THE FICTIONAL IMAGE OF POST-MAO YOUTH: A THEMATIC STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

The present dissertation attempts to examine fictional works written by and about contemporary Chinese youth in the post-Mao era (1976-1984).

Among the several thousand stories that flooded the Chinese literary scene since the death of Mao Zedong and the fall of the "Gang of Four", Zhiqing Fiction, or fiction about urban educated youth, has played an important role in terms of its large quantity, its daring social criticism, and its comprehensive revelation of the physical and spiritual journey of contemporary Chinese urban youth since 1966. Zhiqing Fiction enables us to trace that journey from the Red Guard Movement to the rustication program and life from after returning to their city homes.

In this thesis, a thematic study of Zhiqing Fiction, the existence of a cyclical pattern is demonstrated. An examination of this thematically circular pattern shows how under the influence of socio-political, literary and personal factors, an important part of Chinese literature was transformed from the affirmation of official (revolutionary) values to the negation of them and finally back to a reaffirmation of similar values in a new historical context. It further shows that, despite the relaxation of literary policy, Chinese literature has not yet escaped political influence. A political
exploration of this fact is also seen to be the Chinese writers' inherent desire to influence society through literature.

In this thesis portraits of post-Mao youth are discussed under five thematic categories: the Red Guard Movement, rusticated life, rediscovery of love, re-assertion of the self, and the search for new outlets. Besides supporting the cyclical model, these portraits are seen to also provide a window for understanding the loves and hates, aspirations and frustrations, ideals and disillusionments, and above all, the spirit, of contemporary Chinese youth.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ..................................................1

PART I

Chapter One

Literary Scene: "Cold Winds" and "Warm Breezes"...24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The thaw: Denunciation and Rehabilitation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The demands of writers</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major campaigns and controversies</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Forward-looking&quot; literature&quot;</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Praising Virtue and Lacking Virtue&quot;</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social effects</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Bourgeois Liberalism</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Two

The Path of Youth and the Emergence of Young Writers .................58

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The path of youth</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rustication</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to the city</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions and debates</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rise of young writers</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART II

Chapter Three

The Transformation of Zhiqing Fiction: A Cyclical Pattern .............86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Zhiqing Fiction (1966-1976)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Reemergence of Zhiqing Fiction</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage I: mid-1978 to mid-1980</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage II: mid-1980 to early 1982</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage III: early 1982 to mid-1984</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A cyclical pattern</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Four

"The Fire Spirit": Retrospection and Confession...126

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence and tragedy</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confession and search</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Five
"The Path of Life": Rusticated Life ..........167
  Introduction ......................................167
  The wound .......................................170
  Struggle for personal goals ...................179
  Tragedies ........................................185
  The panorama of rustication ....................198

Chapter Six
"The Right to Love": Rediscovery of Love .......216
  Introduction ......................................216
  Rerecognition of love ............................222
  Struggles against "fedualism"
    and bureaucratism ................................228
  Search for an ideal love ..........................243
  Disillusionment in marriage .....................253

Chapter Seven
"On the Same Horizon": Assertion of the Self .....260
  Introduction ......................................260
  Return of femininity ..............................263
  Affirmation of individuality ......................272
  Self-fulfillment through acquirement
    of education ....................................283
  Search for happiness ................................292

Chapter Eight
"The Southern Bank": Retreat from Authenticity ...298
  Introduction ......................................298
  Nostalgia .........................................302
  Return to the countryside .......................311
  Affirmation of current life ......................335

Conclusion ......................................339

Abbreviations ..................................362
Notes .............................................366
Bibliography ...................................408
Glossary ..........................................435
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INTRODUCTION

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), literature, more than any other forms of art, is used as an important instrument for achieving Party purposes; that is, as a means of motivating people's behavior, mobilizing their support, and molding their thinking. Writers, the so-called "engineers of the soul" are required to create their art according to the changing political criteria set by the Party. Thus, from 1949 to 1953, writers were called upon to propagate the necessity of and to celebrate the ultimate victory of land reform. From 1953 to 1957, they were told to write about industrial reconstruction and the collectivization of agriculture. From 1958 to 1960, they were required to write about the establishment of the Commune system and the utopian spirit of the Great Leap Forward. From the early sixties on, they were required to write only about socialist construction and class struggle. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), when most writers were purged, those few who were active had to eulogize the radical Party line of the time. Except for brief periods of relaxation in literary control in 1956 and in the early sixties, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for almost three decades has tightly controlled what Chinese writers produced.

Since the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976 and the arrest of the Gang of Four in October, along with
most aspects of Chinese society, Chinese literature has undergone drastic changes. The new CCP leadership, under Deng Xiaoping, who suffered deeply along with writers during the Cultural Revolution, and who now also needed the latter to discredit the previous Maoist leadership, instituted a more relaxed literary policy. Although the CCP never completely released its power over literature, Chinese writers were allowed to express themselves more freely than in any period since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. As a result, the highly politicized literature of the pre-1976 period was replaced by a more individualized realistic literature. Accordingly, previously forbidden themes such as love, social problems and historical controversies emerged and new themes were explored. The reality depicted in the works of the fifties and sixties was critically re-examined, and the new social conditions created by the new CCP policies were realistically and critically depicted.

Among the many new departures in recent years, fictional works by and about contemporary Chinese youths have proved to be the most numerous, vigorous and controversial. These fictional works were the most numerous because there were so many young writers whose works could be published by the many new magazines that sprang up. They were the most dynamic because the varied topics dealt with were closely related to the changing situation within contemporary China. They were the most
controversial because the young writers were less intimidated than the middle-aged and old writers, and hence more willing to challenge orthodox ideas.

By 1982, this kind of fiction had become recognized as a distinct category and was referred to as Zhiqing Xiaoshuo (educated youth fiction). For convenience sake, I have used the term Zhiqing Fiction in the present dissertation. "Zhiqing" refers to the urban educated youths who were sent to the countryside in the "going up to the mountains and down to the countryside movement" during the Cultural Revolution in order to bridge the gaps between the three diversities (between rural and urban, manual labor and mental labor, industry and agriculture) and to be remolded by living with the peasants. This historically unprecedented event involved more than seventeen millions of urban educated youths. Only after 1979 under the new leadership were many of them allowed to return to the city. The special experience of this generation of sent-down youths -- the Red Guard Movement, rusticated life, and life after they had returned to the city -- became the basic subject matter for Zhiqing Fiction.

The fact that these young writers were writing about their own distinctive experiences gives Zhiqing Fiction a special realism, credibility and significance. Furthermore, because they are less burdened by the past, they are more innovative in themes and techniques. Their
exposure of social reality and their unorthodox search for spiritual outlets, as well as their artistic exploration, are evident in their works.

The present study attempts to trace the development of Zhiqing Fiction as a response to several factors: the changing socio-political conditions, the fluctuating political-literary climate, and the lives of Chinese youths themselves. Emphasis is also placed on discussing the portraits of young people which change with the changing conditions. The primary focus of this study is thematic, but it will include some discussion of artistic qualities. Since Zhiqing Fiction cannot be understood in insolation, it is necessary to outline briefly the development of modern Chinese literature since the May Fourth Movement in 1919.

The May Fourth Period: 1919-1942

Modern Chinese literature began with the May Fourth movement, China's first modern nationalist movement, at a time when China was a disintegrating and impoverished nation. During the 1920's and 1930's, many talented Chinese writers produced a lively literature which combined a great deal of individual creativity with a strong sense of social and national mission. May Fourth literature was concerned with the individual's liberation from the shackles of "feudal bondages" and decadent tradition, and with exploring the causes of China's national weakness and social sickness. The concern for
the individual can be seen in the candid revelation of individual psychology in searching for love and sexuality in Yu Dafu's novella Sinking (Chenlun) and in Ding Ling's The Diary of Miss Sophie (Shafei nushi de riji). Ba Jin's Family (Jia), Spring (Chun) and Autumn (Qiu) illustrate the struggle against the "feudal" system and parental control in order to obtain individual freedom and happiness. The concern for national salvation is best demonstrated in the depiction of rural and urban bankruptcy under bureaucratic corruption and foreign imperialism in Mao Dun's trilogy Spring Silkworms (Chuncan), Autumn Harvest (Qiushou) and Winter Ruin (Candong), as well as in his novel Midnight (Ziye). Such concern for the individual and critical depiction of social reality are typical of the May Fourth literary tradition.

During the 1930's, as the Japanese threat increased externally, and KMT (Nationalist Government) oppression increased internally, the influence of Marxist literary theories increased. Radical writers and critics such as Qu Qiubai, Guo Moruo, Qian Xingcun, Cheng Fangwu and Jiang Guangci enthusiastically advocated the Marxist view of literature. In the early 1930's, the CCP sponsored the League of Leftist Writers, which became a center for propagating "proletarian literature". Despite the fact that Lu Xun, the figure head of the League, deplored the superficial depiction of the proletariat and the use of excessive political sloganeering, proletarian
literature attracted the attention of many of his idealistic younger followers. The tendency from "I" literature toward "we" literature is well illustrated in the drastic shift in Ding Ling's style, theme and characterisation from The Diary of Miss Sophie (1928) to Water (Shui) (1931).

The Yan'an Talks in 1942

The effective end of the characteristic features of the May Fourth literature was begun by Mao's Yan'an Talks issued in Yan'an in 1942, which established the official CCP model for literature. During the Sino-Japanese war, many patriotic intellectuals came to view the CCP as the savior of China and made their way from the coastal cities to the main CCP base at Yan'an. While their patriotic support was welcomed by the CCP, their individualistic and freedom-loving temperaments as well as their critical view of society were not. In short essays (Zawen) writers such as Ding Ling in "Thoughts of March 8th", Wang Shiwei in "Wild Lilies" and "Statemen and Artists", Xiao Jun in "Love and Patience Among Comrades", and Ai Qing in "Respect Writers, Understand Writers" criticized what they saw in Yan'an, particularly the inequality between the upper and lower comrades and the interference in literature and art by Party cadres. However, Mao stressed the need for more regimentation and discipline to combat the KMT and the Japanese, and he launched a harsh rectification campaign, which marked the
beginning of CCP persecution of Chinese writers to come.

The Yan'an Talks (introduction given on May 1 and conclusion on May 23 of 1942) were meant on the one hand to refute the "undisciplined" writers and their "heterodox" opinions and, on the other hand, to set up the guidelines by which writers could better serve the needs of the Party.

Mao asserted that the quality of a piece of work should be judged first by political, and second by artistic criteria. He also stressed that "In a class society there is only human nature that bears the stamp of a class, but no human nature transcending classes"; hence, literature should reflect class struggle. Mao portrayed writers as doctors who should be responsible when prescribing medicine to their patients; accordingly, writers should consider the "social effects" when they engaged in writing. At the same time, to serve the revolution better, writers should expose the darkness only of the enemy (the Japanese, imperialists, the KMT reactionaries and other enemies of the people), not of the masses, or the Party.

This utilitarian view of using literature and art as part of what Lenin called the "Whole revolutionary machine" and as a weapon in educating the masses put literature and art in a subordinate position to politics. "Literature and art serve politics" and "literature and art serve the workers, peasants and soldiers" became the
guidelines for Chinese writers.

The result of Mao's Yan'an Talks was that the Party, not the writers became the final judge of literary merit and that the Party's political problems would become the only subjects of literary creation. In the resulting "rectification campaign" the CCP also demonstrated that it would ruthlessly suppress any literary dissent and would unceasingly strive to remold the writers.

Campaigns and controversies: 1949-1976

After 1949, the CCP moved rapidly to extend its control over all sectors of Chinese society, but especially the arts. The Party established a comprehensive literary control machinery through the Writers' Union, the Writers' Association and other cultural units. Writers who were concerned about society and those devoted to individual artistic development faced overwhelming power. They either tried to conform to the demands of the Party (eg. Ba Jin's stories on the Koren War in the early fifties) or simply stopped writing completely (eg. Mao Dun, Shen Congwen). For those who conformed the result was the degeneration of quality because of false representation of the human condition and of social reality. There were those who tried, through skillful evasion, to maintain their artistic quality, but they would inevitably be condemned and silenced (eg. Zhao Shuli, Liu Qing).

Although the principle of Party control over
literature in China never changed, the nature and intensity of Party demands on the writers fluctuated greatly. This was because the CCP suddenly often and drastically changed policies and because the CCP itself was at times racked by bitter internal struggles.

