MENDING THE WEB: A THEMATIC STUDY
OF XU DISHAN'S FICTION

By

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Abstract

This thesis is a thematic study of the work of the early Twentieth Century Chinese writer Xu Dishan (Luo Huasheng) (1894-1941). The title, "Mending the Web," is at once a reference to a specific story by Xu and an indication of the importance he placed on spiritual values in a changing world. His work represents a modest search for a solution to the dislocation of his society - his own attempt to mend the broken web of modern China. In his work Xu promoted personal solutions and individual salvation rather than the whole scale transformation of society. He stressed the importance of working for change within a given framework - he was a reformer, not a revolutionary, a moderator searching for a synthesis based on universal values rooted in both the Chinese and Western traditions. The values upheld in his fiction are uncompromising - one must follow one's conscience, accept duty and responsibility calmly, show charity and forgiveness and, above all be true to oneself.

Xu's stress on personal and spiritual solutions marks him out from the majority of his iconoclastic contemporaries who advocated wholesale social change. In Chapter One, I try to provide an historical and ideological context for Xu, a comparative background from which to examine him in relation to his contemporary writers and the times in which he lived.

The value Xu placed on a unifying framework, or a sense
of order to replace chaos, is made apparent in Chapter Two, where I discuss his quest for values and the romance and mythopoetic modes which inform much of his work. In particular I look at the quest themes which influence the structure and message of his stories, concentrating primarily on an analysis of "Yuguan" and "A Daughter's Heart" based on an extrapolation of the "monomyths" of Joseph Campbell and Northrop Frye. I examine the influence of Christianity on Xu's work, his emphasis on a strongly moral vision and his search for an affirmation of life and the individual's potentiality for goodness.

In Chapter Three I analyse Xu's attitude to life and fate in relation to his use of the coincidence motif which acts in his stories as a catalyst and test for action. The coincidence makes the world small, and thus provides a testing ground for characters' actions. A vital element in this is the concept of baoying or requital, whereby an individual is responsible for his or her actions and is judged accordingly. Xu believed an individual has a responsibility to make the best of an unknown fate, but still to work within given limits to have an influence for the good. A strong moral grammar informs Xu's work, providing a framework for judging the acts of his characters.

In Chapter Four I look at Xu's use of female protagonists to embody his philosophy of life. Women like Yuguan and Chuntao represent Xu's ideals in their most specific form, embodying
that sense of affirmation and hope so central to Xu's work
and offering models of human potentiality, an optimistic
vision of life as it could be.

In the conclusion I touch on the role of morality in
Xu's fiction. His work is deeply moral in orientation and
offers an interesting contrast to that of his contemporaries
equally engaged in writing fiction for a purpose. Xu's concern
for spiritual values was almost unique among writers of that
period. His fiction is primarily a fiction of ideas and
his themes and messages dominate. He was searching for a
solution to the dislocation of his society, as were his con-
temporaries, but he did not suggest a radical social trans-
formation but rather to work within the existing framework.
He looked for personal solutions, believing in the innate
capacity of the human being to change for the better. He
advocated change, but stressed that it must first come individ-
ually, through the development of self-knowledge, on a modest
scale, before the world can be transformed. His solution
was modest yet profound, and filled with hope.
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Naturally I take full responsibility for all errors and shortcomings to be found in this thesis.
Chapter One: Introduction:

The May Fourth Movement and Xu Dishan

There is a tendency among people writing about the May Fourth period to refer to a "May Fourth generation"\(^1\), characterizing that generation of men and women who were born at the turn of the Twentieth century, grew up during the early years of the Republic, became active intellectually and politically at the time of the May Fourth movement and are still or have been until very recently in positions of power and influence in both the P.R.C. and Taiwan.\(^2\)

Xu Dishan (1894-1941) was a member of that generation, sharing many of its characteristics and yet possessing others that made him uniquely different. In this chapter I shall attempt an overview of the May Fourth movement and its significance, particularly on the cultural front, and try to present a composite picture, as it were, of a May Fourth writer. On the basis of this I shall then examine how Xu Dishan fits into the category of May Fourth writer, other than simply chronologically, and establish certain themes for discussion in later chapters.

The May Fourth Movement derives its name from a demonstration staged by Beijing students and professors on May Fourth, 1919 in protest against the government's acquiescence in Japan's Twenty-one Demands and the Versailles' Treaty's Shandong resolution.\(^3\) The incident galvanized a series of country-wide protests and actions which were profoundly anti-imperialist
in nature and stimulated already incipient trends towards nationalism, the desire for modernization, social and intellectual reforms and increasing anti-traditionalism. The effects of the movement were manifold, its reverberations are still felt today and its antecedents date back to the reform efforts of the late Nineteenth century. Its chief contributions include the rise of student and labour movements, the re-organization of the Guomindang (Nationalist Party), the birth of the Chinese Communist Party, the decline and rejection of traditional values, the emergence of a new intelligentsia, the increasing dominance of Western ideas and the stimulus it gave to an already existent cultural movement which was responsible for the creation of a truly modern literature in the vernacular language. The May Fourth Movement, therefore, encompasses a wide range of trends, activities and thought, many of which had earlier antecedents and tremendous implications for China's future.

Charlotte Furth defines it as a dynamic movement, in which opinions were being moulded, rather than as a static expression of already held sentiments. The movement was therefore transitional and part of an evolving process. It coincided with and gave extra impetus to a drive for a new cultural movement against the classic tradition and for Westernization. Its links with prior reform trends led one scholar to characterize the movement more as a "culmination of tendencies" than something radically new or different.
It has traditionally been regarded as a pivotal turning point\textsuperscript{11} and the significance of the role of earlier trends has been underplayed, particularly since the emergence of Marxism-Leninism as the dominant ideology out of the debates and conflicts of the May Fourth movement has given emphasis to its role in the rise of the Chinese Communist party and the march towards 1949 and the founding of the People's Republic of China.\textsuperscript{12} Despite these qualifications, the name has stuck and has come to represent a time of enormous change in China as she entered the modern world. Maurice Meisner defines it as "a movement that was directed against the world which had 'opened' China and impinged upon her and a movement that truly opened the doors of China and the minds of modern Chinese to the world at large, giving rise to new hopes, visions and aspirations."\textsuperscript{13}

If the May Fourth movement cannot be considered a totally new phenomenon heralding radical change, given its historical antecedents, there is a very strong case for seeing great differences between the generation who became active during the May Fourth movement and their predecessors at the end of the Nineteenth century. The older generation, while recognizing China's problems, still attempted to work within the tradition.\textsuperscript{14} The May Fourth generation, while products of that tradition, were, in Lin Yü-sheng's phrase, conscious iconoclasts,\textsuperscript{15} seeking in the impatient manner typical to them, to reject the tradition and replace it with alternatives
usually based on Western models. The May Fourth stress on science and democracy, which they believed to be the source of modern Western power, is symptomatic of the demand for a re-evaluation of China's direction; the numerous "isms", ideologies and creeds examined, taken up and discarded by intellectuals active in the movement point to a desire to fill the vacuum left by their rejection of the tradition.

Chow Tse-tung, in his important account of the movement, describes it as, "a vast and fervent attempt to dethrone the very fundamentals of the old stagnant tradition and replace it with a completely new culture." He also said, "The basic spirit of the movement...was to jettison tradition and create a new, modern civilization to save China." The tradition, primarily its Confucian aspects and dynastic rule, had become greatly discredited during the Nineteenth century with China's internal decline and her confrontation with the imperialist powers. The Chinese world view was shattered and confidence in traditional values and systems lost. Concerned members of the intellectual elite had been searching since the latter half of the Nineteenth century for ways to strengthen and enrich China and to gain her independence as a nation. Attempts at reform and revolution had not been successful in freeing China from the presence of imperialist powers waiting to cut her up like a melon, nor had they succeeded in improving the internal situation, despite the 1911 revolution and the establishment of the
Republic. The division of China by warlords following the pattern of the gentry-led armies of Zeng Guofan and others, and the demands for Chinese territory by the Japanese and other powers were sources of great discontent and humiliation. The nationalist sentiments that sparked off the May Fourth incident initially united all potentially divisive factions within the movement. While it is true that the cohesiveness given to the early stages of the movement by patriotism did not outlast the repudiation of the treaty\(^1\), the desire for national unity and opposition to imperialist encroachment were to remain the most significant factors in the rise and eventual victory of the C.C.P.

Chow Tse-tung considers that there was a "fundamental and thorough intellectual and sociopolitical change"\(^2\) in China after the May Fourth movement. He characterizes the movement as a "dividing line in the intellectual, cultural and sociopolitical history of modern China [which] marks the initiation of a new era."\(^3\) And perhaps the most significant factor in the line marking off the previous generation from their May Fourth counterparts was the phenomenon of iconoclasm, the rejection of tradition, which became "the most colorful phenomenon of the movement."\(^4\) Lin Yu-sheng characterizes the iconoclasm of the May Fourth movement as "a unique historical phenomenon from the perspective of Chinese history as well as world history."\(^5\) Lin argues that May Fourth intellectuals consciously rejected the Confucian tradition with a totalistic
iconoclasm ironically and decisively influenced by "a post-classical Confucian mode of thinking" which stressed the intellectual-moral function of the mind and the "power and priority of fundamental ideas." He considers the most crucial factor responsible for May Fourth iconoclasm to be the "cultural-intellectual approach" whereby Chinese intelligentsia gave priority to cultural and intellectual change over socio-political and economic change. Ideas are fundamental --- and the traditional tendency to monism or cultural holism meant that change had to be total: the tradition had to be rejected and replaced with an equally monistic system of thoughts and values --- a new intellectual order. In general, changes from traditional to modern societies are marked by transitional elements linking the past with the future. Lin argues that the cultural and intellectual mode of thinking in China, which he traces back to the Confucian stress on the vital function of the human consciousness or mind, coupled with the May Fourth view of Social Darwinism as an "ideology for change" and the collapse of the Universal Kingship which had held the political and cultural order strongly linked together, predisposed Chinese intellectuals to seek totalistic change. They could not consider a transition from the tradition to the new because they consciously rejected all aspects of that tradition. They made a sharp dichotomy between tradition and modernity and in the process rejected the possibility of achieving a "creative transformation of
However, Lin stresses that while the content of May Fourth intellectual thought was radically different, the traditional mode of thinking was unconsciously maintained and persists even today. This imbalance between conscious rejection and unconscious retention of the tradition marks the instability that Lin terms "the crisis of Chinese consciousness." The May Fourth call for Westernization in favour of the discredited tradition was fundamentally on shaky ground. Firstly, many traditional elements, intellectual and moral values, survived the breakdown of the traditional framework and certain thinking people, particularly Lu Xun, and, I believe, Xu Dishan, were unable to reject certain traditional values completely. Secondly, iconoclastic totalism and nationalism, the driving force of the May Fourth movement, made uneasy bedfellows. A strong sense of national identity would seem to require a positive re-evaluation of the tradition rather than its total rejection. Furthermore, the anti-imperialism of the May Fourth movement did not make for totally smooth acceptance of foreign ideology.

The belief in the power of ideas was not limited to Confucianists. Lu Xun is famous for his decision to abandon his training in medicine and take up his pen to act as a weapon in attacking the ills besetting the diseased organism that was China. The May Fourth generation wanted, above all, to "Save China" and, given their cultural-intellectualistic
mode of thought, many felt that this could only be achieved through changing the minds of the Chinese people. Chow Tse-tung concludes that the May Fourth movement was essentially "an intellectual revolution in the broad sense, intellectual because it was based on the assumption that intellectual changes were a prerequisite for [the]...task of modernization, because it precipitated a mainly intellectual awakening and transformation, and because it was led by intellectuals."³²

A new intelligentsia had begun to emerge in the early Twentieth century. The old imperial examination system had ended in 1905 and the links between intellectuals and government had been temporarily severed. The May Fourth movement saw a renewed involvement of the intellectual strata in politics and it was not surprising, given the fact that "literature was the major profession of the traditional intellectuals"³³, that many should seek to bring about change through a literary or cultural revolution. In Merle Goldman's words May Fourth intellectuals "were rebelling against their Confucian heritage, but they were a part of it because they believed that as literati they had a responsibility to lead."³⁴ They had a strong sense of mission and the literature produced during this period reflects this.

Leo Lee suggests that the May Fourth Incident would not have attracted so much attention had it not been so closely linked with the New Culture movement in which New Literature was "of primary importance."³⁵ Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi had
been pressing since 1916 for a new literary movement. Classical Chinese was claimed to be a dead language and the use of the vernacular (baihua) in literature was being pushed aggressively and effectively. While the vernacular had been used in popular fiction prior to the New Culture movement, it was not until 1918, with the publication of Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" that it became socially acceptable for members of the intelligentsia to write in it.36 The May Fourth Incident facilitated the spread of the vernacular through its use in student papers throughout the country.37 Sun Yat-sen began using the vernacular in his articles written after the May Fourth Incident and by 1921 it had been accepted officially as the national language.38 Ironically, while one of the primary motivations for pushing for its adoption was the argument that it would facilitate education, the vernacular used by May Fourth intellectuals was criticized later by Qu Qiubai, a leading Marxist critic and ideologue, for being a 'mule' language, a hybrid of classical sayings and foreign words totally unfamiliar to its supposed audience.39 (It has to be remembered that over 80% of the Chinese population was illiterate at this time.)40 Perry Link points out that the use of the vernacular in the popular Mandarin Ducks and Butterfly fiction pre-dated May Fourth literature. While the former enjoyed a far wider audience than the limited, privileged minority who read and wrote May Fourth literature, the latter, however, with its sense of mission and emphasis
on serious messages, began to take precedence with the rising tide of nationalism engendered by the Sino-Japanese war.\textsuperscript{41}

The May Fourth movement saw the formation of numerous student societies and literary organizations. The two most significant and influential societies, the Association for Literary Studies and the Creation Society, were both formed in 1921 and played a major role in expressing and directing literary currents in the 1920's. The Association for Literary Studies, of which Xu Dishan was one of twelve founding members, others of whom included Mao Dun, Zheng Zhenduo, Zhou Zuoren and Yu Pingbo, all major May Fourth figures, was inaugurated on January 4th 1921.\textsuperscript{42} A week later the \textit{Short Story} magazine (\textit{Xiaoshuo Yuebao}), once an established Butterfly publication,\textsuperscript{43} appeared under Mao Dun's editorship and began publishing some of the most important fiction of the early May Fourth period. All Xu Dishan's early works appeared in this magazine. In the Association's manifesto published in the first issue of the revamped magazine three principles were laid out: 1) To encourage unity among writers; 2) to advance knowledge (particularly of foreign countries through extensive translation) and 3) to establish a union of writers.\textsuperscript{44} Zhou Zuoren drafted this manifesto which also stated that, "Literature is a form of labor, and a form of labor very significant for humanity."\textsuperscript{45} The Association advocated 'Art for Life's Sake' or, in Chow's words, "a literature based on individualistic humanitarianism."\textsuperscript{46} In fact, the definition of this "amorphous truism"\textsuperscript{47} was
decidedly vague and Association members were not uniform in their opinions. Zhou Zuoren, the major advocate of the 'Art for Life's Sake' slogan, put stress on the central role of the human being in literature and advocated 'Truth' over beauty, ascribing to literature the moral function of promoting certain ideals and tending to undervalue the aesthetic element. Mao Dun, the famous novelist and critic, was also deeply concerned with the link between literature and humanity and believed that fiction should be a mirror of society, objectively recording a wide range of events, thoughts and actions from the viewpoint of an omniscient, objective narrator. In fact, while the Association's name became linked with realism and naturalism, Leo Lee argues that many writers associated with it were writing subjective accounts of not 'Life' in general so much as their individual experiences and thoughts, and their preoccupations were more with a romantic, individualistic image of their self and less with concepts of humanity at large. Lee suggests that Mao Dun was perhaps the exception in that he did consciously attempt to write (and succeeded in writing) true realist fiction based on Nineteenth century European models, but that most writers associated with the 'Art for Life's Sake' school were romantics in disguise. Chow Tse-tung corroborates this but points out that members of the Association in its later period did emphasize realism and naturalism. In fact, Xu Dishan's later works have earned the accolade from P.R.C. critics
that he was moving on the correct road to realism prior to his premature death. In broad terms the contributions of the Association for Literary Studies were to give literature an unprecedented position as an honorable, professional vocation, to introduce Western theories and literature into China, particularly of the realist school, and to give voice to the literature and the moral function of exposing society's ills. Chow Tse-tung describes the literature of this period as "an indigenous 'literature of blood and tears', which reflected the spirit of protest of the Chinese intelligentsia of the time." The other 'spirit' of the time was romanticism, and the Creation Society, which was to undergo a series of ideological metamorphoses, was its primary advocate. Their slogan, 'Art for Art's Sake', had prompted the Association to set up its own opposing one, 'Art for Life's Sake'. Established in 1921 by a group of writers studying in Japan, the Creation Society rejected utilitarian notions of art's function and promoted the development and discovery of the self, the pursuit of beauty and perfection and an "unrestricted expression of personal feelings." After the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925 the members of the Society became increasingly radicalized, adopting firstly the slogan of 'revolutionary literature' and later, 'proletarian literature', but Qu Qiubai maintained that they preserved an idealistic, romantic attitude to Marxism and the role of literature.
Yu Dafu, a major writer associated with the Creation Society, once wrote that, "the greatest success of the May Fourth movement lay, first of all, in the discovery of individual personality." Leo Lee, in his stimulating book, The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers, likens the literary revolution in Twentieth century China to the Nineteenth century European romantic movement in that it "represented a reaction against the classic tradition of order, reason, schematization, ritualization and structuring of life. Both ushered in a new emphasis on sincerity, spontaneity, passion, imagination and the release of individual energies---in short, the primacy of subjective human sentiments and energies." Lee believes the romantic movement in China was infused by two dynamic spirits: Prometheanism, which "glorifies individual bravery, self-conscious and self-assertive efforts at the realization of human potentialities in rebellion against past orthodoxy or tradition," and Dionysianism, which, "with its native force in both spiritual and physical love, demands the total release from the restrictions of convention and plunges the individual into the throes of subjective life experience in order to attain the state of frenzied, ecstatic abandon." The May Fourth generation lived on a veritable volcano of love. The dynamic energies released through the Promethean and Dionysian spirits were characterized by the search for love, truth and beauty, and the primary emphasis on subjective, individual sentiment. It must be stressed, however,
that the pre-eminence of the individual was losing ground by the end of the May Fourth period to a desire for a strong nation-state and a move to popular rather than individual action.

The romantic ethos which Lee asserts coloured nearly all the May Fourth generation's outlook, appears in times of alienation and rapid change. The individual is alienated from his or her society, is convinced of his or her own (unsung) greatness and dreams utopian dreams in which the present society is destroyed or completely transformed, never "remedied piecemeal". Thus the romantic outlook so prevalent among that generation predisposed in them the tendency towards totalistic iconoclasm described by Lin Yü-sheng.

Another significant factor in the romantic influence on May Fourth writers was their role as "unlikely heroes". In much of their early, autobiographical, confessional literature the writers became their own heroes, and the heroes of their reading public. As the most sensitive and articulate spokesmen of their generation they reflected and expressed the thoughts, dreams and pain of thousands who in turn felt a strong emotional identification with them. In her biography of Ba Jin, Olga Lang gives details of letters sent to the anarchist writer by his devoted readers, alternately asking for support and advice or chiding Ba Jin if he wavered on the path they felt he should tread. The writers' influence was enormous---they helped radicalize a generation. Ezra Vogel wrote, "Perhaps
nothing, except foreign invasion itself, did more to stir Chinese nationalism than the works of the May Fourth Writers.\textsuperscript{64}

Their deep sense of mission, the urge, as Yu Dafu put it, "to do something", \textsuperscript{65} did not stop at nationalism. They wished to rid China of old feudal values and systems and replace them with Western alternatives. They considered literature had a function to awaken Chinese people to an awareness of China's internal and international problems and, Vogel asserts, helped create "the spiritual, ideological base for a strong modern nation."\textsuperscript{66} They did not provide solutions---that is not the writer's function---but they did help politicize their contemporaries.

The majority of May Fourth writers come from elite gentry backgrounds and, despite their own impoverishment and their sympathy for the downtrodden, there was an enormous gap between them and the people whose cause they claimed to espouse. They were not at home describing the lives of peasants and workers because they could not truly identify with them, despite the lip-service that was paid to theories of writing about the working class. (One commentator on this period points ironically to the 'rickshaw' literature, in which rickshaw men became the intermediaries between the alienated intellectuals and the world of the proletariat.)\textsuperscript{67} The heroes with whom many of the May Fourth generation identified themselves were not working class. Writers admired and modelled themselves after Rousseau, Tolstoy, Shelley, Rolland and others. Leo
Lee sees a progression from the early sentimental admiration of the emotional, passive hero, Young Werther of Goethe's book to an identification with the active, dynamic hero, Lord George Gordon Byron, poet, rebel and social outcast. They did not admire the "mad, bad and dangerous to know" Lord Byron of Lady Caroline Lamb, but the romantic outcast who defied his country to fight for the cause of Greek nationalism.\(^6\) This progression coincides with the turn towards action being made by the May Fourth generation after the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925. In time a new hero emerged, in T.A. Hsia's term, "the mythified proletariat",\(^6\) with whom leftists felt a strong affinity. It is ironic that the work of May Fourth writers should eventually give way to an apparently more truly proletarian literature with which they could not identify and which they could not write with any true conviction. For Leo Lee the writers of the May Fourth generation became true, doomed romantic heroes: outsiders destroyed by the new society they help create. To a certain extent their heroic role persists in the sense that the May Fourth movement still represents a symbol of freedom and the writers of that generation remain legends who helped shape "a deep social and national consciousness.\(^7\)

The preoccupation of this "moral elite"\(^7\) with the social mission of literature meant that standards tended to be "more moral than literary"\(^7\), a situation that became increasingly the case in the late Twenties onwards. The eclecticism of
the May Fourth movement, coupled with the absence of a literary criticism based on aesthetic grounds, created uneven literary achievements. Despite these limitations much May Fourth literature is significant both for its social relevance and its compelling creativity—in fact, to capture the imagination of so many of the educated youth at that time it had to be good. It was a time of experimentation with new techniques and a new literary language, as well as new themes and content. Despite their conscious iconoclasm writers could not totally free themselves of their rich literary heritage and May Fourth literature emerges as a "hybrid" of native and foreign influences. Cyril Birch, in his thoughtful analysis of pre-and post-May Fourth fiction, concludes that May Fourth literature stands outside the mainstream of Chinese literature, being at once an anomaly and a transitional stage. While marked by certain radically new features May Fourth literature does reveal links with the past and opened the way to the future, but the individualism and realism that characterized it have been replaced with older models of romance-style fiction: flat good and bad characters and a return to didacticism. While a tendency towards a moralistic didacticism is present in realism, as is the division of people into various types, which possibly explains why these particular elements of realism were adopted more easily by May Fourth writers, there is a great difference between May Fourth literature and its predecessor and descendant. The most significant change
from the past was the dropping of the story-teller mode and the "introduction of a new authorial persona, the 'I-narrator'"; often with a close autobiographical identification with the author—Lu Xun, Ba Jin and Yu Dafu being the major examples of this trend. Linked with this was a strong individual style and the use of psychological exploration. A gallery of memorable, realistic characters emerged. A new seriousness, a sense of purpose, entered the literature and new, previously taboo, subjects began to be discussed --- sex, the status of women, the role of the family, philosophies of life.

There were explorations into the use of new techniques, and the predominant mode was tragic-ironic, with the introduction of anti-heroes such as Lu Xun's madman, whose presence gave to literature the semantic effect of social criticism when explicit criticism could have been dangerous.

While Nineteenth century critical realism was espoused by committed May Fourth writers anxious to expose the ills of the old society, Fokkema argues in his article on Lu Xun that realism could not be integrated entirely into the literature because its ideal of objective, detached observation, achievable in a society with a secure world view, could not be maintained in the turmoil of Twentieth century China where there was an emphasis on transvaluation of values and action. In many ways the function of the writer in romantic and symbolist literature as a creator of new worlds and myths seemed more significant to writers coping with a potential cultural vacuum
created by the rejection of the tradition. May Fourth writers were perhaps romanticists in realist clothing and cultural iconoclasts still tied to the past, but they were also modern and unprecedented both in terms of the tradition and the future they helped create.

Where does Xu Dishan stand in all this? Was he a totalistic iconoclast, a Promethean or Dionysian romantic hero or a sharp critic of the realist school? Was his work concerned with attacking the past and exposing China's problems? Did he belong to the romantic or the realist camp and was his mission "to save China"?

The answer, inevitably, seems to lie somewhere in the middle. As a member of the Association for Literary Studies Xu was linked with the realist trend of 'Art for Life's Sake'. Critics tend to divide his works into two periods: an early romantic stage and a later more realistic one. His enthusiastic adoption of the vernacular language and his creative use of it puts him in the iconoclast school as, perhaps, does his conversion to Christianity, but the importance he placed on traditional values such as family feeling implies he was not absolutist in his rejection of the past. Xu Dishan was not a typical May Fourth writer in many respects, but in others he fits the mould. He does not belong to the mainstream, particularly in terms of philosophy, but he was active in the May Fourth movement, knew many of its major participants
well, and is considered to be of significance.

