Tianbao	天保
Tuzi bu chi wobian cao	兔子不吃窝边草
Walizhen	洼狸镇
Wanyuanhu	万元户
Wenxue shidai	文学时代

Wu ji bi fan	物极必反
Wu zuxiang	吴组缃
Xianyouchuan	仙游川
Xiaofan	小凡
xiaojie	小姐
Xiaokui	小葵
xiaoshou	小兽
Xiaoshui	小水
Xin xing	新星
Yantai	烟台
Yi tan qingshui	一潭清水
Yihua	益华
yingyangshi	阴阳师
Yingying	英英
Yu Dafu	郁达夫
yuan	元
yue	狱
Zhang Wang Shi	张王氏
Zhang Wei	张伟
Zhao Bing	赵炳
Zhao Duoduo	赵多多
Zhao Shuli	赵树理

Zheng Yi

郑义

Zhengyue; Layue

正月·腊月

zhongnong

中农

Zhou Enlai

周恩来

Zhou Yanyan

周燕燕

Zhu De

朱德



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Creative Works

- Jia Pingwa, Stories about The Mountains [Shandi biji], Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980.
- Jia Pingwa, The Trace of Love [Ai de zongji], Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1985.
- Jia Pingwa, Turbulence [Fuzao], Shouhuo no.1 (1987): 4-147, reprinted in book form by Zuoja Chubanshe (Beijing: 1987).
- Ke Yunlu, "New Star" [Xin xing], Dangdai zengkan no. 3 (1984).
- Lu Xun, "The True Story of Ah Q" [Ah Q zhengzhuan], in A Collection of Lu Xun's Fictional Works [Lu Xun xiaoshuoxuan], Vol. 2, Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1952: 92-149.
- Shen Congwen, "The Border Town" [Biancheng], in The Selected Fictional Works of Shen Congwen [Shen Congwen xiaoshuoxuan], Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1982: 207-293.
- Zhang Wei, The Old Boat [Guchuan], Dangdai no. 5 (1986): 4-143, reprinted in book form by Renmin wenxue chubanshe (Beijing: 1987).
- Zheng Yi, "The Old Well" [Laojing], Dangdai no. 2 (1985): 4-73.

## Critical Studies

- Bao Chang, "How to evaluate the Literature in the Last Ten Years" [Ruhe pingjia shinianlai de Xinshiqi wenxue], Xinhua wenzhai no. 2 (1987): 134-135.
- Cao Zengyu & Mei Huilan, "The Route of Human Life and the Dream of Human Nature--A Comparion between the Works of Lu Yao and Zhang Wei" [Rensheng zhi lu yu renxing zhi meng--Lu Yao yu Zhang Wei chuanguo bijiao], Dangdai zhoujia pinglun no. 5 (1989): 20-25.
- Chen Yong, "My Views on The Old Boat" [Wo suo kandao de Guchuan], Dangdai no. 1 (1988): 233-239.
- Duke, Michael S, Blooming and Contending: Chinese Literature in the Post-Mao Era, Indiana: 1985.
- Duke, Michael S, "Reinventing China: Cultural Exploration in Contemporary Chinese Fiction", Issues and Studies no. 8 (1989): 29-54.
- Fan Zhizhong, "Turbulence in the Old Well" [Fuzao yu laojing de rensheng yishi], Dangdai zuojia pinglun no. 4 (1989): 83-85.
- Feng Lisan, "A Heavy Look-back and a Joyful Look-forward" [Chenzhong de huigu yu xinyue de zhanwang], Dangdai, no.1 (1988): 221-232.
- He Zhenbang, "A General Evaluation of the Creation of Novels in the New Era" [Xinshiqi changpianxiaoshuo chuanguo de zongti pingjia], Xinhua wenzhai no. 12 (1986): 164-166.
- Hsia, C. T., A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

- Hu Heqing, "On Ah Cheng, Ma Yuan and Zhang Wei: The Evolution of the Ingenuity of Taoist Culture [Lun Ah Cheng, Ma Yuan, Zhang Wei: Daojia wenhua zhihui de yange], Wenxue pinglun no. 2 (1989): 71-80.
- Hu Weishi, "Zhang Wei's New Work The Old Boat Is Warmly Received by Literary Circles" [Zhang Wei xinzuo Guchuan, wentan fanying qianglie], Shanghai wenxue no. 2 (1987): 96.
- Jin Dacheng, "The Aesthetic Value of the Characters and the Unsolved Mysteries" [Renwu de shenmeihua yu bukejie de aomi], Dangdai no. 3 (1988): 203.
- Lau, D. C., trans. The Analects, New York: Penguin Books, 1979.
- Lee Yee ed., The New Realism--Writing from China after Cultural Revolution, New York: Hippocrene Books Inc., 1983.
- Li Tuo, "The Cultural and Aesthetic Consciousness in Chinese Literature--Preface to Jia Pingwa's 'Stories about Shangzhou'" [Zhongguo wenxuezhong de wenhua yishi he shenmei yishi--Xu Jia pingwa zhu "Shangzhou sanlu"], Shanghai wenxue no. 1 (1986): 86-93.
- Li Xin, "Reflections on The Fictional Works about the Reform" [Guanyu gaige tici xiaoshuo de sikao], Xinhua wenzhai no. 8 (1987): 128-130.
- Li Xing, "On the Psychological World of the Writers Who Are City Residents of Peasant Origin" [Lun "nongyi chengji" zuojia de xinli shijie], Dangdai zuojia pinglun, no. 2 (1989): 112-120.
- Li Zhensheng, "Shangzhou, Jia Pingwa's Fictional World" [Shangzhou, Jia Pingwa de xiaoshuo shijie], Shanghai Wenxue no. 4 (1986): 90-96.
- Liu Huo, "On Jin'gou" [Jin'gou lun], Dangdai Zuojia pinglun, no. 4 (1989): 67-77.
- Luan Meijian, "Thoughts on The Problems of Peasant Nature in Chinese Fictional Creation" [Guanyu zhongguo xiaoshuo chuangzuo zhong nongminxing wenti de sikao], Xinhua wenzhai no. 12 (1987): 112-115.

- Prusek, Jaroslav, The Lyrical and the Epic, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.
- Song Suiliang, "My Views on the Current Situation of Novel Creation" [Dui changpian xiaoshuo chuanguo xianzhuang de yidian kanfa], Wenhuibao September 1, 1986.
- Tsai Yuanhuan, "The Second Wave: Recent Development in Mainland Chinese Literature", Issues and Studies no. 8 (1989): 11-28.
- Wang Binbin, "The Traumatized Avengers in Contemporary Chinese Fiction" [Dangdai xiaoshuo zhong de chuanguo baofu xing renwu], Wenyi pinglun no.2 (1988): 37-41.
- Wang Hui, "Two Historical Views in Guchuan" [Guchuan de liangzhong lishiguan], Dangdai no. 4 (1988): 203.
- Wang Lifan, "On the Thematic Evolution of the New-era Novel and Its Characteristics" [Changpianxiaoshuo zhuti yanbian tezhenqiantao], Wenxue ziyou tan no.5 (1989): 27-25.
- Westbrook, Perry D., Free will and Determinism in American Literature, Associated University Press, Inc., Cranbury, New Jersey: 1979.
- Zhang Wei, "Four Essays on Creative Writing" [Chuangzuo suibi size], Zhongshan no. 4 (1987): 44-47.
- Zhao Zuhuan, "At the Back of Karma--A Rambling Talk about Fuzao and Guchuan" [Yinguobaoying de beihou--Guchuan yu Fuzao manyi], Wenxue ziyou tan no.5 (1987): 87-94.