To terrorize the writers into submission, the Party launched a series of campaigns after 1949. Writers were attacked not only for what they wrote, but also for what they had written or done, or with whom they had association in the past. The Party mobilized overwhelming public pressure against various designated targets who invariably were forced to confess and surrender.

The first campaign to remold art and literature was triggered by the film The Story of Wu Xun (Wuxun Zhuan) (1950), which was based on the life of a poor, uneducated peasant who collected money to build schools for the poor. Among other things, it was criticized for stressing social reform through education but not through class struggle. The attack on the film ended with the submission of the director Sun Yu.

The several aggressive campaigns that came after the Wu Xun incident became harsher each time. The purge of Yu Pingbo in 1954 was aimed at undermining the influence of Yu's teacher, the famous western-oriented intellectual Hu Shi. Li Xifan and Lan Ling's articles (1954) criticizing Yu's study of the Dream of the Red Chamber (Honglou Meng) for using "bourgeois" research methods and not using the correct class standpoint were
aimed at eliminating non-class-oriented, western approaches to academic research. The real target behind the attack on Yu was the prominent critic Feng Xuefeng, who, as editor of the Literary Gazette (Wenyibao), had published a favorable comment on Yu's work. Feng, a former close associate of Lu Xun, had his own view of aesthetics which was quite different from that of Mao. Zhou Yang, then the executor of Mao's literary ideas, drew up charges against Feng and finally removed Feng and his associates from their posts and replaced them with his own men.

The persecution of writers became more intense in 1955 with the attack on Hu Feng, Zhou Yang's long-term rival from the 1930's. Although a Marxist, Hu Feng's literary ideas were even more "dissident" than that of Feng Xuefeng's. In his "Realism Today" published in 1943 in Chongqing, he criticized Mao's Yan'an Talks and in his 300,000 word proposal to Mao in 1953, he expressed deep concern for the future of Chinese literature. In 1955, Mao launched a very wide-ranging campaign against the so-called Hu Feng Clique which led to the purge of hundreds of Hu Feng's supporters, friends and readers. Hu feng was not rehabilitated until 1980.

Ding Ling, an even more prominent rival of Zhou Yang, came under attack along with her editorial assistant Chen Qixia. Both of them had been criticized during the Yan'an period, when they were editors of the
Liberation Daily (Jiefang Ribao) for publishing the short essays criticizing the dark side of Yan'an life. Now Ding Ling became a principal target, charged with promoting "one-bookism" (yi ben shu zhuyi), with seeking personal fame rather than writing for the masses. She was also charged with "crimes" such as "clinging to the bourgeois thinking of Sophie" [the heroine of her earlier novella], and of "poisoning the minds of young writers" with her "heterodox" literary ideas.

The criticism against Ding Ling reached its peak during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957. For the next twenty years, Ding Ling was deprived of the right to write. She was sent to Northeastern China to raise chickens on a farm. During the Cultural Revolution she was put in jail and was released in the early seventies. After spending several years in the rural area of Jiangxi, she was rehabilitated only in 1979.

Literature And The Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957):

Given the power of the CCP political machine, it is not surprising that the kind of literature produced up to 1957 in China was generally in line with the guidelines set up in the Yan'an Talks. Literature and art became instruments of propaganda. Socialist Realism, a theory borrowed from the Soviets, became the Party orthodoxy in the arts. Its key objective of "depict[ing] actuality in its, revolutionary development", combined with the didactic task of educating and molding the masses in the
spirit of socialism, made up the general tendency of literature.

As expected, village fiction, factory fiction and soldier fiction made up the bulk of Chinese Communist literature. The strict application of socialist realism gave a very optimistic tone to these works, which was drastically different from the gloomy, pessimistic or even tragic tone of May Fourth literature. The characters were stereotyped, with the worker, peasant and soldier protagonists being the positive characters and the villains being the landlords, rich peasants or KMT spies. The plots were formulaic, the main conflicts being those between the old (pre 1949) and new (post-1949) values, between backwardness and progressiveness, and between the self and the collective. Conflicts, of course, would be resolved under the guidance of the Party as represented by its cadres.

Suddenly in 1956, after these successive campaigns of repression, the Party proclaimed the "Hundred Flowers" policy in which the CCP invited honest opinions and open criticisms from the public. Taking advantage of the freedom to express themselves, conscientious writers such as Liu Binyan and Wang Meng expressed their "loyal advice" through fiction. Liu Binyan's On The Bridge Construction Site (Zai qiaoliang gongdi shang) (April 1956) and The Inside Story of The Press (Benbao neibuxiaoxi) (June and October 1956) and Wang Meng's The Young Man Who Has Just Arrived At The Organisation Department
(Zuzhi bu lai xinlai de nianqing ren) (September 1956) revealed the conservatism, dogmatism and incompetence of cadres who blindly followed orders from above rather then taking responsibility in difficult situations. Other noteworthy works were Zong Pu's Red Beans (Hongdou) and Fang Ji's The Visitor (Laifang zhe), which used young intellectuals as protagonists in developing the theme of love and the psychological sufferings of youth in a socialist society. These stories marked the last use of young urban intellectuals as protagonists in Chinese Communist literature until 1979.

During the "Hundred Flowers" in 1956, literary critics also produced severe criticisms of the mechanical application of CCP literary dogmas. Qin Zhaoyang in his "Realism -- The Broad Path" (Xianshi zhuyi -- guangkuo de daolu) provides an excellent example. In it, he pointed out that socialist realism could only lead to a distortion of reality. He also severely criticized the strict application of the slogan "literature and art serve politics".

Liu Shaotang too voiced his opposition to literary dogmatism in his "Realism in the Socialist Era" (Xianshi zhuyi zai shehui zhuyi de fa zhan). Like Qin Zhaoyang, Liu saw the same basic problem with socialist realism. He declared that since writers could not regard the present reality as reality, and had to depict reality in its revolutionary development, the result would be the
cosmeticisation of reality. Hence, he questioned, "If 'reality' is taken away, what is left of 'realism'?" Many other conscientious writers and critics voiced anti-dogmatic ideas. On the whole these ideas were against the rigid application of the Yan'an Talks.

Faced with a torrent of criticism, the Party abruptly ended the "Hundred Flowers" movement and launched a massive counterattack in the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign. The writers who had forthrightly exposed the shortcomings of socialist society or criticized the literary policies of the Party were among the first to suffer the vengeful wrath of the Party. For instance, Qin Zhaoyang was labelled a "revisionist" and his article denounced as "a guideline for revisionist literature and art".

In fact, the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957 led to the persecution of thousands of intellectuals who had dared to speak up. Many ended up in the countryside undergoing reform through physical labor. For instance, Qin Zhaoyang, Liu Binyan and Liu Shaotang were sent to the countryside to do physical labor. Wang Meng was sent to Xinjiang. Almost all those who were purged in this campaign did not return to the literary scene until 1979.

The Great Leap Forward And The aftermath: 1958-1966

In 1958, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward, a grandiose and radical movement to transform China into a modern Communist society in a few years. But the result
was only complete economic failure and disaster for China. After the Anti-Rightist Campaign, those who dared to speak up had been silenced and persecuted. Those who wanted to publish had no choice but to write what the Party wanted them to write -- which in the present context meant to eulogize of the Great Leap Forward. The cosmeticisation of reality which was a problem in works of the early fifties now became even more pronounced with Mao's proclamation of the "Double Combination: The Combination of Revolutionary Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism" in 1958. Consequently, despite the transparent catastrophic failure of the Great Leap Forward and the resulting large scale famine, no writers dared depict this national disaster in literature.

The failure of the Great Leap Forward split the CCP into two main factions, the radicals under Mao and the conservatives under Liu Shaoqi. With the Party now divided and Mao in temporary eclipse, some relaxation was again given to the writers. Chinese writers whose courage and integrity had not been erased seized this opportunity to speak up.

The first was the literary theoretician Shao Quanlian, who put forth his views in two articles: "Write The Middle Characters" (Xie zhongjian renwu) and "Deepening of Realism" (Xianshi zhuyi shenhua) at the National Conference of the Writers' Association at Dalian in 1962. In these, Shao pointed out that the over-emphasis on the depiction of stereotyped "heroic
characters" and "backward characters" had led to the depiction of "one type of character for one class of people" (Yige jieji yige dianxing). He affirmed that, in reality, the majority of the masses - "the middle characters" (those who are neither good nor bad) - were those who deserved attention because it was in them that contradictions were manifested. Moreover, Shao said that literary works of the time were too "revolutionary" but not "realistic" enough. Thus, he declared if there is no realism, there can be no romanticism and therefore, literary works should concretely reflect reality. Shao was supported by Kang Zhuo, Zhao Shuli and many others. However, in 1964, his literary ideas were criticized as "bourgeois" after Mao raised class struggle as the key link.

During the brief period of relaxation in the early sixties, other conscientious writers and critics also criticized the Party's dogmatic line in literature. For example, Ba Ren (Wang Renshu) who had long resented the over-emphasis on class nature in writing continued to call for the depiction of human nature and human sentiment. Li Helin called for the depiction of the truth, because, he believed, only by depicting the truth could a piece of work manifest its ideology. Zhou Gucheng objected to the dogmatic criterion which identified the spirit of the epoch in literary works with how much they adhere to current policies. Also resented by many critics
were the one-sided emphasis on particular important subject matters and the mechanical application of "typicality" (dianxing).

During this brief relaxation of the early sixties, several major works led up to the Cultural Revolution. The first was Essays of Three Family Village (Sanjia Cun Zhaji) by Wu Nanxing, the joint pen name of Wu Han, Deng Tuo and Liao Mosha. The second was Deng Tuo's Night Talks at Yanshan (Yanshan Yehua). Both of these were written in the form of short essays (zawen). The third was the historical play Hai Rui Dismissed From Office (Hai Rui Baguan) by Wu Han. In the latter Wu used the righteous image of Hai Rui to criticize Mao's radical and despotic implementation of the commune system. The attack against Wu Han came from Mao himself, who believed that these critical works were part of the conservative attack on his leadership and policies. In November 1965, under the direction of Mao, Yao Wenyuan published his article "Criticism Of The New Historical Play 'Hai Rui Dismissed From Office'" (Ping Xinbian Lishi Ju "Hai Rui Ba Guan") labelling the play a "poisonous weed". It was the attack on this play that triggered the Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution: 1966-1976

The Cultural Revolution was Mao's last and most radical attempt to transform China. The conservative opposition in the Party was vanquished but the results were disastrous for Chinese society. The Chinese
literary scene during the Cultural Revolution was a
desert in the literal sense of the word. Never in Chinese
literary history had so many writers been humiliated,
persecuted and killed by a brutal political power. Only
those who had been certified to be from a "good" class
background and had a clean political record could
publish. Hao Ran, who was supported by the Gang of Four,
was the only writer who could produce a fair amount of
work which bears the strong mark of the Gang's ideology.
Literary writings were reduced to those which eulogized
the dominant Maoist ideology and the personality of Mao
in particular. The few literary magazines that continued
to circulate contained nothing but crude propagandistic
pieces.

The politicization of literature that began with the
Yan'an Talks was now taken to its extreme. All works now
included many of Mao's quotations, printed in bold
letters. Class struggle was upheld as the key theme. The
total defeat of the class enemy and total victory of the
Party line (represented by the protagonist) were
mandatory in the plot. In characterisation, the
prescribed guideline was the so-called "Three
prominences" (Santuchu) which required the writer to make
the positive characters prominent among the other
characters, to make the heroic characters prominent among
all positive characters, and make the principal hero
prominent among other heroic characters. Characters were
stereotyped, the good characters (workers, poor and lower
middle peasants, soldiers, Party members and revolutionaries) were always completely good and the villains (previous landlords, rich peasants, revisionists, conservatives, academic or technical experts) were always completely bad. These characteristics can be seen in revolutionary plays such as *The Red Lantern* (*Hongdeng Ji*) as well as in Hao Ran's works of fiction such as *Bright Sunny Sky* (*Yanyang Tian*) and *The Golden Path* (*Jinguang Dadao*).