While sharing the elite gentry background of many of his intellectual contemporaries, and their typical impoverishment, certain aspects of his life set him apart. Born in Taiwan rather than on the mainland, he had travelled in S.E. Asia and spent time teaching in Burma before attending Yanjing University. His travelling experience was unusual in a generation more used to studying in Japan, Europe or North America, and had a profound impact on his work, giving it an exotic flavour quite unique at that time. Mao Dun has remarked on the neither-here-not-there quality of Xu and his independence of any faction or trend, but still firmly puts him in the category of May Fourth writer.83 Mao Dun had an ambivalent attitude towards Xu Dishan, characterized by his device of using two people to discuss Xu in an assessment of his work. There seems to be an element of fond exasperation for a wayward colleague in Mao Dun's tone, and the hope that he will eventually join the right road.84

Joseph Lau has said that Xu Dishan was an anomaly for his time in that his work does not seem to be influenced by the prevalent iconoclastic rejection of the tradition.85 Other critics have remarked on the singular lack of discussion or description of contemporary problems and issues, particularly in his earlier works.86 The exotic Southeast Asian settings in his early works, unique for their time, have led critics to accuse him of dealing in fantasy and unreality, unconnected
as they were with the events and trends of Twentieth century China. Certainly his characters seem largely untouched by political events, except in as much as any social upheaval affects anyone. Their lives go on regardless and the resolution of their problems does not depend upon the transformation of the whole society but on their personally found solutions and the development of an individual philosophy of life. Mao Dun said that the thread linking Xu's stories together is the ideals his characters hold on to despite the buffeting they receive from fate. Xu's attitude to fate and the philosophy of life he espoused in his work will be discussed in greater detail in the chapters that follow. He has used the metaphor of the sea to describe life --- the individual cannot control it, but must just float on it and go where it wills. However, he does not advocate total acquiescence but struggle --- each day one should go out and face the sea again, like the pearl divers in his early story "The Toiling Spider" ("Zhui Wang Lao Zhu"), never knowing what the sea might divulge or do. In the same story he likens fate to a spider's web which must be patched again and again. His 'web-mending' philosophy has brought him accusations of compromise. He concentrates on repairing the breaks in the web of life and does not suggest that the web should be replaced.

His characters' philosophic acceptance of adversity, taking life as it comes, did not fit into the prevailing
mood of struggle and defiance. Women like Xiguan in "The Merchant's Wife" ("Shangren Fu") and Shangjie in "The Toiling Spider", both of whom suffer tremendous blows from fate, deal with it by accepting it as part of nature's course and believing that there are no real distinctions between sorrow and joy, for when seen from a distance of years and another perspective they can seem quite different.92 A mainland critic has criticized this attitude for its unquestioning acceptance of social problems and Xu's failure to explore the source of these problems.93 His early characters are chided for their lack of a set goal in life, in contrast to the more resolute people in his later work. Chuntao, heroine of the story of the same name, earns the approval of P.R.C. critics for her determination to direct her own life.94 Xu's choice of a woman who lives by collecting and sorting scrap paper in old Beijing for heroine earns him their praise: he is at last, in their view, writing realist fiction. However, the class status of the main character is not really enough to define this work as truly realistic. It is memorable for the unusual establishment of a ménage à trois and for Chuntao's straightforward, simple personality, but like most of Xu's characters she is not at all introspective: we see very little character development or psychological anguish. She deals with life as it comes and in the best way possible, never rebelling or bemoaning her fate.

C.T. Hsia wrote that "what distinguished [Xu Dishan]
from his contemporaries was his religious preoccupation." His Buddhist background, Christian conversion and lifelong personal and professional interest in comparative religion all had a major influence on his work. He was less concerned with political issues and more with questions of personal morality; his characters seek personal salvation, not the salvation of China. Mao Dun described Xu as a typical May Fourth eclectic in his early work, still searching between different ideologies, but the themes of charity and love, of populist humanitarianism and a search for spiritual values pervade nearly all his works. His most powerful and impressive work was his last, "Yuguan", a novella about the spiritual development of a woman who becomes a Christian convert for the practical reason of getting an education for her son. Yuguan gradually becomes a truly unselfish Christian through a process of slow awakening. Mao Dun expressed the hope in the mid-Thirties that Xu would progress enough to write about a heroine even stronger than Chuntao, whose name means Spring Peach --- an Autumn Chrysanthemum. Yuguan is that woman, but the Christian element and the negative references to Communist insurgencies in Southern Fujian have apparently prevented its publication or even mention in the P.R.C. Hsia describes it as a minor masterpiece, compelling a reappraisal of Xu's work.

C.T. Hsia has said that Xu Dishan ignores the conventions of the modern short story in "Yuguan" to give it the freedom
of a romance — and that this technique works, despite the lack of dialogue and the intricate plots so beloved of Xu. The word *chuanqi*, relating the marvellous, the name for early Chinese fiction, is often used to describe Xu's work. Many of Xu's stories resemble fables or romances, with much action, incredible coincidences, and almost allegorical characters. He often has a moral point to make and Hsia believes he was searching for the perfect fable to embody his spiritual beliefs and that "Yuguan" is the answer. In the next chapter I shall discuss the significance of the romance mode to Xu's work and suggest that his use of both romance and mythical themes helps give structure to his search for spiritual values.

The traditional division of May Fourth writers into romantic and realist schools can be seen to be largely a false dichotomy, with most writers straddling the two. Xu's work has been described as both romantic and realist, with his earlier works mainly falling into the first category and his later ones realistic. However, elements of both streams, and of something unique, overlap in his work and some stories could be considered as a mixture of both. Xu's apparent inability to settle into one mode worried some of his critics who considered it indicative of his class background for him to be hesitant, irresolute and even negative. In a rather sad article by his wife written in November,
1979, (when Wei Jingsheng was on trial), she follows the orthodox P.R.C. line on Xu and describes his ideology as nihilistic and vague, a negative humanism. She categorizes his works as unique, and those that describe ordinary people and attack the exploitative classes as realistic, but criticizes his lack of a class standpoint because he fails to point out the contradictions in society. She goes on to remark critically on the unhappy, pessimistic outlook on life he manifested in a memorial to his first wife. Her terminology and examples follow very closely those of Yang Gang, a critic who wrote a preface to a collection of Xu's work published in 1952 on the mainland. Both Yang and Xu's wife claim that Xu was "returning to the people" through his patriotic activities in Hong Kong during the Pacific War, and point to his later work for its maturity in the increased use of contemporary Chinese settings, the use of ironic description to expose exploitative figures (such as Director Fei), the use of patriotic intellectuals for characters and the more realistic style of writing. Neither of them mention "Yuguan".

Xu Dishan's most memorable characters are women and in this he was very much part of the May Fourth tradition. I shall examine the role played by women protagonists in Xu's work in a later chapter. His heroines are courageous, calm and strong, embodying the ideals of self-knowledge, compassion and a sense of responsibility which are his major preoccupations. There are few anti-heroes in his works,
something unusual for the time, and instead the simplicity and innocence of his characters stand out in contrast to the cruelty of fate and the evil of others. They do not offer a devastating criticism of society as Lu Xun's anti-heroes do, for they are too busy mending their web of life and taking life as it comes. Xu Dishan's characters often embark on circular journeys, going through crisis to a personal resolution and returning to the start of their journey spiritually transformed. In the chapter that follows I shall analyze the structure of certain of Xu's stories in relation to the quest-myth extrapolated by Joseph Campbell and expanded upon by Northrop Frye.

The romantic, individualistic 'I-narrator' who exploded onto the literary scene in the May Fourth period rarely makes an appearance in Xu Dishan's work, and even then there is no sense of deep personal involvement or introspection. Xu's works are always very detached, distanced, dispassionate. While not the omniscient, detached narrator of true realism, since there are things that he does not know and does not explore, he does maintain an objective distance from his characters. There is a meditative calmness and measuredness about his writing that is effective in emphasizing his spiritual preoccupations but leaves the reader ultimately uninvolved, looking on from the sidelines. The intense emotional identification inspired in their readers by other May Fourth writers does not happen here. Xu stands alone and outside, detached from the mainstream. As one critic says, reading Xu Dishan
is rather like listening to an old monk telling tales, a cup of green tea steaming by your side, an incense burner glowing and the rain beating down outside.
Chapter Two
A Traveller's Tales

"I must create a system or be enslav'd by another Man's"¹
William Blake, Jerusalem, I, 10

"But I myself suffer from carrying these old ghosts, which I cannot cast off, and thus often feel a stifling weight... Because I feel that I also often have these hateful thoughts contained in books written by the ancients."²
Lu Xun

Early Twentieth Century China was a country in the process of massive and dislocating change, with the traditional order destroyed and a host of ideologies waiting to fill the vacuum. It was an eclectic, chaotic period, and the totalistic iconoclasm that characterized members of the intellectual elite symbolized the fragmentation and alienation of the country as a whole. The responses of the May Fourth generation to this changing world were varied. Some, like Zhou Zuoren, retreated into the hermit's life;³ others, like his famous brother Lu Xun, fought an ideological battle to "save China". Some became fighters and others withdrew, but none was able to be totally free of the political and psychological ramifications of the destruction of an old world order and the nascent beginnings of a new.

Lin Yu-sheng believes the crisis faced by the intellectuals of that generation to be one of consciousness, for they rejected
the tradition outright while being shaped by it. C.G. Jung, in a discussion on the importance of acknowledging cultural archetypes which help to preserve identity, suggests that the past must be linked with the present to prevent a sense of psychic dislocation. "If this link-up does not take place, a kind of rootless consciousness comes into being no longer oriented to the past, a consciousness which succumbs helplessly to all manner of suggestions and, practically speaking, is susceptible to psychic epidemics." The same syndrome, interestingly reflecting the eclectic thirst for knowledge common to the May Fourth period, is noted by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, "Man today, stripped of myth, stands famished among all his pasts and must dig frantically for roots, be it among the most remote antiquities. What does our great historical hunger signify, our clutching about us of countless other cultures, our consuming desire for knowledge; if not the loss of myth, of a mythic home, the mythic womb?" Lin Yü-sheng suggests that the monistic nature of the Confucian tradition allowed only for its replacement by an equally holistic system, to be accepted totalistically and involving a complete alienation from the past. But the paradox of Lu Xun's ghosts remains - the weight of the tradition is not easily cast off and alienation from the "mythical home" or source brings problems of identity in its wake. To deny the past outright is to encourage rootlessness. A better solution would seem to lie in a flexible mix of
past and present, taking the source as the base from which to progress. There is need for a third way which is neither a total rejection of the past nor total adherence to it - a compromise or synthesis between the valuable elements of the modern world and the tradition. Such a synthesis is possible, for it was achieved, in a minor, personal way, by Xu Dishan. He made a sustained attempt to create his own system, his own code of conduct, taking as his "mythical source" universal values rooted in both the Chinese and Western traditions and embodying them both in himself and his work. It is possible that Xu's attempt at a synthesis has validity for a wider application, but it was nonetheless a small, personal venture and as such has been drowned in the flood of recent history. C.T. Hsia said of Xu that he made an "almost unique endeavour to recover spiritual values for his time." Lewis Robinson, in his perceptive article on Xu's last major story, "Yuguan", agrees with this assessment and goes on further to say that, "by achieving a level of pure moral exploration, he transcended the bounds of culture and race to enter that rare category of writer whose message has universal application."9

A deeply religious man whose intellectual life was centred on comparative theology, Xu Dishan was a converted Christian with strong Buddhist leanings. His Christianity was of a special order10 and did not preclude an understanding or
acceptance of the ways of other religions. His many obituaries testify that he made a conscious attempt to live up to the Christian teaching to love thy neighbour as thyself, and never refused to help anyone in need. Several refer to his gentle, smiling countenance and the strong determination behind it not to compromise or act in a way that could cause regret. His works are infused with the same sense of uncompromising integrity. Throughout his stories the same themes occur again and again. An individual should always be true to his or her conscience and act responsibly, accepting events and duty calmly and with patience. While no-one can totally shape their own fate, their decisions and actions will influence its direction and they will be held accountable. Some of his characters display great patience and a love for others which manifests itself in charity and forgiveness. Others hold on to an ideal despite all obstacles and thus remain true to themselves. A few take a false step and must take responsibility for their actions through the resolution of their story.

The qualities Xu promoted in his fiction were present in the man himself. A modest, unassuming man, he took the pen-name "Luo Huasheng" (peanut) to signify his desire to live a humble, useful life. The message of an early essay he wrote on the peanut is that appearances are unimportant and the major aim of life should be to be of use. One should follow one's own nature and not strive to be something else.
In other words, one must be true to oneself. A good, simple, practical man, Xu had an optimistic, straightforward vision of a life as a spider's web. The web is sure to break, but it can always be repaired, and an individual must be prepared to spend time mending it.\textsuperscript{14} The image of a spider's web is a suggestive one, for it hints at Xu's desire for order, for a supporting structure on which to live. It is Xu's use of a thematic system to inform his work that is the focus of this chapter. His work represents a modest search for a solution to the dislocation of his society - his own attempt to mend a broken web.

One motivation for artistic creation is to make sense out of chaos.\textsuperscript{15} Although he was writing of another place, Mark Schorer's comment on the role of literature has validity for Xu Dishan's China caught in the turmoil of massive change. "In a disintegrating society such as this, before it can proceed with other business, literature must become the explicit agent of coherence."\textsuperscript{16} T.S. Eliot, a contemporary of Xu's writing about another, James Joyce, says of the constant use of mythology in his work that, "it is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."\textsuperscript{17} Like Joyce or Blake, Xu Dishan had need of a "system", a personal mythology which could give organization and expression to his values and beliefs and provide a sense of order in a chaotic world. To come closer
to an understanding of what Xu's "system" entailed, it would be useful to examine C.T. Hsia's comment that Xu was "by temperament --- a writer of romances."18

To talk about romance is to talk about myth19, and any discussion on either topic cannot ignore the contributions of Northrop Frye and Joseph Campbell to archetypal criticism. Their work can act as sources of "suggestive insights"20 in assessing Xu Dishan's "quest for the perfect fable to embody his vision of the good life."21

The word "myth" is a protean word22 and has excited much debate, centred largely around its functional or theological definition.23 Questions on the nature of myth and the validity of archetypal criticism are complex and controversial, but Jung's comment that "whoever speaks in primordial images speaks with a thousand voices"24 gives some indication of the emotive reverberations ascribed to myth. Advocates of myth criticism, particularly Northrop Frye, tend to be persuasively obsessed.25 The critics are equally polemical.26 The "radical anti-traditionalism" of the May Fourth period27 became for many a Marxist determinism and the Marxist view of myth as a controlling device of the upper classes28 fits neatly into an intellectual leaning towards iconoclasm. Philip Rahv states, "Myth is reassuring in its stability, whereas history is that powerhouse of change which destroys custom and tradition in producing the future."29 Roland Barthes, on the same theme, writes, "Myth has the task of
giving a historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal. Now this process is exactly that of bourgeois ideology."\(^{30}\) The radicals of the May Fourth period would agree with this assessment --- they felt they had to free themselves of the archaizing past and traditional values in order to progress.

Thomas Mann described life as a "sacred repetition" in which man's path is "marked out for him by those who trod it before him".\(^{31}\) May Fourth individualists wished to stand alone, free of the past and rejecting their debt to their ancestors. Mann cites Ortega Y Gasset's man of antiquity who always searched for historical precedents before taking action, a syndrome not unknown in traditional China.\(^{32}\) He continues by saying that the antique man's life "was in a sense a reanimation, an archaizing attitude. But it is just this life as reanimation that is the life as myth."\(^{33}\) For Mann, "the myth is the legitamization of life; only through it and in it does life find self-awareness, sanction, consecration."\(^{34}\) It is this sanctifying function ascribed to myth that many critics find objectionable.\(^{35}\)

C.G. Jung's theory of a collective unconscious and universal archetypes has had a profound influence on thinkers seeking to prove the ultimate unity in diversity they believe shapes the world and its myths. Jung defines archetypes as "forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the world as constituents of myths and at the same
time as autochthonous individual products of unconscious origin."36 And again, "the primordial image, or archetype, is a figure - be it a daemon, a human being, or a process - that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed. Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure."37 Joseph Campbell, deeply influenced by Jung, goes beyond this definition by ascribing spiritual attributes to these mythological figures.38

Mark Schorer, in his stimulating discussion on the nature of myth, in which he argues that the universality and diversity of myth requires a broad definition, defines myth in terms at once functional and approachable, and yet metaphysical. Myths he writes, are "the instrument by which we continually struggle to make our experience intelligible to ourselves. A myth is a large, controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life; that is, which has organizing value for experience --- Without such images, experience is chaotic, fragmentary and merely phenomenal."39

As a May Fourth activist accused of being "anti-Confucian,"40 Xu Dishan helped dismantle the old traditional order, but the thematic system traceable in his fiction, with its echoes in Christian, Buddhist and Chinese roots, suggests that he sought some kind of organizing principle to create another order out of chaos. Through the aesthetic choice of the romance and mythical modes as unifying structures he endeavoured to make sense of a disintegrating world and create a meaningful
pattern to support his beliefs. Frye states, "Romance is the structural core of all fiction: being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect to the sense of fiction, considered as a whole, as the epic of the creature, man's vision of his own life as a quest."41 The unifying structure of much of Xu Dishan's work centres on the quest, a quest that not only represents a personal search for spiritual values, but a literary quest too --- his characters embark on journeys; some return transformed, others lose their way or fail in their goals.

"Of all fictions, the marvellous journey is the one formula that is never exhausted."42 The journey motif is very common in Xu's work, perhaps because he spent much of his life travelling, but it should be stressed that the journey of the soul is as significant as physical travelling. Yuguan's spiritual journey is skilfully charted by Lewis Robinson, who suggests that it reflects a similar growth towards self-knowledge in her creator.43 The journeys that are undertaken by Xiguan, the merchant's wife in the story of the same title, and Shangjie, heroine of "The Toiling Spider," are motivated by different reasons, but the calm transcendence they achieve is identical. Xiguan travelled a troubled road in search of an erring husband. Shangjie journeyed to an island haven of sorts and home again when her husband repents his lack of trust.

In "The Mingming Bird" ("Mingming Niao") Minming strolls
in a strange garden, reminiscent of the dream-worlds found in Taoist tales, and learns that freedom from suffering comes by walking hand in hand with her lover into a lake that will lead them to a country beyond death. In "A Daughter's Heart" ("Nu'er Xin"), Linzhi sets out on a quest to find her father. Mr Dongye searches for the parents of his foster son; another man dies in the attempt to find his long-lost adopted daughter. Yet another man fruitlessly follows the trail of a mysterious woman he admires. There is endless movement in Xu's stories, perhaps symbolic of his search for something unattainable. Cirlot, cited by Curtis Adkins in his discussion of the quest-myth in Tang chuanqi tales, states, "From a spiritual point of view, the journey is never merely a passage through space, but rather an expression of the urgent desire for discovery and change that underlies the actual movement and experience of traveling... Heroes are always travelers, in that they are restless. Traveling, Jung observes, is an image of aspiration, of an unsatisfied longing that never finds its goal, seek where it may."

Much of the action in "A Single Star of the Sea" ("Hai Jiao di Gua Xing") takes place on board ships and boats. This slight, anecdotal story shares certain details with Joseph Conrad's much longer and more poetic "The Lagoon". Both have the same setting - the Malaysian peninsular - and both describe a single, small boat's journey down a forest-lined river. Both are travellers' tales, describing the
sad fate of men who tell their story to another man who is travelling and adds it to his store of experience. The Conrad story is more haunting, telling the tale of a man who betrayed his brother for an obsessive love, while Xu's story seems slight in comparison, an early piece by a writer not yet mature.

The same "traveller's tale" atmosphere hangs over the story of "The Merchant's Wife". Xiguan tells her story to the narrator whom she meets on board ship. At the end of her tale he promises to help her find first her husband and then her mother. He is successful in neither. The husband has disappeared and no-one knows where he has gone. When the narrator reaches Xiguan's old home he finds the house deserted and overrun with weeds, looking as if it had been uninhabited for years. Peering through a window he can see rotting ancestral tablets and asks how could anyone be living there. This final scene brings an air of mystery and unreality formerly absent from Xiguan's straightforward, detached narrative. Suddenly we enter a slightly different world, and are thrown off balance, wondering if Xiguan's tale is true or if she has been absent so long, like Rip van Winkle, that all traces of her former life have disappeared. It is this intrusion of a magic unreality that has led to Xu's work being described as having a "chuanqi" element to it, that marvellous or "fabulous" quality that gives his stories their sense of being outside historical time, in some universal
time.

In "The Phoenix that Changed its Nest" ("Huan Chao Luan Feng"), the heroine, Heluan, is tricked into leaving her home by her lover. The story begins in a garden and the setting throughout remains pastoral. Heluan and her lover Zufeng are unreal figures and their story enters the boundaries of a romance world. They are forced to flee from place to place, seeking sanctuary in deep, isolated forests and finally in the mountain fastnesses of a bandit king's fortress. Heluan preserves her chastity by insisting, like a fairy tale princess setting a task, that Zufeng first prove his worth to her by making a name for himself. Despite his rather unsavoury past and his future role as bandit, Zufeng maintains a courtly distance from his beloved and tries to do her will. Despite the historical references to the fall of the Manchus and Zufeng's unhappy reversion to criminality, this story remains unsatisfactory in its blend of real and unreal. It hovers uneasily between the world of romance and reality in an uncomfortable limbo. Like "A Single Star of the Sea" it is an early piece and suffers from an uncertainty that gradually disappears as Xu grows more confident in the handling of his material.

Xu Dishan has been described variously as a "romantic" and as approaching realism in his later works. While stories such as "In Director Fei's Reception Room" ("Zai Fei Zongli di Ketingli") and "Streetcorner" ("Jietou Xiang Wei Zhi Lunli")
fit the critical irony or realist pattern admired by P.R.C. critics, attempts to fit him into an overall realist mode fail when it is realized that he was stubbornly writing fairy stories up until his death and that his final piece of major fiction is characterized by C.T. Hsia as a "romance". The "chuanqi" element in his work has already been noted above. Xu's stories are rather like fables, their roots, as C.T. Hsia points out, to be found in Buddhist and Christian tales, as well as the syncretic Chinese tradition. Fables have a didactic purpose - they point morals and posit ways of behavior. Northrop Frye identifies two levels in "types of verbal experience", the mythical and the fabulous, in which mythical stories differ from the fabulous, or folktale, only in degree of authority. Myths tell stories about gods and societal structures; folktales function as entertainment, but should not be discounted as negligible, for among them should be included Shakespeare's comedies and Chaucer's Tales. Prose romances have strong links with folktales.

Romance and realism are on the same spectrum, according to Frye, but for him realism is "displaced", or the furthest away from the source of myth which he believes to be the bone-structure or structural principle of literatures. He suggests that the social function of a realist work tends to outweigh other considerations. "When we start to read Zola or Dreiser, our first impulse is to ask, not what kind of story is being told, but what is being said about the
society the story is reflecting." Unlike many of his contemporaries Xu Dishan rarely reflected or overtly criticized his society - his stories tell another kind of tale and are outside the realm of topicality in its most limited sense, even when they gain a certain verisimilitude by references to particular historical events as in "Yuguan" or "A Daughter's Heart."

The story Xu tells is of human, universal values, of how to live life and take responsibility for one's actions by following one's conscience. His reality is a heightened reality, a reality made marvellous because he wrote of the conceivable, what is possible, rather than what is. The journeys of his characters are like fragments of the marvellous journey known as the quest-myth, the "monomyth" that lies at the heart of most romance.

The fullest analysis of the passage of the human spirit as represented by the quest-myth of the hero comes in Joseph Campbell's mammoth discussion of the universality and diversity of that theme in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell's monomyth, the quest, can be summed up as follows: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from the mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man." More briefly, but more significantly,
he describes it as, "A separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return."68

Both Campbell and Frye give detailed descriptions of a mythical hero's "standard path",69 the rites de passage which involve a circular or spiral journey from which the hero returns transcendent.70 Curtis Adkins and Hellmut Wilhelm have both shown what place this quest-myth holds in traditional Chinese literature.71 In the analysis that follows I shall attempt to show that the structure of two of Xu Dishan's stories closely follows the pattern of the "standard path" and that elements of this and the romance mode in which the quest finds its most frequent expression are present in nearly all his work.

The outline of the hero's path that follows is on a grand, archetypal scale and must be seen as a mythological prototype for much humbler journeys.72 First comes the birth of the hero, often accompanied by flood imagery symbolized the death of an old cycle and the beginning of a new. The hero's origin is usually mysterious and the question of his or her identity is often the major theme of the story. The youthful world of the hero is innocent, pastoral and beautiful - Eden before the fall. The call to adventure comes, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and the hero sets off on the quest, involving a journey in which adventures and trials play an important part. One of the trials involves a descent into a labyrinthine world or 'belly of the whale', "a world-wide
womb image". The descent often brings in its wake some form of a break in consciousness and a growing confusion of identity. Occasionally the real or mimic death of the hero follows, sometimes as the result of a dragon-battle.

The hero's "death" is followed by re-birth, and while the hero still continues along the road of trials, he or she is now ascending. The predominant imagery now is of "escape, remembrance, or discovery of one's real identity, growing freedom, and the breaking of enchantment." The road is still perilous, but a benign power often provides aid, and the trials are seen as necessary to the hero's ultimate transformation. The hero reaches a nadir and undergoes a supreme ordeal and is rewarded, often with sexual union or by recognition by the father-creator. Frye characterizes this as a cyclical movement down and up again to return to the creator. The hero achieves enlightenment, an expansion of consciousness in which his or her lost identity is found; but now the hardest task of all is the return to the world, bringing "the boon that restores the world." Frye posits two stages of contemplative withdrawal following the quest in which experience is "comprehended" and no longer a "mystery".