**Post-Mao Era: 1976-1984**

After Mao's death and the arrest of the Gang of Four in October 1976, Chinese literature quickly recovered from the ruins under the new leadership. The writers' long suppressed emotions and thoughts that had briefly burst forth in the Tiananmen Incident of April 1976, now found an outlet in the more relaxed literary atmosphere after the proclamation of the "Double Hundred" (let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend) in late 1977 by Hua Guofeng. Most writers who had been persecuted since 1949 were rehabilitated (such as Ding Ling, Zhou Libo, Chen Dengke), and some posthumously (such as Zhao Shuli, Tian Han, Feng Xuefeng). Forbidden works were republished, banned films and plays were staged, and foreign classics were reprinted. Many literary magazines resumed publication, and many more new ones quickly flooded the market to meet the needs of the long intellectually starved readers.
Cultural exchange were set up with foreign nations.

In contrast to previous periods since 1949, now the relationship between the writers and the new Party leadership was one of much greater harmony. In order to create a more favorable public opinion for itself, the new Party leadership granted some freedom to the writers to expose the disasters of the previous radical leadership. From 1978 to 1979, the so-called "Wound Literature" exposed the human tragedies caused by the autocratic rule of the Gang of Four during the Cultural Revolution. Beginning in 1980 and throughout 1981, works critical of many aspects of current society, particularly bureaucratism, dominated the literary scene. However, in response to increasing political pressure, since 1982 harsh criticisms of the system have substantially decreased.

These trends show that the basic fact of the Communist Party's direct control over literature has not changed. From the spring of 1979, though in a milder fashion compared to the pre-1976 period, the leaders of the Party continued to interfere in literature, as seen in the recent controversies and campaigns which are dealt with in greater detail in Chapter One. It is within the framework of alternating "restriction" (shou) and "relaxation" (fang) in literary policy that the thematic development of Zhiqing Fiction will be examined.
The Rise of Zhiqing Fiction In The Post-Mao Era

Since Mao's Yan'an Talks in 1942, the enforcement of the dictum "literature and art serve the workers, peasants and soldiers" had resulted in the dominance of those characters in Chinese fiction at the expense of others. The young intellectual protagonists who played central roles in May Fourth fiction were largely ignored.

After 1979, intellectuals gradually regained their social status because of their usefulness to the Four Modernisations. In literature too, they regained their role as protagonists which they had not played for decades. It is thus not surprising that in the Wound Literature, the fate of the intellectuals was one of the earliest themes to reemerge.

While the ordeals of the middle-aged intellectuals since the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957 were used as an important source of middle-aged writers as in Lu Yanzhou's A Tale of Tianyun Mountain (Tianyun Shan quanqi), and Shen Rong's Reaching Middle Age (Rendao zhongnian), the unusual experience of this generation of Chinese youth -- the Red Guard Movement, the Cultural Revolution, the rustication program, and life after returning to the city -- was also exploited as a primary source by young writers.

A few anthologies of Post-Mao literature in translation were published in recent years outside China. However they only include a small number of works from China. The only work devoted to contemporary
youth was Helen F. Siu and Zelda Stern's *Mao's Harvest*. But this book is confined to a handful of stories and poems in translation from young writers.

The present dissertation is devoted to the study of a category of stories which reflect the life of Chinese youth, the largest sector of the Chinese population. It is based on about five hundred short stories, novellas and novels. The works chosen for discussion are mainly from the official literary magazines available outside China. Through friends in China, I was able to obtain some restricted literary magazines such as *The Ugly Duckling* (Chou Xiaoya), *West Lake* (Xihu), *Works and Contention* (Zuopin yu Zhenming). As for underground literary works, those available outside China are very few, and are not dealt with here.

This dissertation is divided into two parts. Part I includes chapters one and two and Part II includes chapters four to eight. Chapter One introduces the literary background from 1976 to 1984. Chapter Two outlines the life of contemporary Chinese youth and the emergence of young writers. The third chapter traces the development of Zhiqing Fiction from its early stage during the Cultural Revolution to 1984. It also introduces the cyclical pattern of thematic development in Zhiqing Fiction: the eulogy of the rustication program during the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976), the bitter condemnation of the rustication program (late 1978
to mid to 1980), the shift to the depiction of present life in the city (mid 1980-early 1982), and the affirmation of the past (early 1982 to late 1984). The full development of the cyclical pattern and the portraits of contemporary Chinese youth are illustrated in the various themes covered in chapters four to eight. The treatment of these themes is both chronological and thematic so as to reveal the changes in Zhiqing Fiction and the subsequent changes in youth images. Chapter Four and five focus on the first stages of Zhiqing Fiction -- the Red Guard Movement and the rustication program. These chapters focus on the victimized young protagonists and their reactions to the adverse environment. Chapter Six and Seven concentrate on the second stage of Zhiqing Fiction. They reveal the search of young people for happiness, human dignity, and individuality through love and the assertion of the physical and psychological self. The last chapter examines works of Zhiqing Fiction in the third stage of its development. It shows that changes in young people themselves, political and social pressure and literary factors have converged to bring about the creation of fictional characters who eschew extreme defiance and rebellion in favor of increasing conformity and support for current government policies.
CHAPTER ONE

LITERARY SCENE: WARM BREEZES AND COLD WINDS

Where ideology restricts, art frees; where ideology generalizes, art discriminates; where ideology simplifies, art complicates; where ideology lies, art tells the truth.

T.A. Hsia
"Hero and Hero-worship in Chinese Communist Fiction" 1

In China since 1949, literature has been at all times inseparable from politics. Hence the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976 and the fall of the Gang of Four in October of the same year which resulted in the change of leadership also led to a drastic turn for the Chinese literary scene. The desolate literary scene from the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) during which the majority of writers were either killed, driven to suicide or forced to remain silent, literary publication was only possible by praising the Party line, and in which all forms of art were politicized, was now to be swept away under the new leadership.

Hua Guofeng's formal announcement of the "double hundreds" (let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend) in November 1977 marked the initial step toward the relaxation of literary control. But it was the Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in late 1978 that greatly enhanced this
policy. The post-Mao literary "thaw" was not a spontaneous social phenomenon but the product of the political policy of the new leadership which needed the intellectuals, particularly writers, the so-called "engineers of the soul", to help create a favorable public opinion for "cleansing" the "pernicious influences" of the Gang of Four and the legacy of the Cultural Revolution. It is not surprising that, after the new leadership had gained firm control, it proceeded to reinstate some restrictions on literature. Hence, despite the generally more "liberal" literary policies of the post-Mao era, the alternation between periods of restriction and relaxation characteristic of the Chinese literary scene since 1949 still seems to be at work, though in a milder form.  

The fluctuation between the "warm breezes" and "cold winds" made up the at times harmonious and at times conflicting relationship between the leadership and the writers. In Chinese literature, the "warm breezes" usually means a revival of humanism and realism which leads to a revelation of the individual psyche and examination of social problems. When the "cold winds" returns, literary works tends to conform to political ideology. In this chapter, we will examine the Post-Mao literary scene from early 1977 to mid-1984 in the light of the alternation between restriction and relaxation -- "warm breezes and cold winds". It is within this framework that the relationship between writers and the
leadership developed, and it is within this framework that the thematic emphasis of literary works fluctuated. Zhiqing Fiction as part of this main frame is inevitably affected by this mechanism.

Literary Scene: 1976 to 1984

1. The Thaw: Denunciation and Rehabilitation

After Hua Guofeng "inherited" the Chairmanship from Mao Zedong, a nation wide campaign was launched to "expose and criticize" the Gang of Four. To effectively mobilize the nation for the campaign, some degree of freedom of speech had to be given to people to let them vent their pent-up emotions and long-suppressed thinking. In late 1977, Hua announced the second "double hundreds" policy (the first was in 1956) and called for the "emancipation of thought" from the confines imposed on it by the Gang of Four. For intellectuals, this policy meant the relaxation of political control in regard to personal expression in the form of literature or other disciplines.

In the transitional period of 1976 to 1978, since Hua Guofeng, the leader hand-picked by Mao and now head of the "whateverists" who strictly adhered to Mao's words, did not want to change the legacy of Mao and the Cultural Revolution; the literary scene was still quiet, though latent with great energy. Only a handful of literary magazines (such as Beijing Literature and Art
[Beijing Wenyi], Guangdong Literature and Art [Guangdong Wenyi] and Shanghai Literature and Art [Shanghai Wenyi]) had resumed publication. The majority of writers were still not rehabilitated. Those active then were still influenced by the literary style of the Cultural Revolution. Literary works still closely resembled those from the Cultural Revolution, except that the villains were reversed, Deng Xiaoping changing place with the Gang of Four.

The Chinese leadership realized that to revive Chinese literature and art, it was necessary to overthrow the so-called "Conspiratory Literature" (Yinmou wenyi) of the Gang of Four. This term referred to two areas: the system of literary theories promoted during the Cultural Revolution by the Gang of Four, and the labels they made up for the purpose of persecuting Chinese writers in order to monopolize control of literature and art.

As early as spring 1977, many of the Gang's literary theories such as the "three prominences" (Santuchu), "basic task theory" (Jiben renxu lun), the "write the 'capitalist roader' theory" (Xie zouzi pai), the "anti-real person and real event" (Fan zhenren zhenshi lun) came under attack. Criticism of these literary theories was characterized by heavy political blame and even condemnation rather than calm and convincing literary discussion. In this critical manner, the "three
prominences" theory, for instance, was called a tool "for usurping power from the Party". Critics tended to avoid tracing the formative history of these theories for fear that to dig into the formative history of these theories was to face the danger of becoming critical of Mao. Deng Xiaoping, in his struggle for power, gave more freedom of speech to intellectuals in order to gain their support. In early 1978, he supported the publication of Mao's letter to Chen Yi (1975) in Literary Criticism (Wenxue Pinglun). The purpose, of course, was not to honour Mao but to use his prestige to initiate a new trend in public opinion, a strategy frequently used by the Communist leadership. Using Mao's undefined notion of "think in images" as a point of departure, the idea that literature and art has its own principles was brought up for discussion. The main criticism was that the literary theories of the Gang of Four were invalid because they were used as tools in "scheming for power" and not in accordance with artistic principles.

A stronger step taken to denounce the Gang of Four was Deng's slogan: "Practice is the sole criterion in testing truth" (Shijian si jianyan zhenli de weiyi biaozhun) (raised in May 1978 and enforced in late 1978). This provided critics with a more powerful theoretical basis. For instance, critics said that since in actual life [practice] there is no perfect man, the "high, great and perfect" (Gao da quan) heroes created
according to the "three prominences" were stereotyped characters without "blood and flesh". Since life is rich in content, to emphasize "important subject matter" alone would be one-sided and against reality [practice]. Applying this logic, critics repudiated most of the Gang's literary theories by late 1978.

The second aspect of the "Conspiratory Literature and Art" was the so-called label of "dictatorship of the black line in literature and art" (Wenyi heixian zhuanzheng lun) proposed in 1966 by Jiang Qing at the "Symposium On Literary And Art Work In The Armed Forces" (Budui wenyi gongzuo zuotanhui jiyao). It says that from 1949 to 1966, Chinese literature and art was "dictated by the combination of anti-Mao Zedong Thought, an anti-Party and anti-Socialist black line, and the literature and art of the thirties". In 1977-78, in refuting this label, Chinese critics again used Mao's name as a pretext by saying that Mao had positively evaluated the merits of May Fourth Literature in Yan'an in 1942, and thus to call it part of a "black line" was simply false.

The main content of the "black line" was the so-called "Eight black theories" (Hei ba lun) which were used as a pretext to persecute thousands of writers, critics and those indirectly involved during the Cultural Revolution. This label referred to: "write the truth" (Xie zhenshi), "the broad path of realism"
deepening of realism" (Xianshi zhuyi shenhua lun), "anti theme- determinism" (Fan ticai jueding lun), "middle characters" (Zhongjian renwu lun), "anti-gun power smell" (Fan huoyaowei lun), "spirit of the epoch" (Shidai jingshen lun) and "divorced from the canon and the way" (Lijing pandao lun). This label was not easy to overthrow. The reason is simply that because these "Eight black theories," which Chinese writers brought up in the fifties and early sixties, were personally attacked by Mao in a series of campaigns before the Gang of Four rose to power. To rehabilitate these theories would then mean to criticize Mao. This posed a difficulty to Chinese writers and critics. From 1977 to early 1978, some critics adhered to the view that there had been a "Black Line" but Mao had overcome it through a series of campaigns. It was only following the decline of the "whateverists" and the prestige of Mao toward late 1978 that more daring criticisms of the label appeared. Still, to avoid getting into trouble by criticizing Mao, critics awkwardly claimed that one must separate Mao from the Gang of Four.

In the meantime, in refutation of the "covert and deceitful" nature of the literature of the Cultural Revolution, there arose a call for sincerity and truthfulness in writing. Critics even said that whether a writer was "emancipated" or not depended on how truthfully he depicted reality. The unanimous
affirmation of truth in writing led to the rehabilitation of realism -- a key issue in the "eight black theories". Accordingly, Qin Zhaoyang's article "Realism -- A Broad Path" which was purged during the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957) was now recognized as "having good intention" in "grasping the essence of literature and art in the reflection of reality", and as a demonstration of "frankness and courage" in revealing the literary problems of the fifties. Also rehabilitated were Shao Quanlin's ideas in "Deepening of Realism" and "Write Middle Characters", as well as other issues.

Many important but "persecuted" ideas were also brought up for affirmation. One was "intervention in life" (Ganyu shenhuo), a term negatively labelled since the mid-1950s. The rehabilitation of this notion brought back many previous "poisonous weeds" which were critical of the dark side of socialist reality. These "poisonous weeds" were now regarded as "fragrant flowers". The most conspicuous were the short stories by Liu Binyan (eg. On The Bridge Construction Site), Wang Meng (eg. A New Youth Came To The Organization), Liu Shaotang (eg. West Garden Grass) and others which aimed at criticizing bureaucratism and dehumanization in socialist society. These stories, collected and republished in Fresh Flowers Bloom Again (Chongfang de xianhua). in 1979, aside from being used to reinforce the "expose and
criticize" campaign against the Gang of Four, signify the return of the critical role of literature in China.

In 1979 Chinese writers also launched another endeavour: to re-evaluate the literary principles and guidelines set forth in Mao's Yan'an Talks. Such re-evaluation was not new. In 1962, Zhou Yang had already suggested that literature should serve the broad masses instead of only the workers, peasants and soldiers. But criticism of Zhou Yang at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution showed that any attempt to modify Mao's words was dangerous. In December 1978, Zhou Yang in his speech at the Forum On Literary Creation in Guangzhou again pointed out that Mao's Yan'an Talks needed to be evaluated in accordance with historical progress. At the Fourth National Congress of Writers and Artists in late 1979, he further stated that, "for practical purposes, we should courageously correct and modify whatever is unsuitable or completely inappropriate".

Many critics also pointed out that Mao's literary thought should not be dogmatized. Since Mao's thought on literature and art was a science, it should be studied with a scientific attitude. Obviously, all these discussions did not mean a total negation of Mao's literary thought, but a reassessment under the new social order. The paradox of this re-evaluation was summarized by Feng Mu who said that to negate the importance of Mao's literary dicta was extremely wrong,
but to stick to Mao's every word was also against the nature of Mao Zedong Thought.

Many issues from the Yan'an Talks such as "delving into life" (Shenru shenghuo), "human nature" (Renxing lun), "praise or exposure" (Gesong yu baolu) and so forth, were brought up for discussion. The most important issue to undergo modification was the relationship between politics and literature and art. Since 1949, the notion that "literature and art serve politics" carried the connotative assumption that "literature and art serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers". Now, critics pointed out that "times have changed," and, "whom literature and art should serve cannot be decided by an unchanging rule but by the objective development of social practice." Following a lengthy discussion among Chinese writers and literary critics on the relationship between politics and literature and art, a new slogan, "Literature and art should serve the people and socialist society" was issued in July 1980. To serve the immediate goal of the national policy of the Four Modernisations, this slogan was expanded to say that literature and art must serve the Four Modernisations which, as indicated by official critics, would in turn serve the people. The essence of this slogan is basically no different from the long-held slogan, "literature and art serve politics," except that it is broader in scope concerning
the object of service. However, some leftists found this new slogan difficult to accept. In explaining this slogan to the leftists, Wang Ruowang asked a provocative question, "If literature and art serve politics, then what does politics serve?" He further asserted that, "Politics and literature and art are not the end; human beings are the end."

As far as creative method is concerned, one critic pointed out that there was no absolute creative method in literature and hence Mao's insistence on the "double combination" method was not scientific because it actually caused Chinese literature to degenerate instead of promoting it. The notion of "double combination" was later elaborated by Li Zhun and Ding Zhenhai who co-authored many articles in developing and defending Mao's literary thought. They said that this notion was not only a creative method but a creative principle. Using this principle as guideline, the writer could understand the essence of "factuality" (zhenshi) and "tendentiousness" (qingxiang xing), know what should be exposed and what should be praised, and know what kind of socialist new man should be created. The elaboration of Li and Ding represented the views of orthodox officials who strove to maintain Mao's literary line. Toward 1982, although many changes had occurred, Mao's Yan'an Talks, though in a low profile, was still regarded as the guideline.
2. The Demands Of Chinese Writers

Throughout the years from 1978 to 1980, simultaneous with the denunciation of the ultraleft literary phenomena of the Cultural Revolution and the rehabilitation of long-suppressed literary theories, a new trend among Chinese writers toward greater autonomy in literary creation was begun. Numerous articles re-evaluating the literary policies and literary works since 1949 were published. The general opinion was that the leadership had been "misled" by "ultraleftism" and "feudalism" in the handling of literature and art. This malpractice was embodied mainly in a number of mistakes: Firstly, the Chinese leadership (implying Mao) incorrectly regarded the contradiction between the leadership and the writers as that between enemies. This led to the purges of a large number of writers and artists in many political campaigns. Secondly, writers argued that the leadership simplified the relationship between politics and literature and art. It "inappropriately" subordinated literature and art to politics. This notion led to the demand that literature serve current policies and acted as justification for the officials' interference in artistic creation. Thirdly, the leadership ignored the artistic principles. This led to a large number of low-quality works in mass production. Finally, the leadership used literary criticism as a crude and brutal weapon rather than as a
means of literary persuasion.

It is evident that there had to be an improvement in the relationship between the leadership and the writers in order for the flourishing of literature and art to take place. Chinese writers at this stage were more fortunate than in previous years because the pragmatic leadership shared the same bitter experience with them and hence the relationship between the two groups was harmonious to an extend unprecedented since 1949. This harmony was not enough for Chinese writers who had for decades been subjects of persecution. To them, the question remained: How could a writer be sure that he and his work would not be purged again? To promote the relationship between the leadership and the writers, in February 1979 under the support of the pragmatic faction, the 1961 speeches of Zhou Enlai on drama and other literary matters were published. Though originally meant to clear the air of "ultraleftism" and bureaucratism accumulated since the fifties, they were relevant to the Post-Mao literary situation, particularly in the notion of "democracy in literature and art". Using Zhou's speeches as a guideline, Chinese writers called for autonomy in literature. Throughout 1979, they sharply pointed out that there would be no hope for Chinese literature if "feudalistic" practices and "ultraleftism" were still extant. Following the publication of the national constitution in 1978, writers such as Xia Yan and Ai Wu requested legal
In numerous articles, Chinese writers also requested that literary officials follow the principles of literature and art and allow criticism and rebuttal. They must not "intervene without reason", must not treat their words as orders and more importantly, must not lay labels and charges upon writers. The famous actor Zhao Dan, almost on his death bed, warned the leadership that "literature and art would be hopeless under heavy restriction". With regard to the role of the Party in literature and art, the theoretician Wang Ruowang went so far as to say that the best way to handle literature and art was to "do nothing". His view, inevitably attacked by conservative critics, represented the most "liberal" among Chinese intellectuals.

The spirit of the Chinese writers reached a high point at the Fourth National Congress of Writers and Artists held in Beijing from October 31 to November 16, 1979. Attended by 3,200, this meeting was the first reunion of Chinese writers and artists since 1960. Deng's congratulatory speech represented the high point in the harmonious relationship between the leadership and the writers. Most warmly applauded was the passage to the effect that:

"Literature and art, as a complex mental activity, requires the creative spirit of an individual artist. What to write and how to write can be decided only through the literary practice of the artist, and they should not be interfered with."
Also lending significance to this meeting were the sincere and critical speeches by some Chinese writers. Liu Binyan, who was labelled "rightist" in 1957 because of his exposure of bureaucratism, said that no matter what one writes, one cannot escape from purges. Thus, writers have no choice but to express the voices of the masses. The poet, novelist and playwright Bai Hua, also a rehabilitated "rightist", called for "democracy", for the complete elimination of the "attack, revenge, ostracization and isolation" approach to "those with different opinions", for improvement in the living conditions of writers, and for support for young writers. Chen Dengke, a veteran writer, while confessing to being misled and writing works "deceiving the people" during the Great Leap Forward period, called for re-emphasis of realism as well as the institutionalization of the "double hundreds".

Despite all the promises and encouragement given by the leadership, Chinese writers were never free in the western sense. They were constantly reminded by the leadership to study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thoughts and, above all, to adhere to the Party line. In 1978, in the articles calling for the implementation of the "double hundreds" policy, restrictions were simultaneously set out. Writers were reminded to observe the "six criteria". After the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee, they were asked to
"emancipate" their thoughts, but in spring 1979, they were told to adhere to the Four Basic Principles: the socialist path, proletarian dictatorship, leadership of the CCP and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. To justify this contradiction, one official theoretician asked writers "to emancipate [their] thought within the framework of the Four Basic Principles". He asserted that:

as long as writers write from the stance of the Four Basic Principles, then, no matter what they write and what material they use, their work will be revolutionary literature."

This seemed to imply that as long as the writer obeys what the Party demands, he will be safe. But whether his work will be "revolutionary", in fact, is another matter. This passage reminds one of Lu Xun's saying that what comes out of a person's veins is blood and what comes from a spring is water. However, Lu Xun referred to the source of inspiration within the writer, but what the Communist critic meant was something external and prescribed to the creative mind.

Demands that writers adhere to Party leadership gradually intensified after 1980. This began with Deng's speech given on January 26, 1980, in which he brought up the slogan of "insist on and improve Party leadership". Orthodox theoreticians took this phrase and turned it into a critical criterion against which literature was judged. As it developed, it became a cudgel in Communist critical vocabulary. Any work not
matching the expectation of the Party would be labelled "divorced from the Party leadership" and subject to criticize as we shall see in the following paragraphs.

3. Major Campaigns And Controversies

Throughout these few years, the ideology of Chinese leadership had fluctuated between two poles. On the one hand, it had to fight against the "ultraleftism" remaining from the Gang of Four and the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, it had to remind writers to guard against "rightist" and "bourgeois" influence from foreign countries as the result of the open door policy. Hence, the notion of the "two-line struggle" -- against the left and the right -- became a guideline for literary policy.

The Wound Literature (also includes films, plays etc.) that flooded the Chinese literary scene in 1979 and 1980 represented the most daring attempts to date to reveal the darkness of socialist society under the rule of the Gang of Four during the Cultural Revolution. The new leadership, which needed this type of literature to prepare public opinion for the consolidation of its own power, tolerated criticism from Chinese writers. But its tolerance was not without limit. The unreformed leftists (or conservatives/dogmatists who were not "emancipated" in thinking), however, would take the opportunity to surface as soon as they saw the tolerance of the new
leadership begin to run thin. If the leadership found it beneficial, it would consent to enlarge the scope of criticism. But if the leftist's "judgement" was untimely, the writers would speak up. The counter attack by writers, however, occurred only during the most "liberated" period of 1979. At other times, writers remained vulnerable in the face of political authority.

Let us now examine the most important controversies and campaigns triggered by this kind of political mechanism.

a) Forward-looking and Backward-looking Literature

The Wound Literature in late 1978 and 1979, which exposed the wounds of the masses caused by the Gang of Four and the Cultural Revolution, was extremely well received. But this was upsetting to the leftists. Riding on Deng's proclamation of the Four Basic Principles in March 1979, the leftists initiated an attack on Wound Literature. The purpose of Deng's raising the Four Basic Principles was to compromise with the leftists, especially the army, which could not tolerate the "confusion" caused by the "emancipation of thought" set forth at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in late 1978. The leftists took this as a hint from the leadership and claimed that too much exposure of the wounds of socialist society would be harmful to the prestige of the Party. They also claimed that since the Cultural Revolution had passed, writers should
"look to the future" and not "to the past".