"Yuguan" was Xu Dishan's last major story and it has been described as his "spiritual testament", "a small masterpiece" and a "reflection of the evolution of the author's own 'inner life'". Yuguan, a young widow with one son, has the single-minded goal of wanting her son to become an
official and then erect an arch in memory of her chaste widowhood. To escape the attentions of her brother-in-law she moves in with a Christian convert, Xingguan, and eventually becomes a Christian herself. Her conversion is superficial, based as it is on the desire to obtain a free missionary education for her son and provide herself with a living. Thus her outer identity is at odds with her inner beliefs she does not understand Christianity, nor is she prepared to give up her Chinese customs and aspirations, and yet she continually exhorts others to do so. It is this crisis of identity and Yuguan's journey towards self-knowledge that is the theme of her story.

Yuguan gains the reputation of being a devout Christian and her missionary work sends her far and wide. The difference between her outer show of conviction and her inner doubts is stressed again and again and we are left in no doubt that this conflict will provoke a crisis. On her travels she meets and becomes attracted to a man she later discovers to be the estranged husband of her close friend Xingguan. This discovery is the first of several coincidences to cross Yuguan's path. Her first encounter with Chen Lian, Xingguan's husband, marks her first crisis of belief. Staying in the old house of which Chen is caretaker, she is convinced that ghosts are in her room. Unable to sleep, she chants from the Bible and in time manages to sleep fitfully, disturbed all night long. In the morning she is convinced that Chinese
ghosts will only fear Chinese texts and on her return home she prays to her ancestral tablets and ensures that from that time on she always carried a copy of *The Book of Changes* along with her Bible. The dark, fearful night among the ghosts is the first of Yuguan's trials and it brings her closer to an understanding of her identity as a Chinese woman first and foremost.

The realization that she is also more than a rice-Christian comes later along the road of her development. Yuguan's son marries one of Xingguan's daughters (the other having been kidnapped and sold by Yuguan's brother-in-law). A jealous mother, Yuguan's selfishness and hypocrisy are seen at their worst in her relationship with her daughter-in-law. To Yuguan "having the respect and compliments of one's friends and relatives while living, and enjoying posthumous fame afterward, was what life was all about. Although she was supposedly treading the heavenly path, she was, in fact, looking for a worldly path that would take her to the same end". Convinced her daughter-in-law was influencing her son to be disrespectful to her, Yuguan decides to marry Chen Lian, only abandoning this idea when her daughter-in-law dies in childbirth and Yuguan once again is in full charge.

Her son goes abroad to study and Yuguan continues her missionary work but it is made quite clear that it is a fraud. When caught out in argument with local school-teachers questioning her beliefs, she is at a loss to know what to say. "It would
be an exaggeration to say that the foundation of her faith was shaken on such embarrassing occasions, because she did not have any religious foundation to begin with. She had never really been clear as to what she was asked to believe in. In fact, she was not really interested in her missionary work. She was just marking time until [her son] came back to give her a peaceful and comfortable life." The gentle dead-pan style of this passage is typical of the story as a whole. The humour and straight-forward honesty of the narration help undercut the selfish hypocrisy that is the dark side of Yuguan's nature and lend a sympathetic and totally understanding light to her story.

After the death of Yuguan's daughter-in-law her troubles mount. Taken prisoner by communist insurgents, she is held captive with many of her converts. Reluctant at first to give them spiritual aid, she is finally persuaded to preach to them. As she does so she becomes increasingly convinced by her own exhortations. Her old unbelieving self receives a traumatic shock and she is re-born, as if coming out of Campbell's belly of the whale. She gains courage from her own preaching and encourages the other captives to remain calm. She is confidently able to persuade soldiers intent on rape of their sins and they are transformed into lambs, or lions now ready to offer protection. The wave of confidence reaches its peak when Yuguan leads her flock into sanctuary in a nearby church. She comes to realize the power and efficacy
of her preaching, but she is only at the start of her journey towards real belief. She is now on the ascending path towards her creator.

Yuguan's road of trials continues as her grandson becomes permanently crippled and her son returns home with a new foreign-educated wife, who turns out to be none other than Xingguan's other daughter. Only Yuguan is aware of this. Yuguan reaches the nadir in her relationship with her son and daughter-in-law and in the darkness of her "final relapse" she becomes aware of her selfishness and hypocrisy, likening her life as a missionary for a faith in which she does not believe to that of a seller of china who only uses mended bowls at home. Finally conscious of the true meaning of Christian life she resolves to "take off her mask and make amends." For the first time she is able to unite the outer persona of a dedicated missionary with her inner beliefs. Her formerly conflicting selves are brought into harmony as she becomes conscious that the earthly rewards for which she strived for so long are unimportant. It no longer matters to her that a memorial should be built in her memory; she strives instead to lead a humble and truly religious existence.

Yuguan's spiritual transformation is her reward. Her enlightenment is represented by the discovery of two conflicting selves within her and the consequent merging of her inner self and outer persona into one whole identity. Like a hero out of legend, our last view of Yuguan is of her waving
from the ship that will carry her on her final quest. She has taken upon herself the task of finding Xingguan's husband, Chen Lian, to return him to her. This final task represents Yuguang's transcendent freedom from selfish desire as she sets out to bring back a boon to her friend. The informing motif for both Yuguang's apotheosis and Campbell's monomyth is to be found in Christ's words, "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it." 88

In Xu's earlier stories, the reader senses that it is the series of external events which shapes a character's response rather than a character controlling their fate. It is possible that Xu was harking back to the tradition here. The response of the traditional Chinese hero to events has been described as "momentary", a capacity to "respond to the needs of the moment" 89 and change approaches and attitudes according to the pressures of a particular time. This corresponds closely to the romance hero's response to the external events and adventures that bombard him. Frye contrasts this typical characteristic of the romance mode to the horizontal "technique of causality" found in realism where the characters define the plot - "'given these characters, what will happen?'" 90 Many of Xu's protagonists share the traditional hero's momentary capacity - they float on the sea-currents, taking life as it comes and adjusting accordingly. Linzhi, heroine of "A Daughter's Heart", is able to adjust swiftly to the chain of events that befalls her, always managing, somehow, until
the very end, to turn her adventures to her advantage.

Yuguan is rather different, for she is very much an individual who creates her own conflicts. External factors certainly have an impact on her life, but they do not shape it as her own character does. She is responsible for her actions and for much of what befalls her, and she makes a mature decision to alter the direction of her life. She, in a sense, defines her own plot.

"The romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream". Campbell describes the happy ending of the fairy tale or divine comedy as "a transcendence of the universal tragedy of man." A happy ending provides reassurance, the sense that the status quo, disrupted temporarily, is restored and the cycle of life can continue as before. It might be "manipulated", but the happy ending is a vital ingredient in the wish-fulfilment dreams of the romance world. Lewis Robinson suggests that "Yuguan" is fundamentally realistic, despite the romance elements of the complex plot and the "fable-like happy ending." C.T. Hsia, in contrast, considers "Yuguan" a romance, albeit life-like. Yuguan is not one-dimensional, she does not fit into a simple romance ideal construct of good and bad characters. She develops and her character is far from straightforward. Romance and mythical heroes are conceived of in terms of a journey from imperfection to perfection. Their journey brings them to enlightenment or a state of self-knowledge. Both Robinson and Hsia stress
Yuguan's spiritual transcendence and both believe Xu was making an important and universal point about human spirituality and his own search for "disinterested goodness". Charles Walcutt suggests that in the depiction of a quest towards self-knowledge a character by default remains a mystery, undefined because his or her individuality is undergoing a process of development. Yuguan's character is not static but suggests instead a real individual working towards a strongly defined sense of self.

Yuguan's journey towards self-knowledge, her spiritual transcendence and the final task she sets herself all echo elements of the myth and romance modes. The happy ending provides a sense of affirmation, of the story's rightness and of a return to an idyllic world universally desired. Yuguan's self-knowledge is universal, as is the shape of her story, but she nonetheless remains "stubbornly Chinese". The story of her gradual growth towards self-knowledge, with its stress on the strongly Chinese elements of her personality, is realistic. Yuguan, with her long narrow feet, her black umbrella, her maternal jealousies and calculating mind, is thoroughly believable. The arguments she uses to justify ancestor worship in the face of Christian disapproval make great sense. Her fears of abandonment, of being supplanted by her daughter-in-law, are typical and very natural. Yuguan is realistic. The structural framework of her story is that of romance. The complexities of the plot, the extraordinary
coincidences and the happy ending are all true romance elements. The affirmation achieved by the happy ending underlines the universal validity of Yuguan's journey of the soul.

In somewhat ironic contrast to "Yuguan", "A Daughter's Heart", perhaps more truly akin to the pure romance mode, does not have a happy ending. There is no spiritual transcendence for Linzhi, the story's perennially youthful heroine. Her quest fails and she is doomed to wander forever. Thus Xu gives a potentially tragic twist to an otherwise typical romance tale, and the resulting lack of affirmation - no return to the ideal world - gives the story an uneasy linear air slightly incongruous with the cyclical structure of the pure romance. The romance world is an idealized one in which the heroes are brave and the heroines beautiful. It is a world of simplified morality and encompasses a vision of an idyllic, pastoral place with fountains and gardens, children and wise old men. It is a world of adventure, a "sensational" world where event piles upon event in a series of discontinuous episodes. Plaks notes a similar aesthetic stress in traditional Chinese narrative on the "dove-tailing" of episodic series of events. Linzhi's story is full of adventure. She tumbles headlong from one awkward situation into another, the only connecting thread being the quest that dominates her life, the quest for her father.

The story begins in true dramatic fashion. A Manchu
official prepares for loyal suicide as the dynasty collapses. The scene is starkly and simply described. The blood-bath that ensues, followed by a fire (a recurring motif in this story) marks both the end of the old era and the symbolic "birth" of the heroine, thrust out into the world to begin her frustrating quest for a family she believes to have become immortal. She is forced to leave the idyllic, golden age of her childhood and begin the journey along the road of trials. Her journey, except for its ending, where the only illusion is her own, follows Frye's definition of the romance world's dream-like tendency to mix reality and illusion.  

"Reality for romance is an order of existence most readily associated with the word "identity". "Identity" is "existence before 'once upon a time', and subsequent to 'and they lived happily ever after.' What happens in between are adventures, or collisions with external circumstances, and the return to identity is a release from the tyranny of these circumstances."  

Illusion in romance is a form of alienation. "Most romances end happily, with a return to the state of identity, and begin with a departure from it." Linzhi is aware of her origin, something she does not share with most heroic romance figures who are often the victims of concealed identities, but her ignorance of her family's fate adds a touch of mystery and gives her the reason for her quest. Douglas McOmber stresses the importance Xu placed upon an individual's identity within the family context,
and while McOmber sometimes stretches his argument too far, it does seem as if Linzhi's identity is very closely linked to the idealized family world from which she was so rudely thrust. By the end of the story, however, she becomes increasingly identified with the quest per se, rather than with the goal of finding her family.

In the confusion following the murders of her mother and two brothers, Linzhi escapes death at her father's hand by hiding in a tree and then slipping out of the beleaguered city of Guangzhou unnoticed. Meanwhile her father is prevented from killing himself through the ministrations of an old Buddhist monk, the guide who leads the distraught man on to a path of spiritual redemption. Until the very end of the story we lose sight of Linzhi's father, and, when he does reappear, it is with no sense of certainty that he can be identified, except by the author's use of parallel images and scenes to allow him an opportunity to redress his earlier deeds.

Linzhi, meanwhile, wanders innocently and untouched in an unthreatening world of nature. She too is taken in hand by an old man who brings her home to his idyllic cottage to live with him and his grand-daughter, Yigu. Briefly Linzhi enters a pastoral, Arcadian world, where the forests and streams are benign and beautiful. In her desire to find her family she leaves this untroubled place on a journey that begins in play and ends in fear. A stroll in a gentle, forested
valley becomes a dark, demonic scene when the two girls are kidnapped by mountain-dwelling outlaws whom Linzhi at first naively believes to be immortal emissaries from her family.

She and Yigu develop a growing rapport with their captors who decide to give up their outlaw life to become soldiers. Dissatisfied with the fate decreed for her as serving-maid to one of them, the ever-resourceful Linzhi escapes alone, only to be tricked into joining a wandering band of quacks and acrobats whom she believes will take her back to Guangzhou. Linzhi's sojourn with outlaws and her wanderings with travelling performers have a magical air to them reminiscent of Frye's "green world" (or greenwood), a dream world into and out of which romance characters slip.

After several years of wandering Linzhi and her companions finally do indeed approach Guangzhou, but before she reaches there Linzhi is kidnapped once again and made the wife of an unscrupulous man. The coincidental appearance of an ex-bandit acquaintance who happens to work for her husband, coupled with the chaos caused by an attack on the city, once more gives Linzhi the opportunity to escape. Once again a fire destroys the place she has left. While waiting at the train station with other refugees from the city she briefly encounters an old monk whom she is later convinced must be her father.

On Linzhi's arrival in Guangzhou she traces her old friend Yigu, now married to one of the erstwhile bandits who has become eminently respectable and powerful. Yigu
has become elegant and fashionable - everything she wears and uses is foreign. She dresses Linzhi up and hopes to find her a husband, but, much to her exasperation, Linzhi remains steadfast to her quest. One of Frye's six phases of romance is "the maintaining of integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience." Linzhi ignores her friend's well-meant and worldly advice and insists on continuing her search, now focussed on the old monk. She dreams of returning with him to the old man's cottage, now abandoned, to live out their lives in peace. Like the princess in the fairy tale who told her father she loved him as much as meat loves salt and was rejected for her pains, like King Lear's Cordelia, she remains loyal to her father despite her violent abandonment. She holds steadfast to her goal, maintaining her integrity, her truth, through all her trials.

Unfortunately for Linzhi, her desire to be reunited with her father is not fulfilled because, before she can identify him in their next encounter, the old monk dies in an act of redemption, saving lives by putting out the third and final fire of the story. Her failure to ensure his identity means that Linzhi is doomed to remain eternally unsure of the whereabouts of her family and exactly who the monk was.

It is possible that Xu was writing two levels of story within "A Daughter's Heart". One level is the tale of Linzhi's failed quest, while the other is the story of her father's deed and its cancelling out. Frye says that "the complete
form of the romance is clearly the successful quest and such a complete form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die, and the exaltation of the hero." While Linzhi takes the dominant role in the story and her adventures match certain elements of the romance pattern, it is possibly the unwritten story of her father's spiritual struggle, re-birth and apotheosis that more closely resembles the successful quest.

Frye believes the central form of the romance to be "dialectical", a conflict between the hero and his enemy. Linzhi's enemies were ephemeral and quickly nullified, either through developing friendship or coincidental destruction. Yuguan's enemies, with the exception of her brother-in-law who mellowed and reformed in old age, were primarily the products of her own jealous imagining. Her first daughter-in-law was only really a threat because that is how Yuguan perceived her. The same is largely true of her relationship with Anni, the second daughter-in-law. It is only after deep introspection that Yuguan was able to admit that she herself was the primary cause of conflict. Yuguan's enemy was herself, and she won an inner battle by bringing the two conflicting halves of her external persona and inner self into harmony. Like Yuguan, the enemy of Linzhi's father was himself and his final heroic act represents the completion
of his struggle to redress the crimes he committed in his existence prior to monk-hood.

Linzhi's journey remains unresolved, a problem tale. She continues to travel, her circle is incomplete, even though she gains a kind of hope in the last scene as she stands on the boat watching the clouds in the shape of immortals above. Her journey is unfinished, despite the recurring images of escape and fire which serve to enclose the story's structure, her return to Guangzhou and the bungled meetings with her father. In some ways her fate is tragic because the quest remains unfinished, but her unchanging personality, dominated as it is by her singleminded desire to be reunited with a family that no longer exists, remains undeveloped, child-like. Linzhi does not grow, she does not develop Yuguan's self-awareness, and the reader is too distanced from her to really identify with her plight. Yuguan is human, identifiable, someone who grows to understand the problems that are largely of her own making and who acts to change herself. Linzhi remains ephemeral, like the coloured clouds she watches from the boat and like the fruitless hope she carries with her always. In "A Daughter's Heart" Linzhi's small tragedy sits uneasily on a form more readily given to laughter and affirmation. Her tragedy is that of a homeless child who must always wander and who will never find herself, because her identity is bound so closely to the family she has lost. There is no resolution, no affirmation for Linzhi and her
unresolved character precludes true sympathy. It is her father who completes the quest.

In his moving testament to the bitter end of love and the knowledge of sorrow's power, "De Profundis", Oscar Wilde describes Jesus Christ as "the palpitating centre of romance" who "more than anyone else in history...wakes in us that temper of wonder to which Romance always appeals." Wilde's fairy tales, particularly "The Young King", "The Happy Prince" and "The Selfish Giant", deal with the nature of Christian values such as charity and selfless love and with the growth of individuals toward a state of transcendence. There are tragic, despairing moments in some in which reality intrudes and the longed-for affirmation of life is denied. "The Nightingale and the Rose" is bitter in its attack on the unimaginative who cannot appreciate the beauty of Love, but at the same time it is a lyrical chronicle of a single, tiny bird's martyrdom for a cause that seems futile and yet is supreme.

Wilde considered the fairy tale a way to "mediate the extremes" of reality and art, offering as it does a distancing viewpoint and a clarification through a reduction to bare essences of life's experiences. He used the form to "mirror modern life in a form remote from reality". It is unsurprising that Frye, the new prophet of the romance genre, should hail Wilde as "the herald of a new age in literature" for Wilde's
witty yet deeply-felt critical argument for the separation of life and Art in "The Decay of Lying". This anti-realist essay includes a beautiful, haunting plea for freedom of imagination and the re-introduction of the element of wonder or magic that Art provides. He attacks the "chilling touch of facts" that represents the invasion of the realist mode into "The Kingdom of Romance" and paints a contrasting picture of the mysterious delights given by Art.

Oscar Wilde's fairy tales and plays were translated into Chinese in the first decades of the Twentieth century. Zhou Zuoren translated "The Happy Prince" into classical Chinese in 1909 and vernacular versions of this and other tales appeared in 1921. Bonnie McDougall, who finds Wilde's status in the Chinese literary world "curious", notes that he was one of the first Western writers to be translated into the vernacular. His most popular stories were apparently "The Nightingale and the Rose", "The Selfish Giant" and "The Happy Prince", and they were received well by all groups.

It is probable that the moral issues explored in these stories, despite their specifically Christian nature, were made understandable and appealing to a foreign audience through Wilde's subtle and persuasive use of the fairy-tale genre. It is suggestive that it should be a Christian convert who should try to emulate him. While Xu Dishan's two fairy-tales lack the complex moral vision and beauty of Oscar Wilde's stories, they are infused with the traditional notions of good and
evil and have a certain charm of their own.

Both Xu Dishan's fairy-tales were published in a children's books series in 1941, the year he died. The "Firefly Lantern" ("Ying Deng"), the earlier of the two, has many elements of the hero's journey theme. It tells the tale of a prince of a defeated country being carried into his conqueror's palace in a Trojan horse represented here by a marvellous gem-encrusted, massive gold lantern. The prince had earlier discovered one of the lantern's secrets by pressing a red jewel which opened a door into a cavity within the lantern. Interestingly, Xu used the same device in his story "The Mingming Bird". In a fascinating dream sequence which lends the story a fairy-tale air, the heroine opens a door into a magic garden by pressing a jewel on the wall of the Shwe Dagon pagoda in Rangoon. There is no magic garden behind the walls of the lantern, however, merely a hiding place for the deposed prince.

The lantern with the prince inside is carried off to the enemy kingdom and placed in the room of the King's only daughter. In a twist on the Sleeping Beauty theme the hero falls in love with the sleeping princess as he stands over her intending to kill her. The princess, furthermore, later pricks her finger in order to stay awake and catch the mysterious intruder in her apartments. The royal pair spend long nights together talking of matters of the heart. With a certain ponderous humour we are informed that the serving maids become
suspicious when garments most unsuited to a princess are laid out for washing and when the princess orders most indelicate amounts of food and demands that no-one enter her apartments after dark.129

In time the young lovers are discovered and the prince is cast into a pitch-black cave guarded by water from which no-one has ever escaped. The princess goes into a decline and refuses to eat. In true fairy-tale fashion her desperate father the King searches high and low for someone to cure her, offering the reward of any treasure he owns. One of the prince's friends arrives at the palace disguised in rags and demands entry. At first the princess is inclined to ignore him, but after a swift homily on the importance of not judging by external appearances, the friend reveals his identity and enlists her aid. As a reward for curing the princess he asks to be given the lantern, which immediately arouses the king's suspicions because of the lantern's connection with the imprisoned prince. He throws the friend into the same cave where he and the prince lie helpless and completely disoriented until they see a great light approaching. It is the princess, with faithful companions, who has discovered the final secret of the lantern - that it can only be lit by the glow of a thousand fireflies - and has come to rescue them on a raft.

The party decides to go further into the cave, borne on an underground river which eventually leads them out to
a pool within the borders of the prince's own country. He is welcomed by the populace and then returns via the river with an army to defeat the King. The King surrenders, and the prince and princess marry, bringing about peace and harmony. The balance is restored and the future is ensured.

Written during war-time, this story perhaps represents Xu's desire for the restoration of peace and order. With its images of light destroying the darkness, love conquering despair and the hero's triumphant return with his bride, it fits right into the fairy-tale mode. The second story, "Tao Jinniang", is more myth than fairy-tale, with its pastoral vision of an early farming people and a fertility-goddess figure who teaches them to weave and plant good harvests. The story is reminiscent of the Miao tales of Shen Congwen, a writer who, like Xu, had spiritual preoccupations.130

Tao Jinniang is the name of an orphan girl whose parents were killed by a bolt of lightning. The superstitious villagers in the Southern Fujian cave-village see her as tainted by this episode and shun her despite her obvious beauty and talents. Undeterred, the young girl, also ill-treated by her aunt, finds solace in learning the properties of vegetable dyes and the skills of weaving. Her patient industry and inner and outer beauty gradually win her the love of the entire village, with the exception of Yingu, the frivolous daughter of the chief whose sole talent is dancing. The story is punctuated by the villagers' songs in praise of
Jinniang and against Yingu. Not unnaturally Yingu grows increasingly jealous and engineers Jinniang's departure from the village.

Jinniang goes away up into the mountain to a secret place only she knows until summoned down again by a desperate Yingu who pretends she wants to learn Jinniang's skills so that she too might be loved. Jinniang descends to teach the young maidens of the village her skills. There is a brief happy time full of industry and laughter until Yingu's jealousy overpowers her and she destroys the weaving-shed in a fire. Divine intervention comes in the shape of an enormous storm which douses the fire, drowns Yingu and strike her father dead with a bolt of lightning. It is discovered that the young women of the village have died in the fire and Jinniang has withdrawn once again. Her aunt is sent by the distraught villagers to ask her to return and become the village chief. This she does, ruling wisely and well until the day she finally withdraws into the mountains.

"Tao Jinniang" is a curious tale, a strange blend of the pastoral and violent which combines a vision of the power of the elements over primitive people with an expression of the fundamentally Christian-based conflict between simple patience and industrious goodness and the negative influence of vanity and greed. The nature-goddess figure of Jinniang is at once the poor, ill-treated orphan of fairy-tale and an all-wise seer. In this story Xu Dishan's belief in the
possibility of women's transcendent wisdom is carried to its ultimate. Jinniang is the mythic hero who returns to the world after a series of trials and a contemplative withdrawal to offer her boon to humanity. Once balance is restored, the land prospering, and the people able to continue her teachings, she withdraws, her task done.

While the Biblical and specifically Christian mythos is by no means the sole influence in the romance genre, it is the major force informing much of Western literature in this mode from the Arthurian legends through to C.S. Lewis' Narnian tales. Despite the assertion by Xu's wife and other critics that Xu had abandoned Christianity in his later years, there can be no doubt that it had a strong influence both on the message and the pattern of his work. It is no accident that both Xiguan, the heroine of "The Merchant's Wife" and Yuguan should find comfort in Pilgrim's Progress, the allegorical account of an individual's journey toward Christian belief. Xiguan was given support and friendship by the Christian missionary Elizabeth in India. Yuguan undergoes a transformation from a "rice-bowl" Christian to a genuine believer. Shangjie and her husband in "The Toiling Spider" find solace at different times in the Christian message.

These three stories are the only ones of Xu's to make specific mention of Christianity, but the Christian mode of conduct defined as loving thy neighbour as thyself is
present in the story of the good, simple Mr. Dongye and in "Chuntao". The biblical images of Eden and the Fall appear in various guises in his work - "The Toiling Spider" begins in a peaceful garden which Shangjie must leave when the abrupt appearance of an injured thief intensifies the alienation between her and her husband. It is only after her husband undergoes a spiritual transformation that Shangjie can return to the garden she was force to abandon.

In "Chuntao" the heroine and her lover find peace and comfort in each other's company in the opening scene of the story as they sit gently discussing the day's events in the shade of the melon frame in their tiny garden. Their relaxed, contented pace of life is abruptly shattered and reshaped by the appearance of Chuntao's lost husband, now a legless beggar. The threat he represents is a disruption of their former life and all three have to resolve the problem in their own terms, but it is Chuntao's quiet, responsible certainty that she must obey the dictates of her conscience that carries them through. Their lives resume the old rhythm, transformed but still the same, enhanced by Chuntao's simple confidence and charity. At the end of the story Chuntao and her lover sit once more under the melon frame to discuss the day's events.