The earliest attack on Wound Literature was that of Wang Ansi from Guangzhou in his article "Look forward, literature and art!" which appeared on April 15, 1979 in Guangzhou Daily. He said that the literary works which exposed the Gang of Four and the Cultural Revolution make people feel uncertain about their fate in the future, and therefore writers should write "forward-looking literature", that is, literature dealing with the bright side of society and particularly the Four Modernisations.

Wang's view was immediately refuted by a spate of articles. One critic said that to suggest confines for literary creation was no different than setting up a new "forbidden zone." Others said that to look backward was actually to look forward, because if the past disasters and mistakes were not exposed there might be more disasters and mistakes in the future, and consequently the Four Modernisations would be more difficult to realize. The writer Bai Hua, in refuting Wang Ansi's idea, wrote a movie script entitled A Story of Looking Forward (Xianqian kan de gushi) in which a woman writer searches for "forward-looking" material for her story but what she sees during her visit at a feed lot is filled with problems left from the Cultural Revolution. The author's message is brought home through the female protagonist's words that, "In order to look
forward one must look backward".

The leftists apparently had misjudged the intention of the leadership and the commonly-held feelings of most writers. At this stage, Deng still needed Wound Literature to overthrow the legacy of the Gang of Four and the Cultural Revolution in order to strip the theoretical base from the "Whateverists". Hence, this premature "campaign" was aborted.

b) Praising Virtue and Lacking Virtue

Among the many problems unsolved at the Fourth National Congress For Writers and Artists in late 1979, "exposure and eulogy" was an important one. This unsolved issue is what gave rise to the many attacks on works critical of socialist reality in these few years. At the Yan'an Forum in 1942, Mao said,

For revolutionary writers and artists the targets for exposure can never be the masses, but only the aggressors, exploiters and oppressors and the evil influence they have on the people.55

Based on this passage, the leftist literary sector initiated another attack on Wound Literature. In the June issue of Hebei Literature and Art (Hebei wenyi) of 1979, an article by the young writer Li Jian entitled "Praising Virtue and Lacking Virtue" (Gede yu quede) created a great turbulence in literary circles.56 Supported by the veteran leftist poet and bureaucrat Tian Jian57, Li Jian, in a tone reminiscent of Jiang Qing, accused Chinese writers of failing to praise the workers, peasants and soldiers:

If writers do not "praise" the "virtues" of the masses, whose virtue will they praise? [You] eat the grain produced by peasants, [you] wear the clothes made by workers, If [you] don't write the life of the masters of
the nation, let me ask, where is [your] morality?58

He then went further to describe the "sunny and beautiful sky" of socialist China where "no one is worried about unemployment" and "security". Li's turning a blind eye toward current socialist problems irritated many writers and critics. They questioned the author,

Is there a paradise in China after ten years of disaster under the Gang of Four?"59

If there was no unemployment in China, then would it be superfluous for Chairman Hua to bring up at the 2nd plenum of the Fifth Congress the plans for solving the employment problem for seven million people? 60

This "cold wind in spring", in Wang Ruowang's term, though refuted by many did create a certain fear among literary and art circles. The lack of security among Chinese writers was dramatized by Liu Xinwu in his essay "On Sense Of Security" (Cong Anquangan shuoqi). Two friends, A and B, are arguing at a conference whether there are thieves in China. A says that there are none because of the superiority of the socialist system and even if there are, they are only isolated cases. B says there are lots of them and one should expose this phenomenon. After the conversation ends, A feels secure because he belongs to the "praise faction" and he knows no one can cause him any trouble. On the contrary, B feels insecure for fear that he will be labelled rightist if any political movement arises.

Again, the leftists had made an untimely attack on
the writers who still had support from Deng's faction. Under pressure, Tian Jian, the "back stage supporter" of Li Jian's article, had to write a self-criticism, admitting his misjudgment of the political situation. Li Jian, however, suffered a tremendous blow and was so distressed that he wanted to commit suicide. He was "helped" by the leadership after making a confession. However, after this incident, no one wanted to publish his work. Finally he mailed his story Drunk Amidst the Flowers (Zuiru huacong) to a county-level literary magazine Zhanjiang Literature And Art (Zhanjiang wenyi) of Guangdong province and had it published there. Ironically, the theme of this story, which exposes the negative aspect of the Red Guard movement and the ignorance of local cadres through a female Red Guard's tragic experience in the countryside, is exactly what Li argued should be avoided in his article. In fact, Li's several other stories all aim at revealing the dark side of socialist society. Li's self-contradiction reflects how Chinese writers are victimized by the complexity of politics.

c) Social Effects

Deng Xiaoping in his congratulatory speech at the Fourth National Congress of Writers and Artists on October 30, 1979, said that to help build the Four Modernizations,

writers who are responsible for the masses
must continuously face the masses, must perfect their artistic skill, must not produce crude literary works and must seriously consider social effects.65

From then on, the notion of "social effects" has been used by official critics as a new standard against which literary works are judged. The literary works that triggered the application of this concept were the stage play If I Were Real (Jiaru woshi zhende), the movie scripts In The Archives Of Society (Zai shihui de dangan li) and A Female Thief (Nuzei) which represented the two most popular themes of the time: juvenile delinquency and bureaucratic corruption. Critics, however, had differing opinions on these plays.

A Female Thief tells of the life of an innocent girl who turned into a thief after her mother, a famous opera singer, committed suicide during the Cultural Revolution. The movie script was praised for exposing the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, but was also criticized as unrealistic for its "excessive" description of the female protagonist's skill in stealing and her narrow escape from arrest. In the Archives of Society exposes the abuse of power by high officials through the tragic fate of a nurse. Raped by a high military officer and his second son, she is forced to break with her boyfriend (the first son of the same official). Later, she is pressed to leave her feudalistic husband who demands virginity. Mistreated by her father, she leaves home and turns into an outlaw. This story was praised
for its "anti-feudalism" and anti-bureaucratism but at the same time criticized for slandering the army, for not portraying the traits of Lin Biao's followers, and for overemphasizing sex and violence. Actually, the most annoying for official critics was the critical realism embodied in the work which did not point to any "hope" and "brightness" in socialist society.

The literary work singled out for illustrating bad social effects was a play by Sha Yexin (et.al,) If I Were Real, which was based on a real incident happened in Shanghai. It depicts a rusticated youth Li Xiaozhang who, frustrated in getting a ticket for a play, disguises himself as a high official's son. His disguise immediately brings him the privileges that ordinary Chinese have no way of getting. He is surrounded by a group of corrupt officials all of whom try to benefit from him. He takes the opportunity to transfer his "residence registration" from the state farm to the city and plans to marry his pregnant fiance. The climax of the story occurs when the real "father" suddenly appears. The youth is arrested. The most explosive part of the story comes in the conversation between the judge, Team leader Zhao (from the state farm) and Li Xiaozhang, the protagonist when Li is asked to confess his mistakes.

Li : I've made a mistake. My mistake is I'm a fake. If I were real, really the son of Old Zhang or another high official, then what I've done would be legal.70
The expression "If I were real" sharply exposes the problem of bureaucratism. The play was warmly received when performed for restricted audiences in August 1979. But the opinions of official critics were different. Some said that the play had serious defects. Firstly, except for Old Zhang, all the officials are corrupt. Since the majority of Party members are good, this play is not "typical". Secondly, the authors are obviously sympathetic with the imposter. This method of using a wrong to oppose a wrong -- ie, using the "petty bourgeois" youth Li Xiaozhang to expose the corrupt officials -- shows the wrong "tendentiousness" of the authors. Thirdly, the officials in the play are not different from those in Gogol's The Inspector General. This shows the authors' tendency to equate contemporary China with nineteenth century Russian society. All these adverse opinions could be boiled down to the fact that criticism can only be directed at the followers of the Gang of Four, but not present officials.

These opinions are not sound literary criticism. Firstly, because a play is not a social survey, whether or not a play is typical has nothing to do with quantity. The common tendency of Chinese critics has been their identification of "typicality" with the majority of bureaucrats. Secondly, sympathy with the imposter only elicits the audience's sympathy with the victims of bureaucratism, which inevitably leads to a
deeper hatred of corrupt officials.

In response to controversies over these three scripts, a forum on script-writing was convened in Beijing from January 23 to February 13, 1980. Hu Yaobang, in a six-hour speech, remarked that the authors' sympathy for the imposter would lead to bad social effects. Zhou Yang, who first supported this play later sided with Hu Yaobang. After Hu's criticism, Sha was asked to change his play but he refused. The play was suspended. Angered by the clampdown, Sha wrote an article calling the suspension of his play a kind of "unexpected social effect". This event marked the first clampdown on individual work by official order, only three months after Deng's promise of "no interference" in writing at the Fourth National Congress of Writers and Artists.

While bureaucratic critics stressed the importance of social effects and accused authors of causing social ills, writers expressed a different view on the social effects of literary works. Meng Qi said that if a writer has to consider social effects during the creative process, he will be burdened by too much pressure. The veteran writer and editor Wei Junyi said that the increase of crimes in society is a legacy of the Cultural Revolution and has very little to do with literature. Therefore, to put the blame on literary works is not justified. In a similar vein, Wang Ruowang satirized the shallow concept held by top
officials that social effects can be so immediate like "seeing a shadow of a bamboo as soon as it is erected". "What social effects does The Dream Of The Red Chamber have?" he asked, "Did Cao Xueqin consider social effects when he wrote it?"

Despite all the protest, the fact remained that the notion of social effects became a very powerful "cudgel" in judging literary works during the following years.

d) Anti-Bourgeois Liberalism

In spring 1981, in reaction to the increase of expose literature, the demand for more literary autonomy by Chinese writers, and the gradual increase of foreign influence as a result of the relaxation policy; orthodox critics began to show their objection. Hence, throughout the first part of 1981, the slogan "anti-liberalism" began to appear in the official press. But the attack on the so-called "bourgeois liberalism" found its target in the movie The Sun And Man (Taiyang yuren). The movie was based on the script Bitter Love (Kulian) written by Bai Hua and Peng Ning. Based on Deng's negative remarks about the movie, the leftist theoretician Huang Gang of the Liberation Army Literature And Art (Jiefangjun wenyi) published an article (under the sobriquet of "critic of the magazine") criticizing the movie script as "negation of patriotism", "extreme individualism", "anarchism" and
above all "divorced from the leadership of the Party."

This time the criticism was a timely one for the leftist sector. The leadership, taking this chance to propagate patriotism and clear away the "negative elements" introduced from the West (perhaps to reconcile the army), launched a nation-wide campaign. This was the first time since the fall of the Gang of Four that a Chinese writer and his work were openly attacked by name.

The script Bitter Love relates the tragic fate of a painter who was forced to leave for the United States during the thirties and became famous there. He chose to return to China after "liberation" for patriotic reasons. Like many returned intellectuals, he was purged during the Cultural Revolution. Because of his participation in the Tiananmen Incident in spring 1976, he was under indictment and went into hiding. After the fall of the Gang of Four, his wife and friends went to look for him. Mistaking them for the Gang's people, he escaped among the bushes. With his remaining energy, he used his body to make a question mark in the snow and died of exhaustion at the dot of the question mark.

The main criticisms of Bitter Love were that 1) it tends to shake off Party leadership; 2) it confuses China under the Gang of Four and China under the revived Party; and 3) it makes symbolic use of Mao as the Buddha, which hurts the image of the leader. The most controversial line is the conversation between the
painter protagonist Ling Chenguang and his daughter Xingxing. She is about to leave the country with her fiancee, an overseas Chinese. But Ling objects. In tears, Xingxing says to him,

Papa, you love this country, are painfully attached to it.... But, does this country love you?  

The reluctance of literary circles to respond to the criticism of Bai Hua implied a silent protest by Chinese writers. Under pressure from the leadership, the editors of Literary Gazette (Wenyi bao) produced two long but unconvincing articles, admitting laxness in applying the "criticism weapon" and weakness in resisting bourgeois tendencies. The campaign ended with Bai Hua's letter of confession to the editor of the People's Daily (Renmin ribao) in November 23, 1981.

Although Bai Hua was allowed to continue writing, the consequence of this campaign was evident. Sharp accusations of the corruption of the Party and socialist system were greatly reduced. The term "counter-criticism" dropped from the press. The demands on Chinese writers for conformity increased. In a speech given to the prize winners for novellas, reportage and poetry of 1980, Deng Yingzhao, widow of Zhou Enlai, stressed that a writer must first be a revolutionary.

To further ensure writers' conformity, the "communique for literary and art workers" was drawn up at the second meeting of the Fourth National Congress of Writers and Art Workers.
Artists. Writers were supposed to abide by eight regulations covering political, moral and literary discipline. With the emphasis on the building of the "socialist spiritual culture" after the 12th Party Congress in 1982, writers were urged to study Marxism and use Communist thought to "direct literary practice". In fiction, they were urged to portray the "socialist new man" and his struggle and contribution to the Four Modernisations.

e) The Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign

After the criticism of Bai Hua in the second half of 1981, the Chinese literary scene was relatively uneventful and the criticisms of certain writers and their works were confined to a small scale. This situation changed after the Second Plenum of the Twelfth Central Committee in October 1983 when the leadership suddenly began to wage the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign. Again, this campaign was ignited by a remark by Deng. The targets of the campaign were socialist alienation (Zhou Yang), humanism (Wang Ruoshui) as well as other western philosophical ideas such as existentialism, liberalism, and so forth which had manifested their influence in literature.

In literature and art, the main targets as revealed in an editorial in the People's Daily on October 31, included: 1) negation of the socialist "type" and promotion of the "three no's" (no theme, no plot and no
character); 2) intentional exposure of socialist deficiencies; 3) promotion of "modernism", and 4) the tendency toward commercialization and pornography in literature and art. These "unhealthy" phenomena were intensified by the expansion of "bourgeois humanism" and "socialist alienation", all of them, according to the Chinese leadership, manifestations of "confusion in thought" and "spiritual pollution." They were to be dealt with under the guidance of the so-called Four Basic Principles.

Many controversial literary works which had been discussed (or criticized) before were brought up again for more vigorous criticism. For instance, Dai Houying's novel People, Oh, People (Ren a, ren) which was criticized in 1981 was brought forward for more severe condemnation of her propagation of "bourgeois humanism". Another author, Zhang Xiaotian, was criticized for reconciling "class hatred" in his The Unending Grassland (Lili yuanshang cao). Zhang Xinxin's On The Same Horizon (Zai tong yi depingxian shang) was criticized for extolling individual struggle and social alienation. Her other story, The Dreams Of Our Generation (Women zhege nianji de meng), was condemned for its "grey" literary tone of "despair" and the use of subconscious as narrative method. The poet-critic Xu Jingya was criticized because he praised the "modernism" and self-expression of "obscure poetry".
From October 1983 to early spring 1984, the entire literary scene was dominated by the authorities' opposition to so-called "bourgeois humanism", "bourgeois liberalism", "modernism" and "alienation". No contrary sounds were heard. Following Zhou Yang's self-criticism, many writers whose works had been criticized in previous years were told to "re-examine" their own mistakes. The self-criticisms of these writers showed that Chinese writers, despite all their calls for the right of "counter-criticism" in 1979, were still very vulnerable in defending themselves against political pressure.

The campaign soon slowed down for various pragmatic reasons. First of all, it hurt economic development. It was said that some business contracts with Japan were suspended because of the campaign. The indiscriminatory attack on the introduction of foreign technology as "spiritual pollution" also hurt the Four Modernisations. At the same time, the arbitrary boundaries of "spiritual pollution" caused great confusion in many sectors of society. For instance, some conservative local officials even took the opportunity to attack those young people, who permed their hair or wore western-style clothes. This narrow-mindedness was refuted by Chinese Youth Press which said that, "It is detrimental to oppose young people's proper desire to beautify life as 'bourgeois life style' and 'spiritual pollution'". By late spring, lacking support from Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, the core
members of the economic reform, the campaign against "spiritual pollution" finally died down. The consequence of this campaign for literature, however, was serious, as shown in the decrease of criticism of society and the increase of conformity to Party ideology in literary works.

Fluctuations from the "warm breezes" to the "cold winds" shown in the history of Chinese Communist literature in the past three decades or so indicate that Chinese literature, no matter how "liberated" it is, cannot escape political influences. Whether in the pre-1976 or post-1976 period, the fate of writers and their works was always at the mercy of the leadership. Despite Deng's promises of no "interference" in writing in 1979, almost all the campaigns were one way or another initiated by him. What happened after Bai Hua's case was even more onesidedly in favor of the leadership. The "confession" of writers, from Bai Hua to Zhang Xiaotian and the poet-critic Xu Jingya marked the continual subordination of writers to political pressure.

The quality of literary writing also fluctuated with the changes between "warm breezes" and "cold winds". After 1981, with the increasing official emphasis on writing the "forward looking" literature, the portrayal of the so-called "socialist new man", the depiction of the Four Modernisations, the consciousness of "social effects" and above all, with the criticisms
on individual writers, there had been a decline of social criticism in literary works. Yet, because of this unprecedented "liberal" atmosphere since 1949, Chinese writers were able to experiment and innovate literary techniques, and thus were able to, within permissible confines, produce works of more artistic diversity than those of pre-1976 period.
Let me tell you, world,  
I don't believe!  
Even if a thousand challengers are at your feet,  
Count me as the thousand-and-first.  

Bei Dao: "Reply" (Huida)\textsuperscript{1}

Zhiqing Fiction has two basic characteristics: first, it is about urban educated youths and second, it is mostly written by young writers. Therefore, before we embark on the study of Zhiqing Fiction, it is instructive to examine the life of this generation of Chinese youth and the characteristics of young writers.

A. The Path Of Youth

Contemporary Chinese youths are in many ways different from their predecessors. Unlike the youths of the fifties who generally accepted the Party ideology and Communist ideals, the present generation which has physically and mentally travelled a twisting path tends to be negative toward and critical of reality. They have experienced rebellion, factional fights, physical labor, unemployment and disillusionment. "I don't believe," a line from Bei Dao's poem\textsuperscript{2} is emblematic of the defiance
and cynicism of this generation. In this chapter, we shall look at the life of this generation of Chinese youth, because it is only with an understanding of their life that we are able to explain the literary product by and about this age group.

Largely the same age as the People's Republic of China, contemporary Chinese young people were indoctrinated with Communist idealism and Mao Zedong Thought in their childhood. They were taught that the benefit of the nation and the Party was of highest priority; to serve the people was a basic moral requirement; to be loyal to the Party and to Chairman Mao were considered mandatory. When the Cultural Revolution broke out in 1966, they were still in high school. By this time Mao's personality cult had expanded to such a high point that young people's loyalty to him was easily turned into a kind of religious worship. Therefore, when the fire of revolution was ignited, they enthusiastically joined the Cultural Revolution, ideally and fervently trying to destroy the "four olds" and attacking "capitalist roaders" under the banner of "it is right to rebel."

In late 1967, as the power struggle accelerated among top leaders, factions manipulated by them were formed among Red Guards. Bloody battles were so frequent between factions that in March 1967 Mao felt that it was time to mobilize the army to preserve social order. In late 1968, seeing that the Red Guards had fulfilled
their political mission of wiping out his political rivals (Liu Shaoqi, He Long, Peng Zhen and many others), Mao called for an end to the Red Guard Movement and issued the following dictum:

It is necessary for educated youths to go to the countryside to be reeducated by the poor and lower middle peasants.⁴

The practice of sending educated youths to the comparatively backward districts did not begin with the Cultural Revolution. In order to temper the "proletarian revolutionary successors" by remolding their world view and to bridge the gaps of the so-called three differences -- the difference between city and countryside, between mental and manual labor and between workers and peasants -- educated youths had been sent to the less developed or border areas since the late 1950s. From 1956 to 1966, 1.2 million urban educated youths were sent to the countryside. But the number increased drastically after the climax of the Cultural Revolution in 1969.⁵

Mao's 1968 proclamation, which later became a mandate for the nation-wide rustication program, signalled the beginning of a bitter experience for millions of urban youth for many years to come. Urban educated youths from big cities (Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Harbin, Chongqing, Guangzhou) were sent either to the rural areas adjacent to large cities or to distant provinces such as Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia,
Xinjiang, Yunnan, Guizhou and other backward regions. In the decade following the beginning of the rustication program, seventeen million young people -- almost the entire generation of urban youths -- were sent to the countryside.6 This rustication program was also applied to educated young people in the market towns. Since they generally had fewer problems in adapting to rural life, the impact of this program on them was much less.

Urban youths, particularly Red Guards, were at first enthusiastic in answering Mao's call. But their enthusiasm soon cooled when they realized that the program was meant to be a life-long commitment. The poverty of the rural area, the lack of intellectual stimulation and the slim chance of mobility further disillusioned them. The biggest disillusionment in revolution came from the death of Lin Biao in 1971. The fact that Lin Biao who was supposed to be Mao's closest comrade-in-arms turned out to be a "traitor" overnight shattered their faith and idealism. The feeling of being deceived by the revolution was intensified by an increasing dissatisfaction with bleak reality. In the early seventies, some rusticated youths were recruited to work as cultural or technical workers in the cities. This opportunity, however, remained an unattainable dream for the majority, especially for those from unfavorable family backgrounds. Since recommendation was based on political performance, ambitious youths would have to demonstrate their active participation in manual
labor and political activities. Friends or even lovers frequently became rivals for this slim opportunity.

The tension of contemporary Chinese youth found one outlet in the Tiananmen Incident of April 5, 1976. The demand for democracy and freedom signified the first challenge of Chinese youth to the system and its fixed order. The clampdown on the movement temporary silenced Chinese youth. But they soon arose and voiced their opinions after the relaxation of political control in late 1978.7

The situation of rusticated youth improved after the demise of the Gang of Four. The new and pragmatic government, realizing the importance of education for the Four Modernizations, in 1977 opened the universities which had been shut down for a decade. Many rusticated youths were, after ten years in the countryside, allowed to participate in writing the university entrance examination with permission from the local commune or state farm. However, they could hardly rival those who were newly graduated from high school. Only a small number of them could enter university. The anger of the disappointed majority which had been building up throughout a decade now reached its peak.

The new leadership was aware of the problems of rusticated youths. On December 15, 1978, the first meeting devoted to the solution of problems of rusticated youths was held in Beijing.8 The leadership,
as expected, put the blame on the Gang of Four. It also admitted that the management of the rustication program was poor and that much had to be done to improve conditions for rusticated youth.

But the tension among rusticated youths continued to increase. In spring 1979, when rusticated youths of Shanghai were allowed to return to the city to celebrate the Chinese spring festival, they took the opportunity to voice their demands to high authorities through demonstrations and rallies, causing disruption to city traffic and railway schedules.9 In the meantime in border provinces such as Xinjiang and Yunnan, rusticated youths gathered together and angrily demanded the right of choice in their place of residence and freedom of mobility.10 These unprecedented actions did not emerge suddenly but were echoes of the Democratic Movement which had already spread out from Beijing in late 1978.

Under pressure, meetings for "comforting" and "understanding" rusticated youth were convened throughout the spring and summer of 1979. At the meetings, however, top leaders repeatedly called on rusticated youths to understand the difficulties of the nation and to sacrifice self interest for the "stability and unity" of the nation. Wang Zhen for instance, gave a speech to the representatives of rusticated youths from Yunnan province and urged them to put the benefit of the nation above the individual.11 They also reiterated the idea that sending educated youths to the
countryside was still a correct policy for the development of the nation, especially for the Four Modernisations.  

Towards the end of 1979, a large number of rusticated youths was allowed to return to the city. But they soon faced many problems. Unemployment was the most serious one. Some parents were forced to retire early to give their jobs to their children. This did not solve the whole employment problem, especially when thousands of high school and university graduates were to be allocated looking for work every year. As the number of unemployed increased, the government, which was moving toward economic reform, implemented more flexible policies. State farms were restructured to be more autonomous, and street-owned enterprises were established. With permission and help from the street organizations, "job-waiting" youths were allowed to set up "youth spots" mainly doing service business. Among other problems, marriage was also one catching the attention of the leadership, as revealed in a series of discussions in Chinese Youth (Zhongguo qingnian). For unmarried returnees, especially for girls who had already passed the dating age, there was great difficulty in finding ideal spouses. Accordingly, "Marriage clinics" were set up in the city and young people were encouraged to use this social service. All these problems became dominant themes of Zhiqing
In the thinking of the Chinese leadership, in order to build the Four Modernisations, it is still necessary to have educated youths go to different parts of the nation. From the lesson of the Cultural Revolution, the element of compulsion in the implementation of rustication has been reduced. Instead, various types of persuasion have been adopted. One is the old method of public recognition and praise. For instance, those who returned to the countryside (without stating the reason) was praised as new heroes in the "New Long March". The eighty thousand who remained in the Great Barren North were acclaimed as youth models. In early 1983, the China Youth Press (Zhongguo qingnian bao) issued the slogan "Good Sons and Daughters, fulfill your ambitions in all directions", signalling the first formal call to youths to serve the countryside after 1976. [One must note, however, that educated youths have received better treatment than before; particularly, many of them have been appointed to cultural and administrative jobs in the rural areas.] To promote the spirit of self-sacrifice, beginning in March 1983 the campaign to "learn from (the altruistic soldier) Lei Feng" was brought up again, this time with support from almost all top leaders. This campaign was further enhanced by the nation-wide promotion of the altruistic youth Zhang Haidi, who, in spite of paralysis, strove to master several foreign languages and learned the technique of
The idea behind the promotion of Zhang Haidi was that it is not enough to have a Lei Feng spirit alone; to build the Four Modernisations a young person must also be equipped with knowledge and skill.