Despite its setting in old Beijing, "Chuntao", as Mao Dun Points out, is nostalgically un-urban. The city does not impinge - it rarely does in Xu's work, despite the urban
settings of some of his later stories. Overall his work has a pastoral feel and his characters inhabit Frye's two worlds of romance, the idyllic and the demonic.\textsuperscript{134} Their ideal is to return to their creator's peaceful garden for affirmation and renewal.

Mao Dun suggests Xu had a sceptical side to him which manifested itself in early doubts about the ultimate goal of life; but that at the same time his characters developed their own philosophy of life, their own "religion", whether it be Guan Huai's consuming love for his dead wife which gives him the strength to continue living for the sake of his two young daughters in "After Dusk" ("Huang Hun Hou"), or Linzhi's obsessive search for her father.\textsuperscript{135} Lewis Robinson believes that "Yuguan" represents its writer's own spiritual journey from a muddled sceptical vision of Christianity to a genuine belief which encompasses a universal message, "a testament of the human spirit."\textsuperscript{136} A moral anger infuses Xu's later ironic works such as "In Director Fei's Reception Room" and "A Carefree Flower" ("Wu You Hua"), but it is not exclusively Christian in nature, stemming as it does from a distaste for the different manifestations of personal corruption in Chinese society. Throughout his work as a whole however runs a unifying thread which has strong Christian overtones - Xu's quest for the embodiment of love and goodness.
The same search defines the work of a slightly younger contemporary of Xu's, C.S. Lewis (1898-1963). The two men share many similarities. Both were converted Christians, but it is only speculation that "Yuguan" represents a re-telling of Xu's growth towards faith and it remains the only apparent record of his conversion. C.S. Lewis, on the other hand, provides an explicit allegorical description of his conversion, which was reluctant, gradual and strongly debated within his intellect, in *The Pilgrim's Regress*. Both men were born on islands with an ambiguous relationship to their mainlands - Ireland and Taiwan. Both were scholars who spent most of their lives away from their birth-places. When Xu Dishan arrived at Oxford in the autumn of 1924 C.S. Lewis had already been there for a number of years. It is unlikely that they met, however, particularly since while Xu Dishan studied at the mainly theological Mansfield College and was sponsored by the London Missionary Society, Lewis was at a different college (Magdalen) and as yet unconverted. He became a Christian in 1929. They differ in their attitude towards women - Lewis tended to believe in women's intellectual and spiritual inferiority, while Xu's major characters are female, some achieving high levels of spiritual calm and serene confidence. Their fictional work shares two important characteristics - the theme of the quest and the use of the mythopoeic or romance mode to embody a moral, non-secular vision.
A medieval scholar who wrote on allegory, romance and myth, C.S. Lewis was preoccupied with moral and theological questions concerning the existence of something beyond the life of ordinary experience and the lack of mythic awareness in modern times. The central theme of his thought was defined by "sehnsucht", a yearning or longing which is nostalgic yet forward-looking. Lewis describes it as a "Sweet Desire", which comes at diverse moments - hearing the sound of wild ducks overhead or reading an evocative romance. These momentary insights are not the end of the desire but false insights, inadequate for the final enlightenment that "the human soul was made to enjoy some object that is never fully given - nay, cannot even be imagined as given." For Lewis his fiction was "only really a net whereby we catch something else", a forum for expressing and expanding his belief and values. He used allegory and mythic patterns to convey a meaning "that cannot be conveyed in any other way."

Lewis' series of children's books on the world of Narnia represent his most popular and sustained attempt to set out a clarification of his faith. Aslan, the lion, has many parallels to Christ. The journey-theme dominates the books and characters return from their quests transformed and closer to an understanding of love, selflessness and forgiveness. Narnia is a pastoral world finally recreated in a more perfect likeness of itself in the final apocalyptic tale, "The Last Battle". It has undergone its own journey towards transcendence and transformation.
Xu Dishan's work, while less sustained and specifically Christian than Lewis', shares many of his preoccupations and themes. As a short-story writer working under a mixture of complex pressures which included major social transformation and dislocation, it is perhaps unsurprising that his work was uneven and fragmented. Nonetheless there is an overall pattern informing his work, whereby similar ideas reappear in different forms and the underlying beliefs remain the same. The structural framework of his work, the net in which he held his ideas, provided him with a system to mediate between life, art and his beliefs. Concerned with questions of "the dimension of the possible in the actual", the belief that it is possible to find selfless love and goodness in life, he used his work to give expression to that hopeful search. Through his use of certain elements of the romance and mythopoeic forms he was able to give a structure to his work and own search and to put himself firmly within a wider literary context which draws deeply on the "deep springs" of archetype and myth and gives promise of affirmation and hope.
Chapter Three

The Dark Road: Life, Fate and Synchronicity

"All the phenomena of the universe, or, to be more exact, of the universe of an individual sentient being, are the manifestations of his mind. Whenever he acts, speaks, or even thinks, his mind is doing something, and that something must produce its results, no matter how far into the future. The result is the retribution of the Karma. The Karma is the cause and its retribution the effect. The being of an individual is made up of a chain of causes and effect."2

"This above all, to thine own self be true."3

In "Blossoms on a Withered Poplar" ("Gu Yang Sheng Hua"),4 the elderly widow Yungu mistakes the son of her long-lost lover for her own missing son. Later she is given shelter by accidental acquaintances, the kindly Zhu couple, who introduce her to their brother-in-law, none other than the man she had loved and lost so long before. A woman returning home for the first time in twelve years at Spring Festival, the time for family reunions, in "The Road Home" ("Gui Tu"),5 causes the death of her daughter by an ironic accident of fate. A luckless peasant in "The Eyes of the Law" ("Fa Yan")6 dies in prison after mistakenly taking money from his wife as they both flee the turmoil of a besieged city. The corpse of a woman revolutionary bearing the same name as, and sharing a resemblance to, Zhineng, Mr. Dongye's wife in "Mr. Dongye" ("Dongye Xiansheng"),7 prompts him to believe Zhineng has been executed.
Linzhi, in "A Daughter's Heart", leads a tumbleweed existence given meaning by her search for her father. After a series of adventures and unexpected reunions with old friends, she finally encounters him twice, accidentally, as if drawn inexorably towards him by an unknown thread. In "Yuguan", Yuguan's son meets and marries the long-lost sister of his first wife in America; both young people are unaware of the connection. Yuguan herself at first unknowingly becomes friends and almost lovers with the missing husband of her dear friend Xingguan, the mother of Yuguan's daughters-in-law. The list could go on, for these examples are not unique - they merely represent the most obvious illustrations of a recurring theme in Xu Dishan's work: the coincidence.

Paul Kammerer, attempting to establish a law of seriality to account for a-causal events of a similar configuration coming together in space and time through connections of affinity, used the image of a kaleidoscope to describe his vision of a principle active in the universe which lies outside the known laws of physics. "We thus arrive at the image of a world mosaic or cosmic kaleidoscope, which, in spite of constant shufflings and rearrangements, also takes care of bringing like and like together." Schopenhauer, fighting against the post-Eighteenth century view that causality rules the physical world, posited two connected but independent chains of events in an individual's life - the subjective and the objective - which could be brought together at
times by the same event linking the two chains simultaneously. The link was the coincidence, "the simultaneous occurrence of causally unconnected events".12

Carl Jung, fascinated by the same compelling problem of the coincidence, disagreed with Schopenhauer's explanation that life and all levels of beings are created and modulated by the Will of Life, whereby everything is inter-related and future events are arranged as Fate.13 For Jung, the secret of the coincidence lay in the depths of the unconscious. He coined a new term to describe a-causal events linked by meaning - synchronicity.14

In the course of his work Jung had come across series of coincidences which "were connected so meaningfully that their 'chance' occurrence would represent a degree of improbability that would have to be expressed by an astronomical figure."15 Coincidences of this kind, given significance through their number and the apparent meaning behind them, cannot be explained by the known physical laws of chance or cause and effect. Synchronicity, Jung's own "law", is nonetheless based on a complex connective principle which belies his denial of causality. This causal principle is the psyche.16 "Synchronicity ... means the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state - and, in certain cases, vice versa."17

It is "an unexpected content which is directly or indirectly
connected when some objective external event coincides with the ordinary psychic state."\textsuperscript{18} A critical experience, such as a premonition of sudden death, links with the normal psychic state to create a meaningful arrangement that has, for Jung, a cause incomprehensible in intellectual terms.\textsuperscript{19}

Arthur Koestler, unhappy with Jung's theory of synchronicity,\textsuperscript{20} attempted a wider explanation to account for the phenomenon of the coincidence. He believes synchronicity and Kammerer's law of seriality to be "modern derivatives of the archetypal belief in the fundamental unity of all things, transcending mechanical causality."\textsuperscript{21} For Koestler, science is progressing towards a "fundamental unity", towards the oneness, or unity-in-variety, of much philosophy and religion.\textsuperscript{22} Coincidences, or in Koestler's term, "confluentual events",\textsuperscript{23} are part of an overall "Integrative Tendency" whereby pseudo-causal events are brought together without physical agencies.\textsuperscript{24} Everything is mutually related and part of a greater whole. The patterns of the kaleidoscope fall into different configurations but all are created from the same source. Xu uses the image of "the kaleidoscope of life" in his "The Toiling Spider" to make the point that life's patterns are manifold yet all linked in a greater design.\textsuperscript{25} You can choose your own pattern, weave your own web, but you must be content with your lot, accept what life gives you and work within recognized limits.
The same sense of manifold variety-in-unity pervades the *Yi Jing*, or *The Book of Changes*, Richard Wilhelm's translation of which had a profound influence on the development of Jung's theory of synchronicity. Hellmut Wilhelm describes the concept of change in the *Yi Jing* as a self-contained cyclical movement which returns to its starting point, a flowing motion that does not encompass the Western concept of progress from the past to the future but which is instead an integrated system of relationships, a fixed course which is paradoxically dynamic. The concept of dynamic stability is given expression through the image of a son bowing before his father before he in turn becomes the father and receives his own son's homage. The seasons change and reappear. The sun rises, sets and rises again. There is a fixed course in which everything is related, and the constancy within change provides the individual with a sense of order and freedom within limits.

The "principle of order guaranteeing duration in the ebb and flow of events...provides the first guarantee of meaningful action. The concept takes man out of subjection to nature and places him in a position of responsibility." The role of humanity within the constancy of ebb and flow is not small: "within set limits [man] is not merely master of his own fate, he is also in a position to intervene in the course of events considerably beyond his own sphere. But it is his task to recognize these limits and remain within
The individual must have a sense of responsibility and can work to make an impact, but the patterns of change are set and developments can only be made by going along with change while "confronting events with live awareness."  

The same paradoxical image of flowing with the current while working to influence events within given limits appears in Xu's brief essay, "The Sea", (Hai), in his early collection of random notes and jottings, Kong Shan Ling Yu. In this essay Xu's ambivalent attitude towards fate - that it is inescapable and yet must be struggled against - is given its clearest exposition. The narrator, presumably Xu since these vignettes are predominantly personal, and a friend are on a life-boat after the ship on which they were travelling capsized. The friend is giving into despair as he surveys the vast, boundless waves around them and the slowly sinking ship beyond. He says hopelessly, "'People lose all freedom and hope when they go on the sea. We count for nothing within these boundless waves, and our limited abilities and will-power make no impression at all'." The narrator concedes that being at sea limits one's choice and freedom of will. "'All we can do is hold on to our lives and follow the tossing of the waves'," but, when his friend seems ready to infect the other passengers in the small boat with his despair, he asks him to help row. 

"'Row? That's easy enough to do, but where to?'

"I said, 'When something like this happens at sea, no-one
knows what to do. None of us can escape floating aimlessly wherever the sea might take us, but, despite that, let us row for all we're worth!"32

The analogy of life to the sea or a dark road on which we must travel alone, uncertain of the future, is a recurrent theme in Xu's work. He believed that an individual has a responsibility to make the best of an unknown fate by accepting the inevitable restrictions of operating within given limits, but still working to ensure that he or she has an influence for the good through his or her actions. Xu's universe is a profoundly moral one, where cause and effect, action and result, are closely linked together in a chain where past actions have an impact on the present and the future, and each individual must take responsibility for those actions.

The coincidence motif is very common in both the romance genre and Chinese traditional fiction where it has the same functions it holds in Xu's work. Xu's use of the coincidence is the conscious choice of a literary device to give shape to his moral vision. A traveller in exotic lands, Xu was well aware that life is "overladen with chances and trifles."33 Coincidences for him were not unreal or far-fetched - he used them too frequently in his fiction for that. For him they were at once a useful device to link a story together and provide greater scope and meaning to a character's actions, and an acknowledgement of life's inherent strangeness. Joseph Conrad, who travelled in the same regions as Xu, believed
life to be full of mystery. Writing in an attempt to resist being pigeon-holed as a romantic or realist, he said, "the world of the living contains enough marvels and mysteries as it is; marvels and mysteries acting upon our emotions and intelligence in ways so inexplicable that it would almost justify the conception of life as an enchanted state."34

The use of the coincidence gives acknowledgement to the uncertainty and strangeness of life while narrowing the confines of a particular tale to only those participating in it, so that the world can truly be described as small. Citing the story of Jane Eyre's flight from Rochester and her chance meeting at the other end of England with a family to whom she is intimately bound, Northrop Frye stresses that no realist writer would use this device. "The convention of avoiding coincidence is so strong that we often say such things as, 'if this happened in a book, nobody would believe it.'"35 In a discussion of the role played by coincidence in Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native, Charles Walcutt suggests that the apparent power of external forces represented by the coincidence tends to diminish the characters' ability to control their own fate.36 The characters shrink in proportion to their lack of control. "Perhaps the coincidences are introduced and stressed to make the tragedy less due to human frailty!"37 The defeats of Hardy's characters are reinterpreted in the light of coincidence, so that they "appear less due to the qualities inherent in the characters and therefore
more due to tragic flaws in the universe. Hardy, in short, is not blaming coincidence, but rather using it to take some of the "blame" from his characters."

Xu, in contrast, uses the coincidence to establish plot twists in which a character's actions and reactions are examined in a moral context and judged accordingly. While the coincidental reunion of Yungu with her old lover simply represents a chance to complete her story with joy, allowing for the replacement of a lost son by a step-son and the coming-together of lovers sundered by hide-bound tradition, the major role of the coincidence in Xu's work is as a catalyst and test for action. The peasant who unknowingly steals his own money does so at first in innocence, taking a bundle thrust at him by mistake. Unable to find the owner, he soon rationalizes keeping it and spending it. It is this action that is at fault and he is punished accordingly.

Linzhi's father is given an opportunity to redress the act of killing his family when a fire breaks out on the ship on which he and Linzhi, unknown to each other, are traveling. His "one discharge from sin and error" lies in being "redeemed from fire by fire." For Yuguan the appearance of a new daughter-in-law whom only she knows is the sister of her son's first wife represents a test and an opportunity to come to terms with herself. She decides not to reveal Anni's identity to her mother Xingguan because she is convinced it would only cause unpleasantness. Anni's domination
of Yuguan's son, paralleling the imagined domination Yuguan so resented in her first daughter-in-law, helps Yuguan towards an understanding of her own self-preoccupation and hypocrisy. Similarly, her knowledge of Xingguan's husband's identity and whereabouts allows her to perform a truly selfless act to redress the plans she once had to marry him herself. Thus she sets off alone at the end of her story to find him and bring him back to Xingguan. As the link binding a chain of connections together, Yuguan accidentally become privy to knowledge affecting others. It is how she deals with that information and the light that is thrown on her own motivations and desires that are Xu's preoccupations. The coincidences provide an opportunity to establish a closed, intimate moral dilemma and thus allow Yuguan the chance to act and finally redress her actions.

Hsia says of "Yuguan" that Xu "unashamedly lards his story with coincidences and mistaken identities that would look out of place in a piece of realistic fiction." While the word "unashamedly" implies a certain reservation on Hsia's part as to the aesthetic validity of such motifs, it must be remembered that they represent vital organizational elements in the romance world and even in the tragic genre such as Oedipus Rex. The author of a romance has far greater freedom than the realist, and can take liberties in the use of the coincidence to aid the overall design of the work. As such, the coincidence is part of a convention that must be accepted on its own terms.
Coincidences play an important part in the structure of traditional Chinese stories. Curtis Adkins, in his discussion of Tang chuanqi tales notes their presence and considers them "'the result of suppressed desires or conflict' or the product of synchronicity" which influence the actions of the characters. The presence of the fantastic, including coincidences, in traditional Chinese fiction was a limitation for John Bishop who traces a "disturbing...mingling of naturalism and supernaturalism within the same narrative" which is at odds with the reader's apparent need to know right at the beginning whether or not to suspend disbelief by plunging headlong into a fantasy world and accepting its conventions, or whether to treat the work in question as a true mirror of life. Idema, in reply, argues that Chinese literature has to be seen within its own context and not held up for judgement against the standards of Western realism. Frye makes a similar case for the romance genre.

The fantastic elements in late Ming fiction, including predestination, supernatural forces and coincidences, were part of a process describing the moral activity of a story's characters. The stress was not on the marvels or far-fetched events in themselves, but on the reactions of the people concerned to those events. The same stress is noticeable in Xu's work. For Feng Menglong and his contemporaries, as for Xu much later, "it was morals which made the world move. Every human act ... had a moral significance, resulting
in an automatic and inevitable retribution".\textsuperscript{46} This process of retribution or requital,\textsuperscript{47} baoying, with its Karmic base, is an important theme in Xu's moral vision.

Buddhism had a profound and powerful impact on Xu's work, particularly in his early stories and the essay collection Kong Shan Ling Yu. His first story, "The Mingming Bird", deals specifically with the Buddhist belief that life implies suffering. Minming, the heroine, a student at a Burmese Buddhist School, catches a glimpse of a paradisical garden in a dream. Told that she once lived there in another existence, she longs to return there. No longer concerned with the formerly over-riding preoccupation of persuading her father to agree to her marriage, she determines to leave the world, its ties and its suffering, behind. Just before she drowns herself she is joined by her lover Jialing who insists on accompanying her. Unlike Minming, who is tired of the world and longing to shuck off her earthly ties, Jialing's motives for embracing death are less exalted - he goes into death in a spirit of adventure, curious to see what lies beyond. Minming accepts his company because she has seen their likeness, twinned birds on a branch, in the magic garden of her dream.\textsuperscript{48} Their souls fly on, only their discarded bodies remain behind.

The exaltation of death as escape to a better existence is very rare in Xu's fiction. Guan Huai in "After Dusk" longs to be able to join his dead wife, but remains alive to bring up his young daughters. In all but "The Mingming
Bird" Xu argues for the affirmation of life rather than the consolation of death. Even in "The Mingming Bird" it is understood that the two lovers will live again, in some other form and in some other place.

There is a remote, dream-like quality about "The Mingming Bird" which is shared by Xu's next story, "The Merchant's Wife," in which both Christian and Buddhist influences are present. The heroine, Xiguan, tells the narrator her story simply and without emotional embellishment, almost as if she were narrating events in which she had no personal interest. Despite hardship and betrayal she deals with life with a stoic calmness that is reflected in the style of her narration. The events of which she tells are past, remote as a dream and strangely, vividly, unreal.

She has found comfort and support through Christianity, which provides her with peace of mind and an education, but her calm acceptance of adversity and her transcendence of mundane emotions have a distinctly Buddhist flavour. To escape the ties of desire binding one to the world it is necessary to rise above pain and joy. She tells the narrator, "Sir, there is no real distinction between joy and suffering in all human matters. Doing something is hard, but when you have hope it is joyful; at the time something happens, it is painful, but on reflection, it is pleasurable. In other words, the present is filled with pain, but memories of the past and hope for the future are joyful. Yesterday,
when I told you what had happened to me, you felt pain, because I laid it all out before you as if it were happening now; but if I look back on it all myself — the separation, being sold, running away, etc. — there is joy in all these things. So don't feel sorry for me; instead you should see things in a wider perspective." Thus she accepts with equanimity the disappearance of her husband, whom she is prepared to forgive for conniving in her sale to the Muslim Ahuya.

Xiguan's equanimity brings her through several trials, with which she copes by a mixture of a *laissez-faire* attitude whereby she watches to "see what fate has in store" for her, and a determination to make the best of her lot. It is pure chance that brings her to settle in a house near a Christian community after her escape from Ahuya's household, but it is her desire for self-improvement that leads her to accept their offer of further education. She made the best she could of her time in Ahuya's house, but did not hesitate to run away when the opportunity arose. Despite her own unhappiness she finds space in her heart for the unfortunate child-widow Honna, whose mother blamed sins from Honna's previous life for her widowhood. The compassion Xiguan shows inspires one of her fellow wives to extend the same sympathy to Honna. Their generosity of spirit reflects Xu's own criticism of a social attitude that denies pity to a young woman locked into a fate where she suffers for faults not of her making.
Xiguan's journey is like that of a small craft, tossed here and there by strong waves, but still managing to keep afloat and find a safe harbour. She has little control over the events that shaped her life, but made the best she could of what she had. Her strength and her calm, forgiving attitude reveal how far she has transcended mundane levels of recrimination and anger. Her faith that her husband will one day repent his action is expressed with such certainty that it has to be believed.

The most prolonged and explicit exposition of Xu's early beliefs on fate or life is to be found in "The Toiling Spider", published in 1922. There is less specific philosophizing in his later works where the characters' attitudes to life are reflected through their actions and inter-actions rather than in what they say. The writer's early urgency to press a particular message mellows with maturity and he allows the stories themselves to illustrate his philosophy. In "The Toiling Spider", however, Xu's didactic tendencies win through. In this story he has written a fable, or more properly two fables, which act as explicit vehicles for his own beliefs. The third story to have an exotic setting, it also shares with "The Mingming Bird" and "The Merchant's Wife" the same languorous, dream-like quality. The calm, indifferent saintliness of the heroine, Shangjie, adds a slightly detached, unreal dimension to a world that only contains a garden and a tropical island.
The unreality persists with the almost magical redemption of Shangjie's husband, Changsun Kewang. Formerly hostile and bitter, he is persuaded by the local pastor to repent his ill-treatment of Shangjie and accept Christianity. His name (Kewang) implies the possibility of hope, of change. Before he can return whole-heartedly to Shangjie and their garden he first has to embark on a journey to find himself and his story is left open-ended. As in the later "A Daughter's Heart", Xu opens up a trail of speculation on the fate and transformation of the minor male character. The story of Changsun Kewang's change of heart, told third-hand, is left enigmatic, like that of Linzhi's father, but the hope enshrined in it represents Xu's belief in the fundamental capacity of human nature to change for the better, to transcend one's fate through the exercise of a willingness to transform oneself.

The story of "The Toiling Spider" begins with a poem-prologue in which the major messages of the whole are expressed through a dialogue between a spider and the voice of the "Great Spirit of Life". The same image is reiterated at the end by Shangjie. "I am like a spider and fate is my web." An individual can choose where to spin his web, but wherever he spins, the web will be fragile, open to attack and easily broken. And when it breaks, it must be mended again and this task must not be questioned, for one must be content with one's lot. The "Great Spirit of Life" gives the spider "the kaleidoscope of life" and tells him to spin whatever he likes.
When the spider rejects the patterns he sees and asks for another kaleidoscope, the "Great Spirit of Life" chides him for his greediness and tells him he must be content with things as they are. "Go now, for all the arrangements of life are given the illusion of shape by these "fragments of coloured glass", and there is no need to look at another kaleidoscope of life."57

Shangjie uses the metaphor of the spider's web at the close of the story to illustrate to her friend Mrs. Shi her belief that, "one weaves one's own pattern; whether it is broken or remains whole, one can only leave it to nature."58 At the end of the story Shangjie's garden is left uninhabited save for a spider mending its web, doing so because "he was a spider and had no choice but to do so!"59

Enclosed within the spider's fable is the story of Shangjie, whose name implies estimable purity or an untouched immaculateness. A very suitable name for a woman who has "never felt sexual love for anyone",60 and believes love to have little bearing on the life of a household. For her, "love is like a very sharp axe, used more for paring away fortune than for establishing it".61 Her ultimate criterion is that one should be true to oneself. "I often think love received from someone who does not love himself is false."62

A calm woman, totally certain and unshakable, Shangjie had come with Changsun Kewang, her husband in name rather than through formality, to somewhere in Southeast Asia.
Through a conversation she has with Mrs. Shi we learn that things are not going well between the couple. Changsun believes her to be having an affair with a fellow Christian and has stayed away from the house in anger. With a confidence almost bordering on arrogance Shangjie first gives expression to the beliefs that dominate this story. She tells Mrs. Shi that she deals with situations as they arise and cares nothing for others' opinions. "It doesn't matter to me how other people criticize me or how he doubts me. I just seek not to be ashamed of myself, so that I can face the stars and the planets in heavens above and the mole crickets and ants on earth below, and that's good enough."64

Later, when told of her husband's repentance at doubting her, injuring her and casting her off, she reiterates this theme. "I have never asked that others should understand my actions, nor have I ever wanted people's pity or praise. I accept however people treat me, and have never tried to make a reckoning. If I can forgive others, why not him?"65 The same sentiments infuse the later story "Chuntao", where Chuntao urges her husband and lover to ignore public criticism of their ménage because all that matters is that an individual should follow their own conscience.66 Like Xiguan, Shangjie believes past events are of no importance and, when asked to forgive Changsun, says, "Ah, things of the past are like mist in a dream, long since dispersed in illusion, so what use is there in mentioning them again?"67 All three women,
Xiguan, Shangjie and Chuntao, have the courage to stand alone, the courage of their convictions and the courage to follow their conscience.