The above discussion shows the eventful life of Chinese youth from their childhood to their adulthood. Mentally, contemporary Chinese youth has also travelled a twisting path. They began with great faith in Communist ideals and in the Party, but were shaken first by the death of Lin Biao and then by the fall of the Gang of Four. As one youth expressed it in a letter,

I hate the "class enemies" who "opposed the Chairman". I leaned toward the "loyalists" such as Lin Biao who "supported" Chairman Mao... but I never expected that Lin Biao whom I thought was the "utmost" supporter of Chairman Mao would turn out to be the one scheming to kill him.... At that time, to me the "Gang of Four" were "good assistants of Chairman Mao" and "Marxist theorists." Therefore I entrusted them wholeheartedly.... Not long afterwards, the news of the smashing of the "Gang of Four" came to me. I was more confused than hearing of the death of Lin Biao.... From then on, I ate very little, smoked a lot. My face turned yellow and my weight dropped.

The above was one of the sixty thousand letters responding to the discussion of "The significance of life" triggered by the twenty-three-year-old female factory worker Pan Xiao's (pen name) letter "Why Is Life's Road Getting Narrower And Narrower?" in May 1980. Because her parents and grandparents were Party members, since childhood she had been taught to be loyal to the Party and to serve the People. But during the
Cultural Revolution, things that she witnessed -- raids, physical struggle, killing -- shattered her previous beliefs. Later, she suffered from many setbacks. She lost financial support from her mother; she was rejected by the Youth League because of the critical suggestions she made; she was discarded by her boyfriend after his father resumed office. After all this, she had seen through life and human beings. Her letter aroused a nation-wide discussion which lasted from May 1980 to mid-1981.

Throughout this discussion, an unprecedented probing into the "significance of life", the "value of man" and the self was attempted. If the purpose of revolution was for the betterment of the Chinese people, then why, they asked, had the Party stressed class struggle more than material production for so long? Why did people kill each other in the name of class struggle and proletarian dictatorship? Why did harmonious personal relationships deteriorate under the socialist system? Why was humanitarianism classified as a bourgeois idea? Was there humanitarianism in Marxism? Why should the rights and dignity of an individual be taken away in the name of revolution? How could the value of an individual be elevated? The general impression one gets after reading these letters is that there is a "crisis of faith" among Chinese contemporary Chinese youth. They are disillusioned with revolution and the morality of
the people, doubtful of Maoist decrees (such as "serve the people"), and cynical toward the Party and Communism. They seem to believe that only the self is the absolute and that the search for truth, goodness and beauty is basic to one's life.25

As these "dangerous" ideas were continuously unfolded, government leaders became alarmed at the mental state of youth. Hu Qiaomu, for instance, personally went to the office of Chinese Youth to express his concerns and urge the authorities to give more attention to youth.26 In mid-1981, Chinese Youth called an end to the discussion, but the search did not die down. It appeared in different forms and the most powerful of them was fiction.

As the new government consolidated its power, it increased its demand for conformity to Communist ideology. In late 1982, the Chinese Youth Press initiated another discussion after the arrest of a young robber and murderer Feng Daqing. His diaries revealed that he considered Marx, Lenin and Mao unreliable and that he only believed in himself. He believed that "what belongs to others can be made into mine; it is all right to reach the goal by any means". The fact that he was a top student in Beijing Foreign Language Institute made him a lesson to those who felt that red and expert had no necessary connection.27 According a discussion entitled "The Center of Life" was raised. In contrast to the inspiring discussion of 1980 and 1981 which
emphasized the realization of the self and the value of man, this one was dominated by anti-self and the importance of the collective. Because the leadership joined in the discussion at an early stage, emphasizing Party leadership and de-emphasizing individualism and self-realization, the response from youth was cool. The official educator Ren Jiru listed five key virtues -- to be patriotic, idealistic, and responsible, have a correct world view, and be knowledgeable -- for youths to observe. Wu Mu, head of the Central Youth League wrote a conclusive article for the discussion, reiterating that the Communist ideal is the center of life. Throughout 1983, articles such as "Stepping out from the small world of your 'self'" by model university students continued to appear. Accordingly, the probing of the value of the self and the criticism of society in 1980 and 1981 gradually lessened in the press.

Spiritually, this generation of Chinese youth has trodden a circular path -- from the fervent support of "revolutionary ideals" during the Cultural Revolution period to the total denunciation of them after Mao's death and finally reverting to or compromising with the values promoted by the Party in recent years. This cyclical path, as revealed in fiction, formed a clear thematic progression in Zhiqing Fiction.
B. The Rise Of Young Writers

In retrospect, the rise and fall of Chinese writers in the past few decades have been reflections of the fluctuation of politics. After 1949, the heavy demand of Party ideology in literature made most prominent writers from the May Fourth period feel unfit to write anything without the risk of being criticized. Some stopped writing altogether. Mao Dun, for instance, became a highly placed literary bureaucrat; Shen Congwen turned, after his work was criticized, to the study of ancient Chinese costumes. Some, such as Ba Jin (as shown in his Korean War stories) tried to adopt Party ideology to literature, but failed to produce works which could match the standard of his previous stories.

In the fifties, middle-aged writers such as Zhou Libo, Liu Qing and Kang Zhuo who had been nurtured in the revolutionary base of Yan'an became core members of the literary scene. In the early 1950s, there were three main centers training young writers: the Institute of Literature (Wenxue Jiangxi Suo) chaired by Ding Ling, the Kunming Military Zone and the Nanjing Military Zone. But the criticism of Ding Ling and the Anti-Rightist Campaign soon put an end to these literary organizations. In the mid-fifties, young writers such as Liu Shaotang, Wang Meng and Liu Binyan made themselves known by publishing short stories critical of socialist bureaucratism and dogmatism. But the Anti-Rightist
Campaign of 1957 silenced them before they could produce many significant works. From the late fifties to the mid-sixties the aftermath of the Anti-Rightist Campaign hindered the growth of young writers. During the Cultural Revolution the majority of Chinese writers were silenced and purged. Only those who were politically clean and supportive of the Gang of Four were allowed to publish.

The composition of Chinese writers has undergone a drastic change in the post-Mao era. Since 1979, the rehabilitation policy has brought back some old writers who had been purged in past decades. A small number of them resumed, writing essays mourning for the persecuted. Some have retired because of health problems and only write short essays or make occasional remarks on literary matters (Sun Li); others have turned their interest to writing reminiscences (Ba Jin). The Chinese literary scene is thus dominated by middle-aged writers such as Liu Binyan, Wang Meng, Liu Shaotang, and Cong Weixi who were purged in the Anti-Rightist Campaign and rehabilitated shortly after the Gang of Four fell, as well as the large number of young writers who have recently emerged. Precisely how many young writers are now active in China is not known. My own research indicates that at least one hundred and thirty produce work regularly. This figure does not include the hundreds of others who publish only occasionally. In an article in March 1983, Wang Meng stated that at least
several million Chinese youths are pursuing the goal of writing. This amazing figure suggests a tremendous potential in the future development of Chinese literature. According to the statistics given in February 1982, the number of middle-aged and young writers absorbed into the Writers Association in recent years constitutes 70% of the total number of 1550, and it is evident that the number of young writers well surpasses that of the middle-aged.

The rise of young writers is the result of many factors. Firstly, after 1949 the expansion in secondary school education in the cities and market towns produced a large number of educated youths. Even though educated urban youths constitute less than ten percent of the population, they make up the majority of the reading audience of current literature. This is not to slight the eight hundred million peasants, but the fact is that this urban and semi-urban educated group has become the major component enjoying and perpetuating literary creation.

Secondly, the increasing number of literary magazines resulting from the Hundred Flowers policy since 1979 has provided a greater opportunity for young writers to publish their works. According to the statistics given in 1981 in Guangming Daily, the number of literary magazines amounted to 634 and among this figure, 320 of them are published at the provincial
level. Ding Ling's speech (July 1983) given to a group of teachers and young writers reveals that, the amount of semi-literary and pure literary magazines reached over one thousand. It is evident that most literary pieces are written by young writers. For instance, from 1977 to 1984, 70% of the published works in Shangdong Literature And Art (Shangdong wenyi) were by young writers. To provide more opportunity for young writers, many literary magazines have set up sections called "Pages For Young Writers" or "New Persons, New Works". Some of the literary magazines, such as Youth (Qingchun) (later changed to Youth Literature [Qingnian wenxue]) of Nanjing, Ugly Duckling of Beijing and Shoots (Mengya) of Shanghai and Guangzhou Literature And Art are mainly devoted to the publication of works by young writers.

Thirdly, writing can bring fame and other opportunities. In a closed society like China, getting ahead is very difficult and frequently requires the correct social "connections". As expressed by some young writers, writing is the only path they can pursue on their own talents or merits. Moreover, the fact that the remuneration from a novella frequently exceeds a regular monthly pay cheque is a very powerful incentive. [The remuneration for one thousand words ranges from five to ten dollars (RMB)]. Those who make a name by writing may be invited to give lectures in other cities [eg. Liang Xiaosheng, Wang Runzi] or even invited to go
abroad. For instance, Zhang Kangkang was invited to go to Romania (1982) and France (1985) and Wang Anyi to the United States (1983). Considering the restrictions on mobility for most Chinese, a chance to see the outside world is eagerly sought. Writing may also lead to better job opportunities. For instance, both Lu Xinhua and Liu Xinwu, who won national fame overnight after publishing single controversial short stories (The Class Teacher [Banzhuren], The Wound [Shanghen]), have been appointed to positions in cultural units. Liu was transferred from a high school to a publishing house in Beijing, Lu to a cultural organization in Shanghai after graduation from Fudan University. Some of the young writers have taken up editorial positions. For instance, Li Chao of Nanjing has become editor of the literary magazine Youth, Wang Anyi of Childhood Literature and Art (Ertong wenyi), Zhu Lin of Shanghai Literature (Shanghai wenxue) and Ye Xin of Huaxi (Flower Stream) of Guizhou.

As a result of the reform in the Writers' Union, some young writers have attained professional status. Some can pursue further training with the support of the local Writers Union and their own work unit. For instance, Deng Gang was originally a welder in Tianjing. After publishing well-received stories such as The Lure of the Sea (Miren de hai) and Contraction (Zhentong), he was sent by his own unit to attend a two-year writer's
training program in Beijing. During the training period, his unit would provide financial assistance to his family.