In Shangjie's first conversation with Mrs. Shi in the garden she explains that she believes it impossible to try and avoid fate and likens life to walking in a fog where nothing can be determined beyond a certain distance. "Ay, we all come from the boundless mists, live in the boundless mists and go into the boundless mists."68 She stresses that one might as well give up if afraid of walking along a "beclouded, mist-locked path."69 If travel - or life - interests you, you will want to go on, however uncertain the path. "After all, what is there to be concerned about, for you are going forward?"70 It is this spirit that helps her prevail when, forced by Changsun to leave, she finds refuge of a sort on the Malayan island of Tuba.71 She is not overcome by her plight, but deals with life as it comes, treating both blows of fate and joyful events with an equally stolid equanimity. She finds work in a pearl-merchant's office and watches the pearldivers go out every day. Their daily experiences confirm her belief that life should be lived, life should go on, the web must always be mended, because that is her lot, that is the way things are.

"During those moments there she often thought that life was just like diving for pearls in the sea. A diver braved the dangers of the sea the whole day through, but he could
never know for sure how much or just what he would get. But this impression could not undermine her life in any way. As she watched those men searching blindly within the depths each day she soon came to see that her journey on this earth was the same as the work of the pearl-divers. Although it was not in her power to control how much and what she obtained, she still had to take her turn to dive into the sea every day, because that was her lot."72

The pattern of one's life might be broken, the road ahead obscure, but the primary message of "The Toiling Spider" is that one must go on, regardless of uncertainty and lack of control over one's fate.73 Shangjie uses a worm-eaten rose, half still intact and beautiful, to illustrate her belief that one must accept what one is given in life and make the best possible use of it. "Although this flower is half destroyed by insects, it is still beautiful. A person's fate is like that - even if someone cannot grasp all of life, even if it is incomplete, he can still attain a measure of life's beauty and rewards."74 The same point is made in the brief and curious vignette "Ghost-Song"("Gui Zan"),75 in which the narrator watches a singing procession of ghosts in a moonlit graveyard. Live your life to the utmost while you can, they urge. "If you have tears, let them pour down; if you have a voice, sing with all your might; if you suffer, experience it to the utmost; if you have feelings, bestow all you can; if you have a task, fulfil it completely. And
then when you are tired and go to rest, you will have fortune!" All experience is an affirmation of life, despite or enhanced by the suffering that Shangjie, and others, endure.

"The Toiling Spider"'s other message is that one must be true to one's nature and have confidence in one's beliefs. Shangjie compares the existence of different natures and their consequent influence on belief to water, unchanging in itself, but which, when drunk by a cow, turns into milk, and into poison when drunk by a snake. She is confident that her own behaviour is irreproachable and ignores the poisonous remarks of those who think otherwise. She knows what she is and cannot - will not - change her nature. On the same occasion her friend's husband Mr. Shi makes a similar point about belief. He tells Shangjie that the local Christian community, despite the opposition of himself and the minister, Mr. Worthington, has refused her permission to attend Holy Communion. He urges her to disregard this because faith such as hers and his cannot be bound by ritual: "As long as we follow our conscience in all our actions, that is all that counts."

Zhang Zhuling, a Christian minister affiliated to the United Church to which Xu belonged, described Xu in his obituary of him as dissatisfied with the traditional doctrines and rituals of the Church. He was a democrat who "wanted freedom" and believed that Christ's divinity lay not in his holy origins but in the perfection of his moral conduct. The significance
of Christ's life lay not in his immaculate conception, nor in the miracles he performed, nor even in his resurrection from the dead, but in the excellence of his moral character. For Xu, Christ's forgiveness of sins was a much greater miracle than walking on water or feeding the five thousand. Xu shared this attitude with Oscar Wilde who wrote of Christ, "His morality is all sympathy, just what morality should be. If the only thing he had ever said had been, 'Her sins are forgiven her because she loved so much,' it would have been worth while dying to have said it." For Xu, Christ represented a supreme moral exemplar whose love for humanity and forgiving spirit made him a worthy object of worship.

Forgiveness of sins requires repentance. The theme of atonement or taking responsibility for one's actions - that which ye sow, ye shall reap (baoying) - runs through Xu's work. "How could I be considered human if I rejected you?" asks Chuntao of her erstwhile husband Li Mao whom she has discovered, legless and begging, several years after their enforced parting. Despite their lack of love for each other and the contentment she has found with her new lover Liu Xianggao, Chuntao feels a strong sense of responsibility towards her crippled husband and cannot find it in her conscience to turn him away. Zhineng, Mr. Dongye's wife in "Mr. Dongye", develops the same sense of responsibility as she learns to love the husband joined to her in a marriage of convenience and from whom she has been parted for several years while
she studied in Europe. She had a deeply-felt love affair while abroad and had returned full of misgivings about living with her husband. However, Mr. Dongye's eccentric innocence and stubborn good nature unexpectedly made her love him. While the story is ostensibly about Mr. Dongye, it is his wife's change of heart that provides its main interest. Mr. Dongye remains in blissful ignorance throughout of his wife's feelings which range from an exasperated, fond indifference to anguish as she gives up her lover for his sake.

The resolution of this long, rambling story that never quite captures the imagination despite Zhineng's pain and Mr. Dongye's Quixotic character, comes when Zhineng is given the opportunity to fully atone for her previous indifference. In a powerful scene Mr. Dongye, while attempting to recover a body he believes to be that of his wife from an execution ground, is injured so badly by mocking onlookers that he is crippled for life. He had angered the crowd with his compassionate but ultimately ineffective gesture of straightening out the tumbled, broken bodies of the executed women revolutionaries and covering their nakedness with white cloth. Attempting to carry away the corpse he believes to be Zhineng's, his way is blocked by soldiers whom he harangues for their lack of human compassion. The crowd set upon him and leave him for dead. After his rescue the corpses are once again stripped bare and left like slaughtered beasts outside a butcher's shop.82
When Zhineng returns from an abortive attempt to preserve her ex-lover's life she is anxious to confess all to Mr. Dongye. She is prevented from doing so by a family friend who warns her that Mr. Dongye is too weak to bear such a confession. Thwarted of the release she sought, Zhineng climbs slowly upstairs. The last image of the story shows her entering her husband's bedroom, ready to take on the responsibility of caring for him. Her own anguish and need for comfort must be forgotten in her duty to him. She makes atonement.

In stark, sombre contrast to the sunlit garden world inhabited by most of Xu's characters, the snow-bound outskirts of Beijing provides a harsh backdrop for the story of a woman's struggle against a hopeless fate, the act by which she hoped to break out of the pattern of despair and degradation, and the atonement she must make for that act. Reminiscent to some degree of Lu Xun's haunting "A New Year's Sacrifice",83 "The Road Home" is a potentially powerful story that degenerates into a chase, redeemed by the opening episodes and the final snow-bound silent scene of death. This is perhaps the bleakest of all Xu's work for there seems to be no escape except a joyless death for the unfortunate woman once she has chosen her path and acts the way she did.

The first part of the story is a clear-cut, pitiless description of hopelessness. The woman, never named, is first seen sitting lost in thought on a bench in the house
of a Granny Wang who runs a hired-help agency and acts as a procuress on the side. It is almost New Year and the other women waiting for work have all returned to their families to celebrate. Only she is left, sitting there as she has sat for over twenty days, waiting to be hired and accumulating a debt to Granny Wang she has no hope of paying off. Urged by Wang to do something the woman becomes increasingly desperate. She had left her home village twelve years before to follow her soldier husband, entrusting her young daughter to the care of her parents-in-law. After her husband died she was left destitute, save for an old army greatcoat, a hat, a pistol and two bullets. The coat kept her warm in the winter and no-one wanted to buy the pistol. She had no other possessions and no hope of finding a job. Briefly her hopes rise when a servant comes asking for a woman to work that evening, only to be dashed again when Wang crudely tells her a bed-fellow is required and she does not fit the bill.

The scene that follows is the most powerful and effective of the story. Xu paints a picture that is almost comic in its pathos, outlining in swift, simple strokes the depths of absurdity that can be plumbed when despair dictates action. Left alone, the woman is inspired by an idea. "She took her face-cloth, frozen stiff as a board, and dipped it in the pan of hot water on the stove. She went back to her room and gave her thin face a good scrub until it looked a lot whiter. She opened a small wooden box by the kang
and took out a comb missing some teeth to comb her hair. She had no powder, save for some specks left in the corners of the box. She took the things out of the box and with a hairpin scraped out the remaining rather grubby powder, and shook it out onto her hand. She then powdered her face, feeling her heart lighten, for she was beginning to pass muster. She went outside and surreptitiously tore a piece off a newly-posted Spring Festival red paper couplet. She returned to the main room and wiped some coal dust off the lampshade. She wet the red paper and smeared its dye on her cheeks and lips. She mixed the coal dust with some hair oil and blackened the hair at her temples and eyebrows. Now she looked much better. She considered she could quite adequately take on the life of a "bed-warmer".\footnote{84 Granny Wang disagrees.}

The passage above is written in the original without adornment, but the image conjured up is extraordinarily effective. The woman's desperation persuades her into believing her scarecrow figure would find a market. The crude red smears on her mouth and cheeks and her oily black hair stand out in harsh contrast to the grubbiness of her white face powder and the chill grey room. They are the bright banners of her hope which soon freeze stiff and hard like her tears when she is harshly informed she is too old. The woman's last, desperate resort is denied her. She is left without hope, and can do nothing but return home empty-handed. And
therein lies her tragedy, for her pride forbids her to return to her daughter without a gift, starting her on the trail of events that leads to her horrified discovery that she has robbed her only child.

After a hopeless attempt to pawn her husband's pistol to pay off her debt, the woman decides to return to her old village. Snow falls, making her road difficult and isolated, so that the only figures in the landscape are those who become enmeshed in her fate. The scene narrows to a dark, snow-bound road, gloomy and silent. The sudden appearance of a young woman dressed in bridal finery hurrying into town brings a shock of colour and temptation. If only her daughter could have such clothes. The thought leads to action and, disguised in her greatcoat and hat, she relieves the young woman of her possessions. From now on the story takes on the speed and jerkiness of a silent movie as the woman is pursued across a grey-white landscape. A young man discovers the shivering young woman moments after the robbery and sets off in pursuit on a donkey. Terrified, the woman waves her pistol threateningly and shoots him dead. She then leaps on to the donkey and whips it into a gallop. Meanwhile another man discovers the abandoned young woman and also sets off in pursuit of the thief. Unluckily for him he reaches the fallen corpse just as a policeman arrives on the scene. A stubborn, stupid man, the policemen is convinced the second man is the thief and murderer and takes him into custody, allowing the woman time to get away.
The woman abandons the donkey and hides in a graveyard to examine her plunder. She discovers a familiar looking bracelet and recognizes it as one she had left with her daughter all those years before. In horror she realizes her desperate act had led to appalling consequences. Her first thought is not of the man she has killed but of the embarrassment of being discovered as the thief of her own daughter's possessions. She decides to return to the scene of the crime, abandon her disguise and pretend to discover the goods accidentally. On arrival however, she finds the young woman still there, lying prostrate in the snow. Scared of her mother-in-law, the young woman had killed herself rather than return empty-handed. The woman identifies her definitely as her daughter by a birthmark on her foot. Fear of discovery silences her cries of grief. Fire-crackers celebrating the New Year can be heard in the distance and all around silver snow falls, endlessly, silently.

When police arrive on the scene the next day they are greeted by a strange sight. A middle-aged woman lies holding the younger one, snow practically burying them both. They have both died of stab-wounds, and the younger woman is once again dressed in her finery: her peach-coloured gown, blue cap with a peacock feather and red embroidered shoes all neatly in place. Further off lie an old army hat and a greatcoat. The men stand looking at this scene for some time, silent and confused.
"The Road Home" poses a hard, moral question: to what lengths is someone in desperate straits allowed to go? How far does bitter, grinding, hopeless poverty justify theft, injury and murder? For Xu it is not enough of a reason. The woman's pride and anxiety not to lose face in the eyes of her daughter drive her to desperate action. It is this rather than starvation that motivates her and it is for this that she is punished. It is inevitable in Xu's moral universe that it should be her daughter who is the victim of her action, for cause and effect are tightly bound together there. It is not chance coincidence but an effect close to Jung's synchronicity where dark unconscious forces bring requital for an action at the very moment it is performed. The opportunity given to the woman to lay out her daughter and hold her in her arms as she joined her in death is an acknowledgement of the hopelessness of her situation and the harsh nature of her punishment. Hers was a cruel, stark world where bright colours stood out temptingly like banners of false hope against the chill grey background of harsh reality.

"The Road Home" is Xu Dishan's darkest work - nothing else approaches the hopelessness of this woman's story. To some degree it marks a turning point, for several of the stories written after this are infused with a strong moral anger. The preoccupation with moral accountability continues, but there is a new cynical note in stories such as the "The Three Doctors" ("San Boshi"), "A Carefree Flower" and the
earlier "In Director Fei's Reception Room." These three stories represent the closest Xu ever approached to the convention of critical realism so common amongst his contemporaries, but the overall impression given by his later stories, with the important exceptions of "Yuguan" and "Chuntao", is slight. Some critics consider Xu's later works to be his best technically and approve their realist thrust, but fundamentally most of them lack the unusual charm of stories such as "The Merchant's Wife" and "The Toiling Spider" which has been likened to the lingering, sun-filled after-taste of an olive, strange and slightly bitter at first, but soon ripening into a memorable sweetness.

Enough idiosyncratic images remain in the later stories to mark them out as Xu's handiwork and provide a sense of continuity with the earlier works. The piled-up milk bottles furnishing Mr. Dongye's home and the valiant, foolish way in which he harangues an indifferent crowd; the policeman in the "The Liberator" ("Jiefangzhe") who carries a lamb with him on his frustrated search for a woman he freed from virtual slavery years before; the old inventor in "The Iron Fish with Gills" ("Tie Yu Di Sai") who holds onto his dreams of saving China as the world falls around his ears - all these images are typical of Xu's eccentric vision and help redeem these stories from mediocrity.

A new element of humour conspicuously absent from Xu's earlier works enters his later stories as a by-product of
their ironic cynicism. Used to great effect in "The Three Doctors" and "In Director Fei's Reception Room" to deflate the pretensions and expose the veniality of the major characters, Xu's sense of humour reaches its most mature and gentle flowering in the story of "Yuguan". The absence of humour in his early works point to an earnest desire to stress the importance of the messages they were meant to convey. In "Yuguan", however, the message is equally serious, but the omnipresent gentle humour helps to undercut the negative aspects of Yuguan's character and provide a deeper and more powerful, because more sympathetically understanding, expression of affirmation.

"Chuntao" and "Yuguan" represent the full flowering of Xu's vision of life. They have a serene confidence missing in his other later works and a depth the earlier stories lack. Both women stand out as solid, memorable examples of goodness made powerful by self-knowledge and compassion. Yuguan undergoes a complex process of development before she attains self-knowledge, while Chuntao remains throughout a simple, good-hearted woman who knows her own mind. Yuguan comes to an understanding that her actions have had a profound and sometimes negative impact on those close to her and seeks to atone for her selfishness. Chuntao follows the dictates of her conscience in all things even if these might bring about the destruction of all that she holds dear. Both women learn to accept what life has given them and to work as far as possible to improve themselves and the lives of those around them.
Both women are the embodiment of Xu's belief in the importance of personal salvation. By being true to themselves and accepting the imperatives of moral conscience, both women offer rich confirmation of the values expressed less subtly by their predecessor Shangjie. They represent a compelling affirmation of life as it is. There is only one kaleidoscope of life and one must work for change within a limited framework, accepting what one is given. Unlike his contemporaries Xu did not advocate wholesale change. He sought personal solutions rather than the salvation of China. He did not question the existing structure but advocated rather that the web of life should be mended, not replaced, rebuilt to a new pattern while accepting the continuity of change.
"Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth." 2

Oscar Wilde

"Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine." 3

Virginia Woolf

"I didn't want to hire someone to do my work for me in the house, nor was I willing to hire a wet-nurse to feed A Huan. I don't believe men are incapable of raising children and so every day I used to do all I could to feed her myself.'

"Cheng Huan asked, 'Did you have milk for me to drink, Daddy?'

"Guan Huai said, 'I only had cow's milk, but sometimes men can produce breast milk too... A Huan, haven't I told you the story of Meng Jingxiu?' 4

"Cheng Huan replied, 'Yes. He was a filial son whose mother died, leaving a baby brother. He wanted to feed him himself, and sure enough milk flowed from his breasts.'

"Guan Huai smiled and said, 'I was such a bookworm in those days that I thought if a filial son could do it, so could a "chaste widower." So whenever I held A Huan I let her suck my nipples to see if I could produce any milk, but however hard I tried, I was never successful.' 5

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The rueful image of a young man fruitlessly attempting to breast-feed his motherless child is a charming one, giving the otherwise sentimental semi-autobiographical "After Dusk" (1921) an idiosyncratic twist which helps salvage it. Guan Huai, a widower with two young daughters, lives in rural seclusion near the sea. They lead a pastoral, isolated existence, remote from the turbulence of the outside world. On the evening the story takes place Guan Huai reminisces to his daughters on how he and his wife came there and how he coped after her death. His wife still haunts him, obsessing him, and her presence is all pervasive. We first see him at her grave, playing his guitar. We learn later that the grave has become for him a symbol of her transmuted body. "'I believe her body has already grown greater than mine, and stronger; her voice, her face are everywhere. When I go to her grave it is not because I hope that her body lying within it will rise out of the grave-stone, but because I see her body as the grave itself, and I talk to it just as I talk to you here in this room.'"

Guan Huai believes that his wife is hiding and not truly dead and feels her presence everywhere when he is alone. A stone bust of her likeness sits in his room and he persuades his daughters to believe with him that her essence is within it, watching over them all. When he hears windchimes he is reminded of the sound of her ankle-bracelets tinkling as she walked in their bridal chamber. Her surname was Shan,
meaning "mountain" or "hill", and whenever he sees a pointed
to think of mountains and thus of her. This image
is charged with an eroticism rare for Xu, and indeed the
entire story has a pervasive, heavy sense of all-embracing,
unfulfilled desire. The dead woman's presence pervades everything
and Guan Huai is obsessed with an aching longing to be reunited
with her. She fills his thoughts and senses; at night she
causes the crickets and wind-chimes to lull him to sleep. She
is everywhere, she dominates, she obsesses.

Xu Dishan had "a peculiar preoccupation with the Chinese.
woman as the potential embodiment of his own emerging life
philosophy." Major male characters are rare in Xu's work
and none is as memorable as his women. He was not alone
among May Fourth writers in this: C.T. Hsia comments on the
"astounding gallery of memorable female characters" in modern
Chinese fiction. From Lu Xun's Xianglin Sao to Zhang Ailing's
Cao Qiqiao, women dominate early Twentieth century Chinese
fiction. Men are often portrayed as weak individuals or
the butt of satire, and their stories are less haunting than
those of their wronged sisters. The May Fourth tradition
of critical fiction made it "altogether fitting that, given
the brutalization and enslavement of Chinese women over the
millenia, far more female characters than male should stand
for outraged humanity in modern Chinese fiction." The final decades of the Nineteenth century and the
early years of the next witnessed a profound change in Chinese
attitudes to women. The reformer Kang Youwei (1858-1927) was one of the first to stress how debilitating the custom of footbinding was for the overall strength of the nation. Education for women became an important issue, since educated mothers would raise educated sons capable of dealing with a modern world. A minority of upper-class women became increasingly active in the political sphere, some playing significant roles in the 1911 revolution. After the Republic was established a growing number of suffragettes demanded the vote and women workers began strike action for better conditions. The May Fourth movement provided a renewed and greater impetus for previously limited women's activities and from 1919 onwards women became a significant political factor.

Among young intellectuals opposing the traditional fetters of the past there grew up an increased consciousness of women's position in China. The trend towards iconoclasm encompassed the rejection of old values and customs regarding family life and women's status. Young women seeking independence from their families and the right to education were often the object of public concern and support. Men and women began associating together before marriage both privately and professionally, and as political comrades. While reaction would later set in and the status of women in China remains an issue to this day, there can be no doubt that the emergence of Chinese women into the world had far-reaching and very
profound consequences. Women had burst onto the stage and, for a while at least, were to capture the imagination of their educated male compatriots. They came to dominate modern fiction because they were the major symbol of suffering caused by the backwardness of the traditional system. As the main victims of an oppressive past opposed by the majority of the young and vocal educated class it is not surprising that they should therefore become the heroines of a fiction largely dedicated to exposing and destroying that past.

Xu Dishan's female characters are not traditional victims and he rarely wrote stories with the object of vilifying the old society's treatment of women. That he was deeply conscious of women's issues is made clear by the obviously high regard in which he held women and by his public and private statements of concern. In a lecture on religious, specifically Buddhist, attitudes to women he stresses that society and religion are male-dominated systems in which women play a secondary role. He quotes a long series of negative views of women from both Buddhist and Biblical texts, not with the intention of endorsing them but in the expectation that no right-thinking person would fail to reject them. He contrasts Christ's attitude to women with Paul's inflexible depreciation and hopes that all religions will develop a more equal stance towards women. Discussing the sacrifices a Buddhist monk must make on the road to enlightenment Xu emphasizes that the greatest of all is to abandon sexual
life, for the happiness that comes from living with someone of the opposite sex is, he believes, incomparable.  

Xu's fiction is filled with images of women. His early collection of essays, Kong Shan Ling Yu, contains vignettes of his first marriage, including idyllic scenes of close companionship and pieces mourning his wife's death. Other essays describe the anguish of a barren wife, a young girl waiting for her lover, newly-married couples, a woman become mad with the death of her son, a vain wife and a disillusioned husband, an old woman meeting her childhood sweetheart and many others. In one essay he likens a woman to a darting fish, elusive, untouchable and unattainable. "Ah! Woman! You have become a brilliant fish in my 'pool of memory!' Sometimes you float to the surface, letting me see you; sometimes you sink down, making me think you are under a fallen leaf or between a rock; but I have forgotten the direction of that road. All I can do is sit each day by the pool, hoping that you will float up again." The theme of the elusive woman is treated at length in Xu's 1934 story "Who Is She?" ("Ren Fei Ren") in which a mysterious woman eludes and confuses her naive admirer. In a moving piece recalling his wife's last illness he records his wife as saying, "Only if a man knows how to love a woman will he be able to know how to love wisdom. The man who cannot love women or rejects them, even if his mind is untroubled, is still the most stupid of all souls.'" It seems that Xu agreed with his wife's
words for his fiction reveals how high a regard he placed on women.

While positive images of women dominate his work, there are also a few negative or morally ambiguous examples. The tragic end of the woman in "The Road Home" has already been discussed in the preceding chapter. Her choice of criminal action, however far she might have been driven by desperation, marks her out for punishment. Modern women devoted to Western lifestyles also come under attack, blisteringly so in "The Carefree Flower", the tale of Jacqueline Yellow, a venal, selfish woman whose corruption taints the lives of those around her. Rich, western-educated and profoundly materialistic, she is very much the carefree flower of the title. She destroys her ancestral shrine to make way for a swimming pool in which her two women servants, drawn by its glamour, later drown. She has a Spanish lover and a husband in the countryside. The mayor, charmed by her expensively-gowned beauty, gives her a sinecure and later persuades her to launder large sums of money out of the country. By the time the crime is discovered she is long gone, sailing to Europe with her foreign lover and leaving her husband to face the music.

The anger that infuses "The Carefree Flower" is a rare emotion for Xu, whose stories generally maintain a serene detachment. There seems to be a strong patriotic element to his anger, but it is also a bitterness for the destructive corruption of an urban elite who ignore their country's plight.
Jacqueline Yellow sails away amidst the first enemy bombings, careless of her nation's fate. In another piece, written as a series of letters, the writer stresses he has no objection to Chinese women receiving a Western education, but hates the fact that so many who do tend to forget their roots and despise their own culture. It is Xu the patriot who speaks through stories such as these and his high regard for women does not prevent him attacking those who break his rules of conduct. Interestingly, despite the moral grammar of requital that defines much of his work, the men and women for whom he reserves his most biting, ironic and occasionally humourous indictments, do not make amends. They remain unaffected and unconcerned.

These negative images of women are the exception in Xu's fiction. The majority of his female protagonists are strong, confident and virtuous. In marked contrast to this his male characters are problematic; they are often emasculated or somehow feminized, failures, weak, debilitated, dependent, absent or bad. Even those who are given decidedly positive features, like Jialing in "The Mingming Bird", Mr. Dongye, the widower Guan Huai and the old inventor Lei in "The Iron Fish with Gills" suffer a significant diminishment. Jialing becomes increasingly insignificant in "The Mingming Bird" as Minming grows in stature. Is is she who dreams of another world and it is she who decides to go there. Jialing accompanies her almost as an afterthought. Mr. Dongye is an eccentric
ill-adapted for ordinary life and crippled when his naivete leads him into danger. As the story ends he is left physically dependent on his wife, just as previously he had been economically dependent upon her. The widower Guan Huai has chosen to remain celibate, vowing never to replace the woman who has become his life's morbid obsession. He lives only for the memory of his dead wife and waits anxiously for the time when he can join her. The inventor, Mr. Lei, is old and a failure. No-one sees the significance of his inventions and he has never been given any acknowledgement of his talents. His life's work is wasted when he is drowned attempting to rescue it from the depths of a river. The list continues: a strange, inexorable and motley parade of a legless husband; dependent men; a policeman nursing a lamb; a dying prisoner; a man obsessed with an elusive shadow woman and beaten up for his pains; men who abandon their wives and men who die. There are no heroes in Xu's world; all his men are flawed.

In choosing women as his major protagonists, Xu was not concerned so much with the hardship they underwent as with their responses to it. His heroines were not free from suffering - far from it - Xu however did not write of them to expose the causes of their suffering but to show how individuals coped with or even transcended suffering. In the "The Mingming Bird" Minming fights her father's opposition to her love for Jialing and angrily exposes his scheme with a sorcerer to prevent it by magic. Shangjie is wrongfully
accused of adultery and is forced to leave her child and home until her husband realizes he is mistaken. Xiguan is left alone by her husband when he travels abroad to earn a living. When no news of him reaches her she sets off to find him, and discovers him prosperous, re-married and now venal enough to sell her into a Muslim harem. Living amongst her fellow wives Xiguan learns how generous and how selfish her companions can be. Despite her own difficulties she found compassion for Honna, the child-widow whose unhappy fate was the direct result of her sex.37

In "Blossoms on an Old Poplar", Yungu, a young widow, suffers the advances of a fellow villager and has to reject the love of the man who rescues her because society enforced a strict code of chastity upon her. Xu's honorary grandmother in "Thinking of My Grandmother on Reading "Zhilan and Moli"" ("Du "Zhilan Yu Moli" Yin'er Xiangji Wodi Zumu") is forced to return to her father's home for a minor misdemeanour and remains there for the rest of her life because her husband is too weak and too hidebound by tradition to defy family pressure. Bangxiu, a minor figure in "The Liberator", tells a monk of her hard childhood as a servant to a mistress addicted to opium.38 A young factory girl fights to maintain her integrity when Director Fei wishes to make her his fifth concubine. She only succeeds when her parents-in-law decide to forfeit a profit and protect her for their son's sake. The woman in "The Road Home" finds no alternative but prostitution
to support herself, but her failure there leads her to robbery and murder. Yuguan, left alone after her husband's death, decides to follow tradition and remain a chaste widow, for it was the only way for a woman to gain some measure of renown. After a long struggle to support and educate her son, in whom all her hopes and ambitions lie, she becomes a jealous and demanding mother-in-law, perpetuating a system of division and alienation rather than offering support and comfort.

Each of these women suffer because they are women, caught in a system that is harsh and destructive. In all these stories, however, with the exception of "Thinking of my Grandmother...", the events that overtake these women as women are secondary issues, undoubtedly influencing the direction of their lives, but of minor importance in comparison to the way in which they cope with their lives overall. Xu Dishan was not a polemical writer, although he was on occasion a didactic one, and he rarely wrote stories with the primary aim of exposing the ills of his society. When he described a woman's suffering it marked the starting point of her journey and not the major theme. Lu Xun painted a tragic vision of a woman destroyed by traditional superstition. Through the stark power of Xianglin Sao's story he vilified the system that killed her. Rou Shi attempted the same thing, less successfully because more sentimentally, in "A Slave-Mother". Both writers were making the point, a very persuasive point, that the plight of Chinese women was terrible indeed, and
that only a radical change in the system could rectify this.

Both Xianglin Sao and the Slave-Mother are powerless in the face of their fate - they are weighed down by an ancient tradition and they are helpless, without hope. Their hope of salvation lies beyond their personal power because their creators' solutions were based on a wholesale transformation of society. These women could not achieve this alone - their role is one of exposure, of education. It is too late to save them individually, but their stories were designed to inspire dedication to the cause of destroying the old society and to ensure that there would be no more Xianglin Saos, no more Slave-Mothers. They are powerful symbols of the urgency felt by the May Fourth generation for the need for drastic change.

Xu Dishan's women, in contrast, find personal solutions, often of a spiritual nature, which bear little relationship to the driving desire of his contemporaries for a larger answer - to change the world, to save China. For Shangjie and Xiguan suffering is part of life's pattern, but it is only a part, for life has more to offer them than that. They calmly accept all adversity and draw strength from it, achieving a private transcendence which can only influence a tiny corner of the world. Minming struggles against her father's opposition to her marriage and grows indifferent to Jialing, save as a future companion in the world beyond. She finds her solution outside this world. Yungu, in a
fairy-tale ending, is reunited with her lover and allowed a blissful old age, despite the unlikely coupling of a reclusive scholar with a stubborn village granny.

The woman in "The Road Home" has no hope of any solution and the stark realism of the early part of her story is the closest Xu comes to the exposure literature espoused by many of his contemporaries. However, her choice of action, made in desperation and motivated by pride, is implicitly criticized and punished, and the moral ambiguity of her story prevents her becoming a symbol of change. Yuguan comes to terms with her second daughter-in-law when she realizes her own ambitions were selfish and hypocritical. Like Shangjie and Xiguan, she too attains a level of spiritual transcendence which gives her personal peace, but which also enables her to reach out and benefit others. However, her solution was hard-won and her journey a personal one. The spiritual transformation achieved by Yuguan is not easily attainable and marks no radical social change but a gradual movement towards self-knowledge. Hers is one of the hardest roads to follow.

Of all Xu's stories, "Thinking of My Grandmother on Reading "Zhilan and Moli"", comes closest to an attack on the traditional Chinese family system. Based on a true incident in his own family, the story criticizes the destruction of a marriage through family pride and individual weakness in the face of family pressures. In the long preface Xu discusses the differences between Western and Chinese attitudes to
love. Western love is horizontal, based on man and woman and possible anywhere. Chinese love is vertical and encompasses the generations – it is filial love and couples are only seen in relation to the family. He contends that Chinese fiction rarely describes connubial love with any degree of naturalness for it is always envisaged within the context of the family. The greatest possible tragedy for a Chinese is to be separated from his or her family.

Having said this, Xu then goes on to describe how filial love can prove destructive to individuals. In this he reveals his own divided loyalties. The thoughtless young wife of Xu's grandfather offends her sister-in-law who dominates the household by behaving frivolously during a period of strict mourning. The incident is blown out of all proportion and the wife is whisked home by her stubborn father, as proud of his family's honour as the sister-in-law is of hers. The distraught young couple are kept forcibly apart until after she, ironically, given the accusations of unfiliality, miscarries a son. They meet secretly but the husband is too weak to oppose his sister and they therefore can never live together again.

The wife finds personal solace in Buddhism, becoming vegetarian and requesting her husband to maintain a chaste distance. The husband retreats into his studies and finally openly defies his sister only when summoned to his wife's death bed. His wife makes him promise to marry her personal
maid and in time he does this, so that the maid becomes Xu's real grandmother.

The idealized image of a selfless, dying wife ordering her husband to re-marry is also found in one of Xu's early essays, "Farewell" ("Biehua").43 The essay is moving because of its genuine emotion. It was written after the death of his first wife and is imbued with strong emotion given power by the simplicity of the vignette. Xu was obviously deeply affected by his wife's death and gave expression to his feelings in this and another essay describing a young widower's grief and his child's failure to understand.44 The same emotions pervade "After Dusk" in a rather more extended and less successful attempt at expressing a bereft husband's anguish.

The death-bed scene in "Thinking of My Grandmother" does not have the simple heart-felt immediacy of "Farewell" because the story as a whole is written at a distance. While the fate of the young couple is tragic, their marriage destroyed by a brief, rebellious interlude and stubborn family pride careless of individual feeling, it is impossible to feel completely engaged in their story. A sense of distance is immediately achieved through the use of a long discursive preface in which Xu discusses the differences between Western and Eastern culture and describes the research he is undertaking at Columbia University. The second distancing effect stems from the restraint Xu uses to describe an actual event which took place eighty years previously. The reader receives
the impression that only the bare outlines of the story are
given, perhaps because as a family anecdote it was no longer
fresh to Xu and also dealt with a generation he would have
been taught to revere. The characters remain brief sketches,
revealing little emotion or depth. The third reason for
the sense of distance comes from Xu's didactic impulses when
he breaks the story-line to give information on the customs
of Taiwan. In the same vein he twice interrupts to explain
that the husband's failure to defy his sister was because
he lived in a country where filial love was placed above
all other kinds and that, "it wasn't that he didn't have
the courage to oppose the ethical code, but that he did not
yet know how to oppose it." Ultimately the story remains
anecdotal.

Despite these qualifications, this story remains interesting
for the sidelight it throws on Xu's attitude to marital and
filial love, and his opposition to the destructive effects
of stubborn pride. At one point he likens the love between
a man and woman to that of a parent and child, each mutually
nurturing and vulnerable, for each is a parent and each is
a child. In some strange sense this vision provides a
compromise between the vertical and horizontal angles of
love, since it implies a realization of the validity and
necessity of both family and marital ties, unified in one
relationship.

"Chuntao" represents another form of attack on the tradi-
tional family system for in some senses it posits a subversive variation. Chuntao, (the Spring Peach of this chapter's title), is an independent woman who has created her own livelihood and has managed to survive the vagaries of unsettled times virtually unscathed. Separated from her husband of one night when fleeing her village on the eve of an attack, she wandered the country until reaching Beijing. Here she began working as a waste-paper collector and in time is joined by an erstwhile travelling companion, Liu Xianggao, who becomes her lover, colleague and dependent. An independent note is struck immediately at the story's opening when Chuntao returns home after a day's work. She is described simply, but the image is immediate and effective. She carries a big basket of waste paper on her back, her face is obscured by a large straw hat but we catch a tantalizing flash of white teeth as she smiles. There is no need to be told anymore about her, for somehow she is far more alive than Shangjie whose beautiful features are described in detail.48

In an unstated case of role reversal Chuntao is greeted at the door by Xianggao, who works within the house and prepares her meals. When he calls her "wife" she objects, "I told you not to call me wife."49 Chuntao's independence and her proletariat status have made her popular with mainland critics who consider this story to be Xu's best, despite the idyllic setting, idealistic ending and unorthodox establishment of a ménage à trois.50 Told in a simple, straightforward style
with judicious authorial intervention, much of what we come to learn about Chuntao and her life is gained through conversation and plainly narrated passages.

Chuntao's life with Xianggao is content, almost idyllic. They spend their evenings chatting gently under their melon frame and then Xianggao massages her to relieve the strains of her long day's work. There is a matter-of-fact erotic quality about this scene that rings very true, with its air of gentle contentment and a fulfilment which is not explicitly sexual. The gentle rhythms of their life are disrupted badly when Chuntao discovers her long-lost husband Li Mao, legless and begging in the streets. She takes him home and tells him with the honesty that seems so natural to her that she lives there with Xianggao. Discovering she has not actually re-married, Li Mao says that they therefore must still be man and wife. She replies, "No, I am no-one's wife."51 Li Mao is aghast at the thought that people would consider him a cuckold, but Chuntao's response, given with the practicality and openness typical to her, is that only the rich and powerful should worry about such an accusation, for no-one cares about people like him and her. "I'm my own person now and nothing I do can disgrace you in any way."52 She points out that theirs was an arranged marriage and that they were separated from its inception, whereas she and Xianggao had been together for several years. She had brought Li Mao home from a sense of obligation and did not reject him as
a husband because he was crippled, but because she loved Xianggao. She suggests that they all live together since she had been considering finding a third helper for some time.

The three of them live together for a period of time. The men attempt to resolve the question of Chuntao's ownership, apparently unaware of the incongruity of their plans. Chuntao reasserts her independence and for a time at least the two men acquiesce in her plans. Here Xu intervenes to comment that life was not ideal, especially with the three of them sharing one kang.  

"Polyandrous societies are not very common" because men find it hard to abandon the primitive ideology of patriarchal and uxorial rights. When the two men draw up an agreement giving her to Xianggao, Chuntao tells them, "I cannot be arranged just like that" and insists they stop considering her in terms of a wife and to ignore other people's opinions. One of this story's messages is the very strong emphasis on being true to oneself. If one's conduct is irreproachable public opinion is negligible. Chuntao has great confidence in her own rightness, without an accompanying alienating arrogance. She is a simple woman with a simple code of honour and a strong sense of her own value. She will not act against her conscience and in time her confident faith in herself carries the two men along with her, after an interlude where both attempt to assert their independence - Li Mao by attempting suicide and Xianggao
by leaving. Chuntao rescues Li Mao and Xianggao returns home, unable to live without her.

Chuntao's depression at Xianggao's departure is dealt with delicately. Her vulnerability is revealed only in the unusual inefficiency with which she does her work. She too is dependent. She needs Xianggao's love just as he needs her. When he returns it is because he has nowhere to go and feels bound to her. They are tied together in mutual bonds of affection and cannot be separated. Somehow the three of them reach a compromise and their artificial family is established, with Chuntao at the centre and Li Mao the permanent dependent child. The men once again decide her fate - in the city Xianggao is to be head of the household and if they return to the country Li Mao takes over. Chuntao is their wife. But Chuntao has the last word. In the final scene, set in their small garden where the story began, so that they have completed their circle transformed and enlarged, we hear her say to Xianggao, "Don't call me "wife", I'm not your wife." 

"Chuntao" is in many ways an extraordinary tale, explicitly feminist without being polemical. Extraordinary because it was written by a Chinese male in the 1930s; because it gives an unflinching picture of an independent woman who can cope with life and supports herself and others with confidence; and because while the feelings of the two men are acknowledged with understanding and sympathy, it is Chuntao's
will that wins out. The final triumph of the story comes in the revelation that they are all in some ways dependent on each other and that this is no cause for shame. Li Mao is crippled and cannot be a traditional provider, but he becomes an important part of their small business. To have abandoned him would have undermined Chuntao's selfhood - her conscience would not have allowed her to reject him. His reappearance ties up the loose ends created by their enforced separation. He is dependent but he is also useful. Xianggao is also dependent on Chuntao, both emotionally and economically, and his return is an acknowledgement of that dependence and an implicit acceptance of it. Chuntao is the provider, the centre of their lives. She is her own person, but at the same time she needs the warmth of Xianggao's companionship. Her independence is not undermined by her feelings for Xianggao but emphasized, for Xu Dishan placed great importance on self-reliance within a supportive framework, whether it be a family, companions or a system of belief. A spider cannot survive without a web.

Mao Dun wrote of Chuntao that she was unlike Xu's other heroines in that she determined her own life. "The Chuntao of the past, adrift in the turmoil of war, becomes a new Chuntao, with the strength to choose her own fate." He goes on to hope that Xu would one day create an "Autumn Chrysanthemum" who would be even stronger than his "Spring Peach." Xu's "Autumn Chrysanthemum" came into being as Yuguang, but
this achievement went without acknowledgement from Mao Dun for, while Yuguan also made her own fate, her strength comes in part from her adoption of Christianity, an alien and discredited religion.

After "Chuntao" Xu's remaining works, with the exception of "The Iron Fish with Gills",59 all have very positive images of women. In two plays, The Woman Patriot (Nu Guo Shi) and The Assassin (Xiong Shou), written in 1939 and 1940 respectively, he presents examples of strong, resourceful women in historical settings. In The Woman Patriot, written for female students at Hong Kong University,60 the wife of the hero Xue Rengui urges him to leave his mother and herself and abandon his mourning for his father to fight the invaders of his country. An explicitly patriotic play aimed at arousing nationalistic sentiments, it is unusual in that Xu reworked an old story of a Chinese hero to stress the woman's role.61 The Song dynasty heroine of The Assassin is a loyal wife disturbed by her husband's friendship with two unsavoury characters and his subsequent alienation from his younger brother. In a resourceful and rather bizarre way,62 she manages to expose the veniality of her husband's friends and prove his brother's worth. In a postscript Xu describes her as a model Chinese wife and hopes that others follow her example to make life sweeter for all.63
In a nice twist on the traditional fairy-tale it is the princess who rescues the prince from his dark, watery prison and not the other way around in "The Firefly Lantern." Tao Jinniang, the heroine of the fairy-tale of the same name, is both a Persephone and a Demeter figure, the lonely, eccentric child wandering alone and the beloved earth-goddess. She is a Cinderella who becomes a Queen, with no help from a prince. She is set in opposition to a stereotyped dark image of woman. Tao Jinniang is gold, her enemy, Yingu, is silver. Where Tao Jinniang is honest, industrious and pure, Yingu is frivolous, consumed with jealousy, vicious, lazy and pleasure-loving. Yingu is obliterated by a supernatural agency after committing a heinous crime. Tao Jinniang lives on, beloved of her people, teaching them the skills of husbandry and weaving until the time comes for her to leave them. She is the epitome of a golden pastoral dream and Yingu is her dark shadow.

In Yuguan the shadow and the light struggle for dominance and her story is of how she overcomes her dark side and absorbs it into herself so that she becomes whole and at peace. Robinson makes a strong case for the idea that Yuguan's story parallels or reflects Xu's own inner life. Xu "endowed his heroine with his own soul in a rare display of self-illuminating honesty." To impute autobiographical motivations to a piece of fiction is to invite pitfalls, particularly when the work in question can stand very well in its own
right, 67 but this is not the first time Xu used his fiction and, more particularly, his women characters, to express his philosophy of life. Shangjie, Xiguan, Minming, Chuntao and Tao Jinniang are all the mouthpieces or the actors of his beliefs and ideals. Behind each one of them stands their creator, telling them what to say. In a discussion on the problem of the author's voice in fiction, Wayne Booth concludes that, "though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear." 68

The question remains then: why did Xu choose his particular disguises? What is the reason for his preoccupation with Chinese women and why should they rather than any male character become the embodiment of his life philosophy? The convention of adopting a literary female persona is an ancient one in Chinese poetry, but very rare in Chinese fiction. The poetic convention is too old and strong to allow for any genuine element of autobiographical feeling to emerge and images of women are usually idealized and unrealistic. 69 The male poet tended to present an established literary type created within certain conventionalized limits. During the Southern Dynasties period (5th-6th centuries A.D.) a tradition of courtly love poetry grew up in which all women, regardless of rank, were described in erotic, courtly terms where appearance and decoration outweighed character. Women are depicted a totally dependent upon the male's love, without it they are lost and fall into melancholy. Their world is claustrophobic,
isolated and male-centred. The lover "is seen to confer
love and life upon a woman." Love is a malaise, fleeting
and doomed because beauty is transient and men are filled
with wanderlust. The imagined world is an extreme wish-fulfilment
dream where beautiful submissive captives sigh longingly
and hopelessly for the glorious, sun-like, life-giving male.

"Women", wrote Virginia Woolf, "have burned like beacons
in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time," but, while "some of the most inspired words, some of the
most profound thoughts in literature" have fallen from woman's
lips, "in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely
spell and was the property of her husband." Asking why
it is that so many books by men have been written about women
and commenting on the anger that seems to lie behind these
works, she concludes that "women have served all these
centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious
power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural
size." In her analysis of male writers' images of women
Simone de Beauvoir uses a similar comparison, likening women
to "the mirror in which the male, Narcissus-like, contemplates
himself." De Beauvoir posits a male dominant Subject and
the female Other who is at once foreign and his apotheosis.
"Woman is the Other in whom the subject transcends himself
without being limited, who opposes him without denying him;
she is the Other who lets herself be taken without ceasing
to be the Other, and therein she is so necessary to man's
happiness and to his triumph that it can be said that if she
did not exist, men would have to invent her... They did invent
her."78 For Woolf and de Beauvoir the woman of fiction and
poetry, seen through male eyes becomes Woman, the myth, the
archetype.

The magnifying mirror role of fictionalized Woman is but
one layer of a subtle, challenging and ambiguous game with masks
and mirrors. A male writer's masquerade79 of a female persona
suggests several layers of motivation and meaning. Writers who
adopt a female persona, particularly in the first person, are
engaged in a daring game. The female mask can give a male author
a certain emotional freedom to express ideas or feelings unsuited
to traditional expectations of the male.80 There is a sense
of freedom or exploration which lends excitement. It is
interesting to note that despite the emergence of a new Chinese
literature and the experimentation that accompanied it, there
are very few examples of male authors adopting a first-person
female voice or vice versa.81 Xu Dishan uses the I-narrator
form rarely, and only once in the case of a woman, Xiguan,
who in fact tells her story to the real narrator. The adoption
of a persona apparently outside the author's experience is
not unknown in May Fourth fiction. Lu Xun used the device
of a madman's diary to give expression to opinions that were
subversive and therefore dangerous.82 The madman's persona
acts as a protective mask, shielding the author while providing
a memorable and powerful image of outrage and despair.
While the status of women in China provoked similar emotions, the fictional response was different. Modern Chinese male authors wrote about women and their plight, they rarely if ever attempted to assume the female mask in its most intimate form. They did not play Narcissus, nor did they disguise themselves. They did not feel anger about women but for women and yet while sympathizing with them they did not identify with them too closely. They attempted to imagine themselves in a woman's place, but they did not take the final step and replace them.

Modern Chinese fiction about women, either told in the third-person or with a male I-narrator is plentiful, and much of it played a significant role in educating people about their plight. The tragedies which batter our emotions and enlist our sympathies are primarily those of women rather than men. There seems to be a greater emotional range allowed to fiction about women, for in general the May Fourth fiction concerning women is sadder and more terrible, perhaps because it is one of the first times a large number of thinking men had turned their attention to a subject hitherto ignored or idealized. The newness and the iconoclastic nature of the women's issue must have had a powerful impact on young Chinese writers and the pain they describe seems too fresh, too real, to allow complex fictional disguises to intrude. Thus a story like "The Slave-Mother" reads almost like a documentary, for it was written to expose and vilify an abhorrent
system.

The women in Xu Dishan's fiction are not traditional victims. Vulnerable, certainly, to outside forces beyond their control but not weak or without hope. Their stories vary, their characters and circumstances are different, but they all represent facets of an identical ideal: to be true to oneself and follow the guidance of conscience. Some succeed, others fail, but always the thread stressing the imperative of self-knowledge and the journey towards the goal of identity runs through Xu's work. His women are responsible firstly for their own conduct and then for that of others. Their solutions to dilemmas are personal and individual, just as Xu Dishan's response to events and outside pressures was always shaped by an uncompromising, yet humble, belief in the rightness of his actions. It goes without saying that he had doubts, and they are manifested most clearly in his charting of Yuguan's journey towards self-knowledge.

It is difficult to know why he should choose women rather than men to give expression to his beliefs. One reason might be the same sense of freedom, a liberation from constraint, that also comes from using the romance mode, something that Henry James, who also used female personas, described as, "experience liberated..., experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered." To talk through another's voice, another persona, suggests detachment, the curious paradox of an involved bystander, a participating spectator. In this way experience
of an intensely personal nature can be filtered, distilled and transformed so that it becomes less individual and more general. This is the writer's task and for Xu Dishan the necessary distance came from women.

A more speculative suggestion centres on the question of identity. Xu Dishan was a feminist by inclination. He held women in high regard and identified closely with their interests. The women who emerge from his fiction are often strong and confident, revealing a calm decision and sense of their own wholeness in great contrast to their flawed, weakened brothers. It is possible that they represent an ideal to be attained, a quality that is different from Xu's vision of himself. Keith May, in a discussion of the role of women in fiction, suggests that the portrayal of women always conveys an "exemplary effect". Thus the medieval knight's idealization of his lady in courtly love poetry was essentially a spiritually "exalted image" to which the male aspired. The paradigm of spiritual perfection and beauty is Dante's Beatrice who can be seen as the symbol of the summit of human potentiality. John Gardner suggests Beatrice was a moral mirror, Dante's "test of authenticity in himself." A similar trend can be found in Xu's fiction whereby the image of woman represents an ideal to which to aspire, a paradigm on whom to model behaviour and a symbol embodying human possibilities.

Jung suggests that each psyche has a male or female
component within it that is different from the individual's sex. The anima, the female part of a male psyche, is considered to rule the creative levels of the mind and manifests itself in archetypal images of woman, the Mother, the Goddess and the Whore. The creative use of the anima helps towards a sense of wholeness, a unity which brings an individual closer to the realization of self-knowledge. A balance can be achieved between male and female elements to create a fulfilled, completed circle of identity.

Perhaps, as Coleridge suggests, the truly creative mind is androgynous. Virginia Woolf wrote, "Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the act of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated." In Xu Dishan's fiction we see that consummation, that working towards a marriage of opposites.
Conclusion: The Consoling Plot

"Conflicts or rivalries and their resolution, pride and its fate, estrangement and reconciliation, revenge and forgiveness, quests and searches rewarded or unrewarded, abidingness versus change, love and its proof - these are among the constants, the themes of the story."  

The mind,, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas,
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Andrew Marvell, The Garden

"The main tradition of criticism," writes Susan Sontag, "...treats the work of art as a statement being made in the form of a work of art." Sontag opposes this utilitarian approach to art, arguing instead that art should not advocate anything, nor make moral judgements, but must stand aloof, sublimely neutral, offering the sole moral pleasure of "the intelligent gratification of the consciousness". Tolstoy, an important influence on the May 4th generation, believed otherwise: "The task for art to accomplish is to make [the] feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbour...the customary feeling and the instinct of all men." He goes on to hope that the fictional expression of these feelings will in turn persuade people to adopt them in real life. Xu Dishan, writing on creativity and criticism in 1921, stressed that morality is inseparable from life which in its turn
is one of the three "treasures" of literature, the other two being wisdom and beauty.\(^6\) Even if a writer were to describe immorality, it must be done in such a way that a reader will be prompted to examine his own soul. A work of literature that can make an individual aware of his own failures is, for Xu, beautiful.\(^7\)

The issue of morality's role in fiction is a complex one, raising as it does fundamental questions on the nature of art and whether or not it should have any function.\(^8\) This debate occupied the writers of the May Fourth generation, splitting them into two ostensibly opposing camps: those who advocated "Art for Art's Sake", and those who believed in "Art for Life's Sake". In reality, the strong tradition of "pragmatic" Chinese literary theory\(^9\) and the powerful contemporary emphasis on the role of literature as a weapon in the struggle against the past often undermined purely aesthetic considerations.

In his discussion of the 19th Century Romantic debate on the use of poetry\(^10\), M.H. Abrams defines the Art for Life's Sake tendency as extrinsic, with moral and social implications which extend art beyond itself.\(^11\) Shelley, "who wanted intensely to unite the functions of poet and reformer",\(^12\) believed that, "A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and many others; the pains and the pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral
good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause."13 Art should be sensitizing rather than instructive - "whatever strengthens and purifies the affections, enlarges the imagination, and adds spirit to sense, is useful."14

The same efficacious role for art is stressed by Xu Dishan in his 1933 preface to his collection of stories, The Liberator. He argues that he is not writing about sociology, morality or philosophy but of his own experiences and views, in the hope that he will touch a sympathetic heart who understands what he has to say. While conceding the transient nature of art, he nonetheless wishes to be of use to his readers, to offer those in darkness a light, to provide medicine for those sick at heart and to relieve the suffering of those in depressed spirits.15 Like Keats he believed art should have extrinsic value, for "a poet is a sage; /A humanist, physician to all men."16

To maintain a balance between moral efficacy and the imperative of quality is not easy17 for, as Frye suggests, literature must avoid overt didactism while maintaining seriousness, but its full integrity can only emerge from a subtle mingling of the two.18 Xu Dishan's work is imbued through and through with his moral vision, an informing idea that structures his work and gives him his themes. His work represents his steadfast quest to give expression to his values and is first and foremost a fiction of ideas. Since he chose
the vehicle of fiction to express his ideas, it is as a writer that he must be judged. Just as the "signature on an archetype" must be unique to give an oft-used theme new resonance, so must moral fiction be more than the re-telling of old tales.

Xu's dominant journey-theme gives structure to both his stories and the system of values he upheld. The quest for values was both fictional and personal, representing an organizational principle that defined his life and his fiction. "It is not the subject a man writes: it is himself." The enclosed world his characters inhabit, made small by coincidence and the sense of being outside historical time, limits the possibility of distraction from the testing of the central moral themes. His stories focus inwards rather than expanding outwards to encompass society at large, but at the same time his use of an archetypal theme and virtually paradigmatic characters, coupled with his stress on common values, imbues his work with an outward-reaching resonance which gives it universal significance.

As a writer who concentrated on ideas, on the distillation of a moral universe into fiction, his structures, modes and characters are all dictated by his themes. His brief early vignettes reveal how well he was able to reduce all to a single "green thought" and his choice of the short story as the major vehicle of his ideas, while partly influenced by prevailing literary fashion, is an acknowledgement of that genre's quintessential role of intensification.
Xu did not try to present a perfect world, nor is the affirmation of life so often to be found in his work always clear-cut. Rather, he wrote of possibilities, of the potentiality of the human spirit. The quest theme suggests a journey towards perfection, "the romance concentrates on ideal possibilities"\(^{21}\) and his characters are "ascending symbols"\(^{22}\) moving towards self-knowledge.

Individually, his characters are often flawed or sketched so lightly that their story dominates them,\(^{23}\) but still they represent vital models of human potentiality. Some offer negative images, others positive, but the progress of women like Xiguan, Chuntao and particularly Yuguan represents a paradigmatic journey, for it is an embodiment of hope, an optimistic vision of life as it could be. Their stories are expressions of ideals to be attained, but their resolutions are by no means straight-forward nor completely idyllic. Xu had "his feet on the ground"\(^{24}\) and did not attempt to describe perfection but to suggest the possibility of attaining it, to point people in the right direction and to give them hope.

Xu's writing has been likened to a gentle stream with the cool fresh clarity of spring water yet having an unfathomable profundity.\(^{25}\) He writes simply and calmly, evincing few strong emotions save a stubborn commitment to personal integrity and unselfish goodness, and revealing a serene, dream-like detachment typical to the romance genre.\(^{26}\) Xiguan's cool
objective telling of her own troubled tale, with no interference of sentiment or personal involvement, represents a reflection of Xu's style in miniature. He set up a controlling distance to free his stories from sentimental attachment and allowed the themes to stand alone and untrammeled. Since, however, the values endorsed in his work are those to which he was deeply committed, a singular personality emerges from his corpus which gives it coherence and distinction. Xu's detached style gives balance to his commitment while his stubborn individuality makes that detachment more personal.

There is a deceptive straight-forwardness to Xu's work and the paradox of an unfathomable clear stream offers an effective description of its profoundly simple depths. While the quality of his fiction is uneven, not always attaining the sustained power of "Yuguan", his work as a whole remains memorable because it provides an arena for deeply important spiritual questions to be treated with great insight and an illuminating simplicity.

Shining through all his work is the humble integrity of the man who likened himself to the lowly peanut and believed in the potential for simple goodness in all. A moral vision informs his fiction, giving it significance, depth and a focusing centre. He is a writer who requires re-reading for the slowly ripening pleasure of discovering beneath the simple exterior subtle layers that emerge to create an allusive whole - the varied, individual, universal quest for values.
Writing at a time when a whole generation of intellectuals was questioning values, re-assessing or rejecting the tradition and laying stress on the primacy of the individual, Xu Dishan stands out like "a lone tree", unique and idiosyncratic. Concerned with spiritual values in an era when all allegiances were held up for vigorous and irreverent examination, he attempted to create or maintain a system of belief to give a sense of order to an unsettled, rapidly changing world. A deeply religious man when all around him were sceptics or hostile to established religion, he promoted in his fiction a strongly defined moral universe in which his characters held on to their own "religion" their own set of beliefs. As the values and systems of the old society crumbled around him and a new, vastly different world began to take shape, he presented a vision of a closed, safe universe untouched by social disintegration in which his characters tread familiar yet unique paths towards self-knowledge and a sense of affirmation. His is a consoling fiction, offering comfort and a sense of hope in a framework of uncompromising integrity. His signature is unique.
Appendix I

Xu Dishan: A Brief Biography

"He brought sincerity to the making and maintainance of the friendships he deemed worthy of cultivating. He brought sincerity to the analysis and management of all problems surrounding him. He brought sincerity to the exploration and pondering of all aspects of the scholarship in which he specialized. Sincerity was Mr. Xu's greatest characteristic."²

Childhood and Youth (1894-1917)³

Xu Dishan was born on either the 3rd or 4th of February 1894 in Tainan, Taiwan. His given name was Zankun and his milk name Shuchou. He was the fourth son of Xu Nanying (Jinshi, 1890), a poet, scholar and patriot who was then 39.⁴ Xu's mother's surname was Wu. In August 1894 The Sino-Japanese War broke out and the Japanese occupied Taiwan. Xu Nanying became head of a local organization resisting the Japanese under Liu Yongfu's Black Flag Army.⁵ Hampered by bad supply lines and Qing incompetence, the Chinese resistance met with defeat and the Xu family had to flee Taiwan. One of Xu's earliest memories is of being carried through streets crowded with fleeing refugees.⁶ The Xu family had to abandon most of their possessions in their flight. They returned to the mainland to settle in Longxi (Zhangzhou) in Fujian province, from which the Xu ancestors had moved to Taiwan during the Ming dynasty.
Xu Nanying lived in Singapore and Bangkok for two years before returning to become an official in Guangzhou in 1897 under the Qing. In 1896 Xu had started lessons under the family tutor Wu Xiantang and studied with him until Wu died in 1903 and was replaced by Ni Yusheng. Xu had a variety of tutors and schooling which might go some way towards explaining the broad and flexible range of his knowledge. Xu once wrote that two of his tutors had been disciples of the reformer Kang Youwei, something which might account for the progressive tendencies of the Xu brothers.7

Xu's childhood memories of Guangzhou centre around his habit of hiding in the branches of a tree in the family garden and of once becoming lost on Baiyun mountain and being rescued by a woodcutter.8 These episodes appeared in a different guise in "A Daughter's Heart".

In 1904 the Xu family moved to Yangjiang in Guangdong when Xu Nanying was appointed magistrate there. Xu attended the Zhendao primary school while continuing to study under Ni. His elder brother Zanshu became head of the Xiamen Tongmenhui. In 1906 Ni died and Han Gongsan became the family tutor. Xu began studying the Classics at this time and also attended Suihuan School with his brothers. In 1907 his family moved back to Guangzhou and at some point Xu began studying English with an English missionary doctor whose small daughter became Xu's friend until her untimely death.9 Xu graduated from Suihuan School in 1910. His second eldest brother,
Shuren, joined the revolutionary army and Shuwu (Lungu), the third brother, went to Japan to study art.\textsuperscript{10}

The 1911 revolution brought economic hardship to the Xu family. Xu Nanying resigned his magistracy, but was briefly appointed by the Republic to Longxi county. Xu Dishan began work there at the provincial Second Normal School, earning 60 yuan a month. His duties included teaching handicrafts for he had considerable skill in constructing model aeroplanes etc.\textsuperscript{11} This hobby makes a later fictional appearance in "The Iron Fish With Gills", in which the old inventor Lei builds models of his inventions.

In 1913 Xu went to Rangoon in Burma to teach at a Chinese school. He drew on his experiences there to write his first published story, "The Mingming Bird." He returned to China in December 1915 and taught at a Chinese-English middle school in Fujian. In 1916 he joined the Southern Fujian London Missionary Society. His father left for Sumatra to work on a biography of Zhang Hongnan and died there in 1918, unable to return because of World War One. At some point during this period, perhaps while travelling to or from Burma, Xu is said to have worked briefly as an interpreter in Cantonese and Fujianese in the Chinese communities in South-east Asia for the nascent Nationalist party.\textsuperscript{12}

Xu became engaged to Lin Yuesen, the daughter of another Taiwanese family, in 1915. They married in 1918 and had a daughter, Fanxin, at the end of the year.\textsuperscript{13} In 1917 Xu
received funding from the London Missionary Society to study in the literature department of Yanjing University (then known as Huiwen University).

**Student Days (1917-1922)**

Xu Dishan was considered eccentric by his fellow students when he first began studying at Yanjing. He wore a long gown he had designed himself, had shoulder-length hair and a small goatee beard which prompted others to nickname him "Shakespeare".\(^{14}\) He was also known as "Mr. True" (Xu Zhenren).\(^{15}\) Fellow students noted three eccentricities in Xu - his devotion to studying, particularly Sanskrit, his idiosyncratic appearance and his habit of eating wotou (steamed corn bread deemed only fit for the poor).\(^{16}\) In time these idiosyncracies were outweighed by his smiling geniality, warm character, generosity and his talent for languages.\(^{17}\)

When the May Fourth movement began in 1919 Xu was very active, giving speeches, marching and acting as the representative of various schools. He believed in egalitarianism, democratic freedom and humanism. In November 1919 he helped found a journal *Xin Shehui* (New Society), with Qu Qiubai, Zheng Zhenduo (his room-mate and close associate), Qu Shiying and Geng Qizhi, funding for which came from a branch of the Y.M.C.A.\(^{18}\) Its aims were "to disclose the evils of the old society and to establish a democratic new society by peaceful and practical methods."\(^{19}\) *Xin Shehui* was ordered to cease publication
in April 1920 and revived briefly under the name *L'Humanité* until funding was withdrawn and it folded after the second issue.

After graduating from Yanjing Xu went to Fujian to bring his wife and daughter north. En route in Shanghai his wife died, an event which had a profound effect on him. Some outlet for the grief he felt came through the writing he was beginning to do at this time. He returned to Yanjing and entered the School of Religion there, perhaps spurred on by his wife's death. He was one of the twelve founding members of the influential Association for Literary Studies which had its first official meeting on January Fourth, 1921, in Beijing. Shortly after this he began publishing fiction in the Association's important magazine, *Xiaoshuo Yuebao* (*The Short Story*), edited by Mao Dun. The period between 1921 to 1924 was one of Xu's most creative.

Xu graduated from Yanjing in 1922 and began work there as a teaching assistant and at Pingmin University. While at Yanjing he helped Zhou Zuoren and Yu Pingbo modernize the Chinese department of which he had had a very low opinion. Late in 1922, financed by the London Missionary Society, Xu left for Columbia University with Liang Shiqiu, Bing Xin and Xie Bingying. Bing Xin had been a member of a literary society to which Xu had belonged at Yanjing and one observer suggests that they had an affair.
Years Abroad (1922–1926)

Xu studied comparative religion at Columbia and wrote a Master's thesis on "A Study of Certain Chinese Texts Relating To Manichaeism." He told his friend Ye Qifang that he found life at Columbia shallow, and went in the autumn of 1924 to Mansfield College, Oxford. He had the status of a "special student" pursuing his own programme of study, which included religion, Indian philosophy, Sanskrit and anthropology. He did not receive any degree from Oxford. While at Oxford he prepared an English translation of his research on Taoism which was read at a meeting on Religions of the Empire by his professor, R.K Evans, at Imperial College, London.

Xu once remarked that he had the reputation of being a bookworm at Oxford and that, if allowed to do so, he would have been willing to stay at Oxford as a bookworm all his life. Apart from his studies, he also researched Sino-English relations during the Opium War and memorized portions of Dunhuang manuscripts at the Bodleian for Zheng Zhenduo who later incorporated them into his study of folk literature. Xu became the friend and mentor of Lao She, then living in London, and recommended Lao She's novel Old Zhang's Philosophy (Lao Zhang de Zhexue) to Zheng Zhenduo for publication in Xiaoshuo Yuebao. It would be interesting to know how much Xu shared in Lao She's lack of enthusiasm for English landladies and customs.
In 1925 Xu's first short story collection, *Zhui Wang Lao Zhu, (The Toiling Spider)*, was published. In October 1926 Xu left England and returned to China, stopping en route to study Sanskrit and Buddhism in India.

**Beijing (1927-1935)**

Xu returned to teach at Yanjing. He was researching Buddhism at this time and preparing his *History of Taoism* for publication. He worked as an assistant professor in the School of Religion while concurrently teaching Indian philosophy at Beijing University and anthropology at Qinghua. In 1928 he went on a field trip to Shanghai to research the Danjia people with other professors and students from Yanjing. He also translated twenty-one Bengali folktales for Commercial Press.

In 1928 he met Zhou Sisong, his future wife. She graduated from the National Beijing Normal University in 1928 from the mathematics department and taught briefly in Hubei. On May First 1929 they married and she began teaching at an upper middle school in Beijing. In 1930 Xu was promoted to professor at Yanjing, earning 360 yuan a month. He taught history at the Normal University and put most of his efforts into research work. He planned a history of Chinese costume and collected photos and pictures for it. In 1931 his son Zhou Lingsong was born and given his maternal grandfather's surname. Xu was on good terms with his father-in-law and
they spent their leisure hours exploring temples.\textsuperscript{32}

In 1933 Xu spent a sabbatical year at Zhongshan University in Guangdong. During this time he spent ten days with his wife in Taiwan visiting relatives and friends and distributing his collection of his father's poems, which were confiscated by the Japanese.\textsuperscript{33} Xu was part of a pressure group attempting to free Qu Qiubai from a prison in Fujian, but the attempt failed. At the end of the year he went to India where he visited Tagore, some of whose poetry he had earlier translated. He continued his studies in Indian philosophy and Sanskrit there. He also went to visit his father's grave in Sumatra. His daughter Yanji was born this year.

**Hong Kong** (1935–1941)

In 1935 Xu was dismissed from Yanjing because of a difference of opinion with John Leighton Stuart, the head of the University.\textsuperscript{34} Xu was persuaded by Hu Shi to accept the post of dean of the Chinese Literature department at Hong Kong University, becoming the second Chinese to hold such a prestigious academic post there.\textsuperscript{35} The Chinese department was very traditional at this time and Hong Kong was considered a cultural back-water, but in the seven years Xu spent there he completely re-vamped the department and Hong Kong became a vital centre of cultural activity as people fled the Japanese. Xu's dedication to modernizing the Chinese department and his passionate advocacy of the necessity for reform in the Chinese writing system
reveal how much he still held to the beliefs he espoused in the May Fourth movement.

Xu was extremely active throughout his time in Hong Kong. Apart from teaching and administrative work he was also involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and personal research work, which included the compilation of a Sanskrit dictionary. He was an active member of numerous committees, particularly those concerned with anti-war efforts, and was a leading figure in cultural circles, being friendly with luminaries such as Mao Dun, Mei Lanfang, Xu Beihong and Hu Yuezhi. In his spare time he read Japanese, French, German and Latin, adding to an impressive store of languages which included Greek, Arabic, Burmese and of course English.

The incredible energy Xu displayed at this time makes one wonder if he had intimations of mortality, particularly in the last two years of his life. His wife writes that he strode out of his study at this time to become active in patriotic organizations. He sent a telegram in 1941 to Chiang Kai-shek urging unity with the C.C.P. and resistance against the Japanese. Some observers believe this was the beginning of Xu's inclination to the left, but since he died later that year it is impossible to speculate on his putative future affiliations.

It is perhaps unsurprising, given the degree to which he was driving himself in the last two years of his life, that Xu Dishan should die so suddenly of a heart-attack on
August Fourth 1941 at the premature age of 49. Over a thousand people attended his funeral service. Song Qingling sent a wreath. Memorial services were held in Southeast Asia as well as Hong Kong. The volume of obituaries is impressive testament to Xu's popularity and the deep affection and respect with which he was regarded.36
Appendix II

Glossary

Ahuya
Ai Jiushi Xingfa
Ai Liu Xi Zhang
Anni
Bangxiu
Baoying
Biehua
Changsun Kewang
Chen Lian
Chang Huan
Chuangzao di San Bao
he Jianchang di Si Yi
Chuanqi
Chun di Linye
Chuntao
Da Zhong Ji
Dan
Daojiao Shi
Dongye Xiansheng
Du "Zhilan yu Moli" Yin'er
Xiangji Wodi Zumu
Fa Yan
Fanxin
Fu Ji Mixin di Yanjiu
Gu Yang Sheng Hua
关怀
归途
鬼赞
国粹与国学
诲
海角的孤星
和鹭
哈那
挽巢鹭风
黄昏后
加多冷伊罗
加陵
解放者
街头巷尾之伦理
空山灵雨
雷
李茂
林月森
麟趾
刘向高
落花生
美底牢狱
孟景休
命命鸟
敏明
你为什么不来
Xiguan
Xin Shehui
Xingguan
Xiong Shou
Xu Dishan
Xu Nanying
Xue Rengui
Yang Gang
Yanji
Yigu
Ying Deng
Yingu
You
Yuan
Yu Furen
Yuguang
Yungu
Zai Fei Zongli di Ketingli
Zai Hui
Zankun
Zhineng
Zhou Lingzhong
Zhou Sisong
Zhui Wang Lao Zhu
Zufeng

惜官
新社会
否官
凶手
许地山
许南英
薛仁贵
杨刚
燕吉
宜姑
萤灯
银姑
鸳
愚傅人
玉宫
云姑
在李总理府客厅里
再会
赞美
志能
周芩仲
周俊松
缀网劳蛛
祖凤
Footnotes to introduction

See Appendix I for a brief biography of Xu Dishan


5. Furth, in Schwartz, p.59, argues that the ideas expressed during the May Fourth Movement "had been pioneered before", particularly from 1898-1912.

6. Chow, p.13, says of the May Fourth Movement that it was "...the first time Chinese intellectuals recognized the need for a complete transformation of traditional Chinese civilization."


ities Yen Fu found between the philosophy of Herbert Spencer and Taoism, pp.50-52.


26. Ibid, p.29. "The intelligentsia believed in the necessary priority of cultural and intellectual change over social, political and economic changes and not vice versa."
27. Ibid, p.27.
28. Ibid, p.56.
29. Ibid, p.43. "May Fourth iconoclastic intellectuals were not really modernized or modernized enough."
32. Chow, p.358.
33. Ibid, p.270.
34. Goldman, in Goldman, ed., p.5.
35. Lee, in Schwartz, p.69.
36. Perry Link, "Traditional-style Popular Urban Fiction", pp. 325-349, in Goldman, p.346, says, "...the landmark contribution of May Fourth leaders such as Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu was not to create vernacular fiction but to venture the audacious opinion that the elite should stoop to it."
37. Chow, p.278
38. Ibid, p.279.
41. Link, in Goldman, p.337.
42. Chow, p.283; Lee, p.11.
43. Lee, p.11.
44. Ibid, p.12.
45. Chow, p.284.
46. Ibid, p.284.
47. Lee, p.20.


56. Pickowicz, p.117.

57. Lee, p.263.


60. Ibid, pp.292-293.


64. Vogel, in Goldman, p.156.


forth a number of rebellious youths who pitted their egos against society, and when they found their individual strength too puny for the contest, they extolled one class of society -- the mythified proletariat, with whose interests they identified their own."

70. Chow, p.365.


72. Ibid, p.152.

73. Goldman, in Goldman, ed., p.11.


76. Birch, in Goldman, p.390.

77. Michael Egan, "Yu Dafu and the Transition to Modern Literature", pp.309-324 in, Goldman, p.315, suggests that it is an intentional fallacy to consider Yu's work "Sinking" to be subjective and autobiographical and that Yu's work has been misinterpreted because of this (p.311.) "Yu has suffered a case of mistaken identity. The real author, Yu Dafu the person, has been confused with the implied author, or narrative persona, of the work." p.312. Egan considers that Yu was in fact employing an ironical mode which made the story "truly modern", p.315.


80. Ibid, p.92, p.96.

81. Ibid, p.96.


84. Mao Dun, p.142.

85. Remarks made at a colloquium on modern Chinese literature at the University of British Columbia, Spring, 1983.

86. Mao Dun, p.135.

87. The massacre of Manchus in Guangzhou after the 1911 revolution sets off the sequence of events in Xu's story, "A Daughter's Heart", but, as in his other stories, this seems to have been used primarily as a device to initiate the story rather than having any significance in its own right.


89. "Hai" ("Sea"), one of his brief vignettes from Kong Shan Ling Yu, (Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1935) pp.32-33.

90. "The Toiling Spider", ("Zhui Wang Lao Zhu") first published
in *Xiaoshuo Yuebao*, vol.13, no.2, (1922); reprinted in *Xu Dishan*, (Hong Kong, Joint Publishing Co., 1982.) pp.117-135, see p.129.


94. Ibid, pp.11-12.


97. Ibid, p.142.


102. Pan Weicheng et al, p.11.


105. Yang Gang; Zhou Sisong p.225. In strong contrast to
the tone of Yang Gang's 1952 preface, her obituary of Xu is emotional, very personal and full of praise for his generosity, enormous energy and conscientiousness. Yang Gang, "Zhuinian Xu Dishan Xiansheng", in, Quan Gang Wenhuajie Zhuidao Xu Dishan Xiansheng Da Hui Choubei hui, eds; Zhuidao Xu Dishan Xiansheng Jinian Tekan, (Hong Kong, Guoji Shangye Yinwugong, 1941) pp.28-30.

106. Pan Weicheng et al, p.11.
Footnotes to Chapter Two


2. Lu Xun, quoted by Lin, Crisis, p.156, n.2.


4. See, Lin, Crisis, and Chapter One of this thesis for an analysis of this crisis' impact on the May Fourth generation.


7. Lin, Crisis. See in particular Chapter III, pp. 26-55 and p.155. "...the cultural-intellectualistic approach of the first and second generation of the Chinese intelligentsia was decisively molded by a deep-seated, traditional Chinese predisposition, a monistic and intellectualistic mode of thinking. When the cultural-intellectualistic approach, with its monistic character, was pushed to its extreme by the pressure of sociopolitical realities
in China after 1911, it evolved into an intellectualistic-holistic mode of thinking, by which the May Fourth iconoclasts perceived the Chinese tradition as an organismic totality to be rejected in toto."(p.55).

8. C.T. Hsia, History, p.84.


12. See, Quan Gang ... eds; Zhuidao Xu Dishan Xiansheng, passim, and Vols.1 and 2 of Xu Dishan Ziliaoji.


15. See, for example, T.S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth", in, John W. Aldridge; ed., Critiques and Essays on Modern


22. Francis Fergusson, "Myth and the Literary Scruple", in, Vickery, ed., pp.139-147; p.139.

23. For a useful, simple summary see, K.K. Ruthven, Myth, (U.K., Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1976). Also, Vickery, ed; Murray, ed; and Joseph P. Strelka, ed., Literary Criticism


See also, Lillian Feder, "Myth, Poetry and Critical Theory", in Strelka, ed., pp.51-71. While acknowledging the justification of certain criticism, I was drawn into using Frye as a basis for this chapter because so much of what he has to say about romance fits Xu Dishan's work so well. I do not presume to argue the validity of his critical system as a whole but have found considerable inspiration in all that he writes and believe his work on romance to be a crucial starting point for my understanding of Xu Dishan.

27. Lin, Crisis. Subtitle.


32. Ibid, p.373.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. See Rahv and Barthes in particular.


38. Campbell, Hero, p.257. Mythological figures are "controlled and intended statements of certain spiritual principles which have remained as constant throughout the course of human history as the form and nervous structure of the human physique itself."


43. Lewis Robinson, *ibid*, p. 150, 151. "I fully believe that Hsu's intriguing psychological treatment of Yu-kuan culminating in her final "spiritual awakening" (or, more aptly, self-confrontation) is a reflection of the evolution of the author's own "inner-life", from the time he adopted Christianity as a youth to the time of his death."


48. Xu Dishan, "Who Is She?", ("Ren Fei Ren"), first published in *Wenxue* 2:1 (Jan. 1934); reprinted in *Xu Dishan Xuanji*, (Beijing, Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1958) (*Xia*) pp. 114-130. It is difficult to give an exact rendering of this title in English, so I have settled for one which approximates to the story's theme without, it is hoped, diverging
too greatly from the title's meaning.

49. Curtis P. Adkins, "The Hero in T'ang Ch'uan-ch'i Tales", in, Winston L.Y. Yang and Curtis P. Adkins, eds. Critical Essays On Chinese Fiction, (Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press, 1980) pp. 17-46. In the introduction Adkins lays stress on apparent merging of universalistic and particular patterns in the use of the quest-myth in Tang fiction. He goes on to point out "that the T'ang ch'uan-ch'i tales, as befits short fiction, emphasized only a portion of the universal pattern, namely, the trials and rewards or middle portion of heroic life, and tend to neglect the earlier and later stages." (p.xii). Similarly, in Xu Dishan's short fiction the same process emerges whereby a truncated or abbreviated version of the quest-theme appears in different forms.

50. Ibid, p.41. It should be noted that critics of Xu Dishan often use terms such as "search" and "quest" to define certain themes in his works. See, for example, Hsia, History pp.87-88; Robinson, p.149, and Douglas McOmber, Hsu Ti-shan and the Search for Identity : Individuals and the Family In the Short Stories of Lo Hua Sheng (1894-1941), Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley (1980), University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, (1983).

51. Xu Dishan, "A Single Star of the Sea", ("Haijiao di Gua Xing"), first published in Xiaoshuo Yuebao 14:11
(Nov. 1923); reprinted in, Xu Dishan, Chun di Linye, (Tainan, Biaozhun Chubanshe, 1970) pp.82-86.


58. C.T. Hsia, History, p.88. "For once the author has the conviction of his romance material: he ignores completely the conventions of the modern short story and unashamedly lards his story with coincidences and mistaken identities of the kind that would look out of place in a piece of realistic fiction".


60. Frye, Scripture, p.6.

61. Ibid, pp.6-7.

63. Ibid, p.41. Geoffrey Hartman, in Krieger, ed., argues that Frye's major contribution to literary criticism is "the recovery of the demon, or the intrinsic role of Romance in human imagination". He is "a topographer of the Romance imagination in its direct and displaced forms". pp.110-111. As the new prophet of Romance Frye has a tendency to underplay realism: "The critical method suggested by realism begins by detaching the literary work being studied from its context in literature. After that, the work may be discussed in relation to its historical, social, biographical and other non-literacy affinities." (Scripture, p.59.)

64. Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature", in Vickery, ed., pp.87-97. "Art deals not with the real but with the conceivable".


66. Ibid.


68. Ibid, p.35.


72. The outline that follows is a composite version of the schema presented by Frye, *Scripture*, and Campbell, *Hero*.

73. Campbell, *Hero*, p.3.


82. Robinson, ibid, p.155, argues that the shadow threatening to engulf Yuguan that night is a result of her suppressed passion for Chen Lian and has strong overtones of the Jungian terminology to describe an individual's repressed side.

pp.51-81, p.66.

84. Ibid, p.68.
86. Ibid, p.165.
87. Ibid, pp.154-158.
90. Frye, Scripture, p.47.
91. Frye, Anatomy, p.86.
92. Campbell, Hero, p.28.
93. Frye, Anatomy, p.170. "Happy endings do not impress us as true, but as desirable, and they are brought about by manipulation."
98. C.T. Hsia, History, p.91.
100. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid, p.54.
106. Ibid, p.122. "In romance the descent theme often has a great deal to do with one's descent in the genealogical sense, where the crucial event is the discovery of the real relation between the chief characters and their parents."
108. The third child, as Linzhi is, is commonly the hero or heroine of fairy-tales and romance. See, Frye, *Anatomy* p.187. "A threefold structure is repeated in many features of romance - in the frequency, for instance, with which the successful hero is a third son, or the third to undertake the quest, or successful on his third attempt."
109. Perhaps similar to Jung's archetypal wise old man.
112. Ibid, p.201.
114. Ibid.


117. See, Wilde, *Complete Works*.

118. Ibid.


120. Ibid, p.78.

121. Frye, *Scripture*, p.46.


123. Ibid, pp.980, 982.


125. Ibid.

126. Ibid.


129. This is reminiscent of a story by Langxian entitled "Master Wu" in which "a young man of gargantuan appetite
falls in love with an official's daughter on a boat at the next mooring. While the two are in bed asleep in her cabin, the weather changes and her father orders the boat to sail. By the time the pair wake, the boat is well along the Grand Canal. The girl is forced to hide her lover under the bed and make bizarre excuses to her parents for taking vast quantities of food back to her cabin." Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1981) pp.131-132.

130. See C.T. Hsia's introduction to, Lau, Hsia and Lee, p.xxvii. One story in similar vein to "Tao Jinniang" is Shen's Miao tale "Longzhu".

131. See in particular Zhou Sisong and Bian Yiji's article, p.236.

132. "The Merchant's Wife", p.108. "Of all the books I read at school, Pilgrim's Progress and Robinson Crusoe moved me the most, giving me much comfort and exemplary guidance." Yuguan sets off on her final quest with a copy of The Bible in the vernacular, Pilgrim's Progress and The Yi Jing, which she could not understand. ("Yuguan", p.114.)


136. Robinson, "'Yü-kuan'", pp.147, 150-1.


138. Chen Jinbo, *Xu Dishan yu Xianggang zhi Guanxi*, (Hong Kong, Yongtai Yinwu Dingzhuang Gongsi, 1976) cites a letter written to Mr. Kenneth P.H. Ho by the Principal of Mansfield College in May 1968. In this the Principal states that Xu arrived in 1924 and held the status of "Special Student". He did not take any public examination there as some have claimed. (See prefatory material in Chen's book).


140. Ibid.


142. See, for example, C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1936)

146. Ibid.
Footnotes to Chapter III


6. Xu Dishan, "The Eyes of the Law", (*Fa Yan*), first published in *Jiefangzhe*, pp.39-54. This story is rarely anthologized. Despite its peasant protagonist, it has not been published in the P.R.C., possibly because of negative comments made equally about the Communists and the Nationalists.

7. Xu Dishan, "Mr. Dongye". See above.

8. Xu Dishan, "A Daughter's Heart". See above.

9. Xu Dishan, "Yuguan". See above.

11. Jung, *Synchronicity*, p.12. The objective is causal, while the subjective "exists only in relation to the individual who experiences it." (Citing Schopenhauer).

12. Schopenhauer, quoted by Jung, ibid, p.12.


14. Koestler, ibid, describes it as Jung's "theory of non-synchronous synchronicity" and says that "Jung kept lapsing into spurious causal explanations to make the a-causal principle work." (p.99). Despite Koestler's critical remarks and Jung's own tendency to use long-winded and often unclear language, the hypothesis of psychic causes for coincidences remains a fascinating one.

15. Jung, *Synchronicity*, p.21. Jung gives examples of extraordinary coincidences, including the bizarre tale of M. de Fortigibu and the plum-pudding, (p.15 n.26), the appearance of a scarab-like beetle during an analysis session which helped break down his patient's Cartesian rationality (pp.22ff, 109ff.) and his own experience of the multiple appearance of the fish motif (p.10).


17. Jung, ibid, p.25. Xu Dishan had an interest in psychic phenomena which he explored at great length in his study
of planchette writing, *Fu Ji Mixin di Yanjiu*, (Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1946). While maintaining an open mind (p.84), he could not accept that spirits were the moving cause behind the phenomena of spirit-writing and believed instead that psychic power, telepathy and the power of suggestion were the primary factors, see pp.89 passim.

19. Ibid., pp.102-3.
21. Ibid., p.108.
22. Ibid., pp.110-111.
23. Ibid., p.122.
24. Ibid.
26. Jung, *Synchronicity*, p.36, n.59. Jung says he first used the term "synchronicity" in his memorial address for Richard Wilhelm (May 10, 1930), and related it specifically to the *Yi Jing*.
28. Ibid., p.23
29. Ibid., p.22.
30. Ibid., p.34.
31. Luo Huasheng (Xu Dishan) "The Sea", ("Hai") in, *Kong
Shan Ling Yu, pp. 32-33.
32. Ibid.
35. Frye, Scripture, p.47.
36. Walcutt, Man's Changing Mask, pp.169,162.
37. Ibid., p.173.
38. Ibid.
39. "The Eyes of the Law". ("Fa Yan"). He dies in prison just before his wife, who has discovered his whereabouts and the reason for his imprisonment, is able to see him.
41. Yuguan feels the rich and spoiled Anni would not take kindly to discovering the elderly Xingguan, whom she considers negligible, to be her mother.
42. C.T. Hsia, History, p.88.
43. Adkins, "T'ang Ch'uan-ch'i Tales", p.41, citing Campbell, Hero, p.51.


46. Ibid., p.52.


48. The passage in which Minming sees two birds like herself and Jialing is reminiscent of lines in Andrew Marvell's poem, *The Garden*:

   My soul into the boughs does glide.
   There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
   Then whets and claps its silver wings,
   And, till prepar'd for longer flight,
   Waves in its plumes the various light.


52. Ibid. I have retained Nienhauser's use of "Honna".

53. In "A Single Star of the Sea", an Indian passenger on the ship on which the narrator is travelling blames women for being the source of all sorrow and suggests that the only cure is to sacrifice them. The narrator disagrees, saying that only Indians could do something like that and, while women were indeed the root of sorrow, men cannot do without them. To bury one's wife is the most sacred of sorrows. (p.85).

54. There is, for example, no dialogue at all in "Yuguan."

55. Shangjie and Changsun are not in fact married, but the local community has always considered them to be.


57. Ibid., p.2-3.

58. Hsia, History, p.87. McOmber translates this rather differently: "All webs are something people have constructed themselves, and whether they are whole or incomplete can only depend on their own nature." (p.177). (See "The Toiling Spider, p.25).


60. That Shangjie is not the total mouthpiece of her creator is obvious from her sentiments about the value of sexual love, on which Xu had very different opinions. (See Chapter Four).


62. Ibid., p.5-6.
63. Ibid., p.3.
64. McOmber, The Search for Identity, p.155.
70. Ibid.
71. McOmber, The Search for Identity, p.193, note 1, identifies the island as Tuba, off the Northwest coast of Malaysia. (Also Known as Dua).
73. C.T. Hsia, History, p.85, entitles this story "The Vain Labors of a Spider", but I would contend that the message of the story is fundamentally optimistic and that the implication of "Vain Labors" is pessimistic, allowing for no possibility of hope.
75. Luo Huasheng, "Ghost-Song" ("Gui Zan"), Kong Shan Ling Yu, pp.48-50; p.50.
76. Ibid.
77. I concur with McOmber's translation. See McOmber, The Search for Identity, p.91 for a discussion of this name.
Ye Qifang, mentions in his obituary of Xu ("Yi Xu Dishan Xiansheng", Quan Gang...eds., pp.34-38) that he had first met Xu at a conference of the World's Student Christian Federation at Qinghua University in April 1922. Xu was representative for Yanjing University. Chow Tse-tung mentions that this conference sparked off a furore, with an ensuing growing anti-religious movement supported by leading leftists including Cai Yuanpei and Wang Jingwei. Zhou Zuoren and others dissented and "some Christians came out to defend their faith." (The May Fourth Movement, p.324). In an attempt to make Christianity more relevant to the Chinese situation, some students "advanced a progressive plea", stating that "the essence of Christianity is the supreme personality of Jesus" and that Christianity is fundamentally socialist, "the gospel of the poor." (Ibid., p.326). These sentiments are very similar to those espoused by Xu, but there is no record of his activity at this time. It is possible that his close association with Zhou Zuoren, with whom he worked at Yanjing, helped influenced that gentleman's dissension.

81. "Chuntao", p.133. In Xu's moral universe the results of one's actions have an impact in this life rather than a future existence.
82. "Mr. Dongye", p.165-167.
83. Both stories present a stark vision of a woman's utter hopelessness, ground down by poverty and despair, but Lu Xun's story has much greater force and haunts the senses far more effectively than "The Road Home."


86. Hsia, History, p.85, considers the Jiefangzhe collection a considerable improvement technically. See also Pan Weicheng et al. pp.7-9.

87. Pan Weicheng et al. p.11.

Footnotes to Chapter IV


4. McOmber, *The Search For Identity*, p. 193, n.3, writes that he cannot trace this story, nor have I been able to find out who Meng Jingxiu might be.

5. Xu Dishan, "After Dusk", ("Huang Hun Hou"), first published in *Xiaoshuo Yuebao* 12:7 (July 1921); reprinted in *Xu Dishan Xuanji* pp.49-64; p.57.

6. Similar autobiographical elements are present in two vignettes in *Kong Shan Ling Yu*: "Farewell" ("Biehua") pp.112-116 and "Love's Tide Overflows" ("Ai Liu Xi Zhang") pp.117-120. In the latter a young widower is unable to hide his grief from his young child, who cannot understand its meaning. Xu's first wife died in 1920, leaving a young daughter, Fanxin.


8. Ibid, p.58.

9. McOmber, *The Search for Identity*, speculates that her name and the objects it conjures up could be "a symbol of the maternal breast" (p.88.) Similarly, her grave
mound, if the traditional shape, could resemble a breast.

10. In "Chuntao", Xianggao nightly gives Chuntao a massage, and there is a gently erotic yet very matter-of-fact air about this event. A potential for sexual tension is fundamentally denied expression because of the nature of Li Mao's injuries, but nonetheless it is made clear that three of them sharing one kang is not ideal. In "Yuguan", Yuguan's sexual feelings are hinted at with great discretion in the description of her first meeting with Chen Lian, but they are complicated by her simultaneous first confrontation with her professed faith.


13. For translations of these stories see the Lau, Hsia and Lee anthology.


15. Ibid.


17. Ibid, p.46.

18. Ibid, pp.61, 62.


22. Croll, Feminism, p.150-1 - the 1927 reaction encompassed
the killings of young women often for no other reason than that they had cut their hair. Mao Zedong laid great stress on women's role in the revolution and there can be no doubt that their support was a useful factor during the war years. The presence of the Women's Federation post-1949 reveals a paradoxical concern for women and an unacknowledged recognition that women are treated as special cases rather than as equals.

23. It should be noted that despite the emergence of certain important women writers, men still dominated the literary scene.

24. He took the step of giving his only son his wife's surname rather than his own because his father-in-law had no sons. He once remarked to a friend that he wished his wife would spend less time looking after their two children and more working for society, because she was wasting her university education. (Zhang Ying, "Xu Xiansheng di Weida de Renge"), Quan Gang...eds., pp.41-43; p.42.


27. Ibid, p.50.

28. See for example, "The Smile",("Xiao") pp.6-7; "Fragrance" ("Xiang") p.10 and "Wish" ("Yuan") pp.11-12.

Is a Punishment", ("Ai Jiushi Xingfa") pp.39-40; "The Mother of a Myriad Things" ("Wanwu Zhi Mu") pp.51-54; "The Prison of Beauty", ("Mei di Laoyu") pp.77-79 and "Meeting Again", ("Zai Hui") pp.85-88. This last is a rather more successful and realistic version of childhood friends re-meeting than the clumsier "Blossoms on a Withered Poplar."


31. "Who Is She?" is an open-ended story full of ambiguities which underline the mysterious nature of the woman who never appears in person. Her voice is heard on the telephone, her admirer catches enigmatic glimpses of her in different roles, she leaves a scented powder compact as the only physical memory of herself and disappears without explaining her many guises.


33. McOmber, The Search for Identity, p.17, gives her the name Caroline Yellow. Both Caroline and Jacqueline only vaguely approximate to "Jiaduolin Yiluo", as she insists on being called.

34. See also, "Letters That Cannot Be Sent Anywhere", ("Wufa Toudi Zhi Youjian") Xu Dishan Xuanji (1958) (Xia) pp.155-158, in which he criticizes a woman for her carefree lifestyle.

35. Director Fei continues his nefarious, corrupt life unabashed. Jacqueline Yellow escapes abroad, her only qualms being the difficulties of returning to China.
if she were to marry a foreigner. Two of the Three Doctors (holders of doctorates) skim through life unconcerned, the third rejects his fashionable girlfriend after playing the academic game she required of him, but she is only temporarily upset.


37. In "Farewell", Xu tells his wife that "girls are just as good" as boys, p.113.

38. This passage (p.73) is rather unusual for Xu, leading me to wonder if its presence was more to pay lip-service to the current trend of exposure literature than anything else.

39. See translation in Lau, Hsia and Lee anthology.

40. Ibid.

41. Zhou Sisong and Bian Yiji comment on the anti-feudal and anti-religious establishment struggle Minming and Jialing undergo in their fight for the freedom to love and say it was a popular story with readers. (Zhou and Bian, p.237).

42. Xu Dishan, "Du 'Zhilan Yu Moli' Yin'er Xiangqi Wodi Zumu" first published in Xiaoshuo Yuebao 15:5 (May 1924); reprinted in Xu Dishan pp. 136-148. See C.T. Hsia (Xia Zhiqing), "Qinqing Yu Aiqing - Mantan Xu Dishan, Gu Yiqiao de Zuopin", in Xin Wenzue de Chuantong, (Taibei,

43. *Kong Shan Ling Yu* pp.112-116.

44. *Kong Shan Ling Yu* "Ailiu Xizhang" pp.117-120.

45. The most noticeable instance of Xu's tendency to interrupt the story-line comes in "The Mingming Bird", where he gives a precise description of an instrument used by Jialing while accompanying Minming as she dances. The scene is one of the few when the lovers are alone and the atmosphere snaps like a broken string when Xu intervenes to cite references on the provenance of the instrument. (See *Xu Dishan Xuanji* p.34). This scholar's habit disappears from his later work.


47. Ibid.

48. "The Toiling Spider", p.7. The language used to describe Shangjie is traditional, with her "jade-white onion" - shaped nose (McOmber p.156), her willow-leaf eyebrows, peachy lips and dishevelled hair. Similarly, the description of an angry Changsun Kewang follows tradition (p.10).


50. Yang Gang, Preface, p.11.


52. Ibid., p.124.
53. The problem of sexual jealousy does not really arise in this story since Li Mao's physical state presumably precludes his assertion of marital rights.


55. Ibid, pp.131-132.

56. Ibid, p.137.

57. Mao Dun, "Lun", p.142.

58. Ibid.

59. There are no major female characters at all in "Iron Fish".

60. The Woman Patriot (Nu Guo Shi), Xu Dishan Xuanji (1958) (Xia) pp.277-292. (January 1939); The Assassin (Xiong Shou), ibid, pp.293-326. (originally in the 100th anniversary edition of Yuzhou Feng magazine (1940).

61. See Xu's postscript to The Woman Patriot p.292.

62. She dresses up a dog's carcase as a human corpse and places it outside her front door to test her husband's friends' loyalty. When they refuse to help dispose of it and report the apparent corpse to the authorities she is able to prove to her husband that they are worthless friends.

63. The Assassin, postscript, p. 326. One hopes not to the letter!

64. Jin of Jinniang is gold, the Yin of Yingu is silver.

65. C.T. Hsia, in Lau, Hsia and Lee, eds., Anthology, suggests rather frustratingly (because he does not cite his source
of information) that Yuguan might be a portrait of Xu's mother, "according to some recent research". (p.40).


67. See, for example, Egan's article on Yu Dafu, p.311.


69. The discussion that follows owes much to Anne Birrell's introduction to her translation of *New Songs From A Jade Terrace* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1982).


71. Ibid. Simone de Beauvoir, writing on male literary attitudes to women, remarks that "woman is defined exclusively in her relation to man". Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated and ed. by H.M. Parshley, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1957) p.143.


73. Ibid, p.75.

74. Ibid, pp.44, 49.

75. Ibid, p.60.


77. Ibid, p.186.

78. Ibid.


80. In an article on a variation of the pioneering tradition of captivity stories, Annette Kolodny describes the introduction of a female voice into a male narrative.
She suggests this voice was able to give expression to the growing acceptance of pioneering women and the new importance placed on static agriculture rather than roving hunting and exploring. The double narrative framework allowed for the introduction of new ideas while maintaining the male dominant status quo through the major narrative. Annette Kolodny, "Turning the Lens on 'The Panther Captivity': A Feminist Exercise in Practical Criticism", in Elizabeth Abel, *Writing and Sexual Difference* (U.K., The Harvester Press, 1982) pp.159-175.

81. In the Lau, Hsia and Lee, eds. Anthology there is only one example - "The Merchant's Wife".

82. Foukkema in Goldman, p.92. In "Mad Talk" ("Xiangqu di Kuangyan") in *Kong Shan Ling Yu* pp.102-105 Xu uses the device of a madman to expose hypocrisy.

83. Henry James, cited by Beer, *The Romance*, p.16 (Preface to *The American* (1877)).


86. Jung, cited by Kort, *Narrative Elements*, p.65, wrote, "The creative process has a feminine quality, and the creative work arises from the unconscious depths - we might say, from the realm of the mothers." By extension it would seem that either women are totally creative beings except for their animus, or unable to create because they do not have an anima. It is hard to accept that either case is true, but the *Yin* within *Yang* concept of the anima and vice versa remains an interesting proposition.


89. Woolf, p.181.
Footnotes to the Conclusion


2. Elizabeth Bowen, "Rx For a Story Worth the Telling", quoted in Trask and Burkhart, eds. *Storytellers*, p.35.


7. Ibid., p.29.


12. Ibid., p.331.
13. Ibid., quoted p.332.

14. Ibid., quoted p.332. Essentially these sentiments are similar to Sontag's belief that Art enlivens sensibility and consciousness, thereby performing a "moral" task. (Sontag, "On Style", p.25).


17. Booth, Rhetoric, p.386, "...to show that an author's intentions are serious and that his subjects are vital or real says very little about his artistic success. To deal with a subject that is in some way important may be a necessary step toward writing well, but it is certainly not sufficient."

"If literature is didactic, it tends to injure its own integrity; if it ceases wholly to be didactic, it tends to injure its own seriousness." (p.14).

19. Ruthven, Myth, citing Fiedler, "the signature on an archetype is much more important than the archetype itself", p.77.

20. Sean O'Faolain, The Short Story, (New York, The Devin-Adair Company, 1951) p.179. "...the short story is an emphatically personal exposition. What one searches for and what one enjoys in a short story is a special distillation
of personality, a unique sensibility which has recognized and selected at once a subject that, above all other subjects, is of value to the writer's temperament and to his alone - his counterpart, his perfect opportunity to project himself." (p.30).


23. Wallcutt, *Man's Changing Masks*, "Journey motifs...tend to dramatize ideas rather than characters because the crises are spots of intellectual fire rather than the choices by which character realizes itself." (p.129).


25. Pan Weicheng et al., p.11, use four characters to sum up Xu's style: Dan (light, simple), Pu (unadorned, plain), You (profound, unfathomable) and Sui (deep, profound). (See glossary).


Footnotes to the biography (Appendix One)

1. The details for this biography come mainly from the chronology provided by Zhou Sisong and Bian Yiji in Xu Dishan, pp.233-44, and pp.245-256. Other sources cited will be listed by footnote.

2. Ye Qifang, Quan Gang, eds., p.34.

3. In Wodi Tongnian, p.15, Xu states that he was born on the Fourth of February, 1894. Other biographers give 1893. McOmber, The Search for Identity, p.184, note 2, believes Xu's calculations were at fault and that he was born on the Third of February 1894.


5. Yu Hui, "Taiwanshengi Zuojia Xu Dishan", in, Xiandai Zhongguo Zuojia Xuanlun, (Hong Kong, Haiyang Wenyishe, 1976) pp.120-135; p.121.


8. Wodi Tongnian, p.43.


10. Zhou and Bian, p.247, note that Xu Shuwwu was still alive at the age of 90 in 1982 and living in Kunming, Yunnan province.

12. Shi, ibid, p.22.
13. Chen Jinbo, (Xu Dishan yu Xianggang zhi Guanxi), pp.50-56, describes a controversy surrounding Fanxin's later fate. Fanxin lived with her uncle Xu Shuwu while Xu Dishan studied abroad. She was injured and scarred by bombing in 1927. She returned to live with her father and later trained as a nurse. In 1938 she left Hong Kong suddenly and without warning to work at the front. This event was publicized by Xu, but was disputed by someone who claimed to have taught Fanxin at the time she was meant to be nursing at the front. The question of what actually happened remains open.
15. Ye Qifang, p.35.
19. Ibid. In "Letters That Cannot Be Sent Anywhere, (Xu Dishan Xuanji (Xia) pp.155-158, Xu expresses his belief that the concept of ends justifying the means is ultimately destructive to the goal of revolution. (pp.156-7).
20. Chen Jinbo, p.4.
21. Zhou and Bian, p.234

24. Ye Qifang, p.35.

25. Chen Jinbo, prefatory material, letter from the Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford.


27. Ibid, p.6.

28. Published as *Da Zhong Ji*, by Shanghai Commercial Press.

29. Chen Jinbo, p.6. Pens and paper were not allowed within Bodleian precincts at that time.


32. Ibid.


34. McOmber, *The Search for Identity*, p.184, suggests Xu "voted with his feet...against leftist pressure tactics." Zhou and Bian, p.253, state that Leighton Stuart expelled progressive professors, including Xu.

35. Lin Guanghao, p.117.

36. Quan Gang...eds., *Zhuidao Xu Dishan Xiansheng*. 
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