The enthusiasm for writing among youth is the highest it has even been since 1949. In China it is thus a common phenomenon for editors to receive over ten thousand manuscripts each month. Established writers may receive manuscripts from young writers, requesting the former to proofread, comment or even recommend their works for publication. In response to young people's great enthusiasm for writing, the Chinese Youth Press set up a column called "Problems concerning the desire to be a writer" for those interested in exchanging literary information and opinions. What has been revealed in these letters shows the actual situation and problems of Chinese publishing circles. Since only a small percentage of works can be published, frustrated contributors frequently complain about the editors of the literary magazines. Some complain that editors simply ignore their efforts and do not bother to return their rejected manuscripts for months. One youth even sourly complained that the reason his manuscript was rejected was because he did not have a writer-mother like the young writer Wang Anyi (whose mother is the veteran writer Ru Zhijuan.) Wang Anyi has her own merits and deserves attention but one cannot say that her mother did not play any role in publishing her first stories.
The large number of untrained and poorly equipped young people flooding the literary field aroused the concern of veteran writers. As early as 1979, Xia Yan, in his letter to a young man, advised him to cultivate his knowledge before embarking on any literary career. Ding Ling, seeing more and more youths pursuing literary careers, advised them to first temper themselves by going among the masses. Wei Junyi, a veteran writer and editor, even went so far as to warn young dreamers of "dangerous" and impractical literary pursuits because not everybody could be a writer and if everybody was after the same goal, there would be a loss of talents in other fields. Wei's opinion was hardly convincing for those enthusiastically seeking literary goals. They asked, "What is wrong with more people engaging in literary creation?" A more concrete analysis of the situation was provided by Wang Meng. In his article, "Don't Crowd The Path Of Literature," subtitled "A Heart-to-heart Talk With Literary Youth", he began with the affirmative remark that it is a good thing that many youths are fond of literature, but quickly turned to list the negative consequences of this overcrowded pursuit. He further discouraged day-dreamers who lack literary discipline and talents, and told them to direct their energy to more fruitful careers.

The worries of veteran writers are not altogether unjustified. As Wang Meng observed, due to the de-
emphasis of knowledge since 1949, there has been a general decline in "cultural standard" among Chinese writers, and this problem becomes more acute with the influx of young writers. This decline was foreseeable considering the number of years of education lost in the Cultural Revolution. A brief survey shows that the majority of these young writers has no more than high school education. This contrasts sharply with the writers in the May Fourth period who generally had a classical education and modern post-secondary education, some even studied abroad for many years. Most contemporary young writers had only completed high school when the Cultural Revolution broke out. This group, however, makes up the most educated of the young writers. Some barely finished junior high school, some only elementary school when they were sent to the countryside. Ye Xin, for example, a Shanghai youth who was sent to Guizhou, has only junior high school education. Since 1977, some young writers such as Lu Xinger, Chen Kexiong, Huang Peijia and Chen Jiangong have managed to enter university after many years in the countryside. In the past two years (1983-84), younger university students such as Fang Fang (Wuhan University) and Yu Cang (Wuhan University) have joined the literary scene. If this tendency continues, there may be an elevation of educational standards among young writers in the near future.

Although education is not a prerequisite for being
a good writer, certain obvious errors could have been avoided if the author had been exposed to more academic discipline. For instance, in Zhang Kangkang's story The Light Morning Fog (Dandan de chenwu) she describes a university student learning the Periodic Table in chemistry. As pointed out by a university student, this description is not realistic because such basic scientific knowledge is taught in junior high school. The lack of knowledge is particularly apparent when it comes to the depiction of things related to foreign countries. This is a general problem of Chinese writers as a result of years of isolation. On the one hand, they idealize material life outside China; on the other hand, influenced by years of adverse propaganda, they feel obliged to add the commonly held simplified impressions of "bourgeois" life (especially North American).

For the purpose of raising the standard of young writers as well as for more effective control, since 1981 provincial branches of the Writers' Association and local literary organizations have established creative writing classes, lectures, forums, and short term study programs. Amazingly, by 1983, over one hundred thousand youths had registered for these programs. In Shenyang city alone, several thousand youths attended "study classes" in 1982. Many literary magazines have their own correspondence courses and outstanding works were chosen for publication. By May 1984, more than a
dozen "correspondence centers" were founded and over three hundred thousand students received training in creative writing. To promote better understanding of literary writing, since October 1982, a column called "Literature classroom" in the Literary Press (Wenxue bao) was founded. Established young writers such as Kong Jiesheng, Lu Yao, and Ye Xin were asked to share their creative experiences. Moreover, local magazines, such as Beijing Literature (Beijing wenxue), Yalujiang Literature And Art (Yalujiang wenyi), Xiangjiang Literature (Xiangjiang wenxue) and Literary Works (Zuopin) have founded their own annual fiction contest in addition to the national one.

Despite their lack of formal training, this generation of young writers possess rich creative sources from their multifarious, checkered life experiences. For instance, Chen Jianggong, originally from Beijing, had been a miner in Datong for ten years. His mining experience became the inspiration for several of his stories such as The Meandering Stream (Liushui wanan), Phoenix Eyes (Danfeng yan) and Sweet (Tianmi) which are concerned with the love life of young miners. Ye Xin, originally from Shanghai, was sent to Guizhou and still lives there. His life with the local Yao people has become a frequent component of his novels such as Youths Of Our Generation (Women zhe yi dai nianqing ren) and The Wasted Years (Chatuo suiyue) which are concerned with rusticated youths from Shanghai.
Zhu Lin originally from Shanghai was sent to Fengyang County of Anhui. The poverty of the district became the background condition for her well received novel *The Path Of Life* (*Shenghuo de lu*), which is about the tragedy of a rusticated female. Kong Jiesheng, originally from Guangzhou, was sent to Hainan Island. Since 1979, this place has become a significant source of inspiration. From his early work *On The Other Side Of The Stream* (*Zai xiaohe de na bian*) (March/1979) to the recent *The Southern Bank* (*Nanfang de an*) (April/1982) Kong has used the setting variously: first as a place to get away from and later as a destination. Some (eg. Zhang Kangkang, Wang Peng) also endured the agony of being second class citizens because of their rightist parents. The most pathetic case is the woman writer Yu Luojin, younger sister of Yu Luoke who was executed for criticizing the "class background theory" during the Cultural Revolution. Her brother's action put the whole family in such a desperate situation that she had to marry someone in the Great Barren North so as to stay alive. Her unique experience -- imprisonment (for writing "counter-revolutionary diaries"), exile (to the Great Barren North), three marriages and two divorces -- has provided her with sources for her reportage *A Winter Fairy Tale* (*Yige dongtian de tonghua*), the novellas *A Spring Fairy Tale* (*Yige chuntian de tonghua*), *Search* (*Zhuixun*) and many other stories.
As more and more rusticated youths participate in writing, certain patterns have emerged. Those who were originally relocated to the Great Barren North -- such as Zhang Kangkang, Liang Xiaosheng, Lu Xinger, Chen Kexiong, Xiao Fuxing -- have formed the "Great Barren North" group despite their return to the city. Their stories tend to be about life in the Great Barren North. This group echoes the Northeast writers of the thirties-- Xiao Jun, Xiao Hong, Li Huiying -- whose literary works are largely set in their native land.

In terms of literary style, there also emerged a pattern. A number of young writers such as Cheng Yi, Wang Peng and Zhang Shishan who still reside in the rural areas have been called the "mountain medicine egg school" (shanyao dan pai). They follow the tradition founded by Zhao Shuli, Kang Zhuo, Xi Yong and others who excelled in portraying peasant life in northern China. What distinguishes these young writers from their predecessors is they have also included other themes in their literary works in addition to rural stories.

There is a group of young writers who are particularly conscious of innovation in artistic expression and technique. Those who feel the inadequacy of revolutionary realism have begun to seek artistic alternatives from western sources. Li Tuo is one of the first to call for the combination of realism and the use of "stream-of-consciousness" in writing. Gao Xingjian, another young writer and playwright, is also
keen at renovating writing technique. His concise and insightful booklet on fiction, Preliminary Study In Modern Fiction Writing Technique (Xiandai xiaoshuo jiqiao chutan) and his recent play Bus Stop (Chezhan) 64 which is clearly influenced by Waiting For Godot are manifestations of his literary adventure. Kong Jiesheng is one of the foremost in consciously making breakthroughs in each of his works as shown in his letters to the old writer Yan Wenjing. From his early story Marriage (Yinyuan) to The Past (Na guoqu le de) and his recent novella The Southern Bank we see how he has moved from relying on twisting plots for literary effect to the application of interior monologue and "stream of consciousness" in order to dissect the emotions and thoughts of his characters. His fiction exemplifies the changing emphasis from overt action to the delineation of inner psychological process characteristic of the modernistic novel. This tendency has also been clearly shown in the works of Zhang Xinxin, Zhang Kangkang, Lu Xinger and many other young writers. If there is a "modernistic" school in the Chinese literary scene, this group is a sure part of it.

One notable feature of Chinese young writers is the rise of women writers. In the fifties and sixties, only a handful of women writers such as Yang Mo, Cao Ming, Ru Zhijuan, and Wei Junyi were known to the public. At present, about 116 professional women writers collect
salaries from cultural organizations in China. Middle-aged woman writers such as Shen Rong, Zong Pu and Zhang Jie have become established figures. Yet larger in number and more vigorous in literary creation are young women writers. Names frequently seen include Zhang Kangkang, Wang Aiyi, Lu Xinger, Zhang Xinxin, Huang Peijia, Wang Xiaoying, Tie Ning and many others. Some of their works have aroused nation-wide discussion. Zhang Kangkang's Northern Lights (Beiji guang) triggered a heated discussion on love and morality. Yu Luojin and Zhang Xinxin are at present the most controversial women writers in China. Yu's novella A Spring Fairy Tale which frankly depicts her divorce and a love affair with an editor of an official newspaper was attacked as "private literature" by moralistic critics. The publication of this work in Flower City (Huacheng), a Guangzhou large-sized literary magazine, brought criticism to the editorial board. The first issue of 1982 was confiscated in the midst of its circulation. Consequently editors of many literary magazines were afraid to publish her work. Her recent novella Search was published by Gejiu Literature And Art (Bejiu wenyi) in the remote town of Gejiu in Yunnan province. Again, her stubborn search for ideal love regardless of worldly moral restraint brought another attack on her during the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign in late 1983 and early 1984. Zhang Xinxin's The Dreams Of Our Generation (Women zhege nianji de meng) which relentlessly portrays the
helplessness and the lack of outlet in socialist society, have also been under attack since their publication. Both Yu and Zhang are stubborn defenders of literary independence as shown in their refutation of the criticism. By contrast, Wang Anyi seems to be safe because she abides within permissible confines. Her The Destination (Benci lieche zongdian) which tells of the unhappiness of a returned youth, has been acclaimed as a pioneer of the theme of returning to the countryside. In comparison to Yu and Zhang, Wang's work falls short of profundity and intensity.

Another salient feature of contemporary Chinese young writers is that they are highly representative of society because they are from a variety of professions such as university students, cultural officers, factory workers, peasants and soldiers. For instance, Kong Jiesheng used to be a worker in a lock factory in Guangzhou; Cheng Naishan is an English teacher in Shanghai; Li Cunbao is a playwright for the Army; Wang Peng is a peasant in Shaanxi; Zhang Chengzhi, a researcher in the China Social Sciences and Nationalities Research Institute. In modern Chinese literature there has never been a period in which the whole population is so well represented.

Contemporary young writers share many similarities with their May Fourth counterparts. Both groups emerged after a political movement against autocratic rule. Both
groups were eager for relief from spiritual oppression -- from the burden of traditional habits and values of the feudal past in the case of the former, and from Communist "ultraleft dogmatism and feudal autocracy" in the latter. This is the essence to their romantic temper. Both groups seek to overthrow restrictions in literary expression -- the classical language in the former and the "ultraleft" literary dogmas in the latter. Both groups aim at writing "the literature of man" and searching for truth, goodness and beauty in humanity. But contemporary young writers, because of their unique experiences, have their own vision of reality different from that of previous generations. In the following chapters, we will look at how this generation of Chinese young writers represent reality from their own perspective.
CHAPTER THREE

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ZHIQING FICTION:
A CYCLICAL PATTERN

The protagonist Zhong Weihua in The Journey (Zhengtu) (1973) said, "The most basic reason for us Shanghai educated youths to come to the rural area of Heilongjiang is to humbly receive re-education and thoroughly reform our world view, to use our hands, together with the poor-and-lower-middle peasants to cultivate and protect the borderland."1

The female rusticated youth Juanjuan of The Path Of Life (1979) pleaded with her boyfriend Zhang Liang, "I can't stay here any longer. No doubt, people here are pitiful. But can we change their lot only with our own strength? Do you mean we're going to waste our youth in this poverty-stricken mountain village? ...I beg you, leave this place, for me, and for you.... leave this place, leave this place!"2

Yi Jie, protagonist of The Southern Bank (1982), on his way to Hainan Island, thought to himself, "When I embark on this steamer, my wasted youth immediately returns to me. The god of fate has brought back to me those numerous days and nights, has injected anew in my veins and pores every drop of blood and tears that I shed."3

After 1949, Mao's discriminatory attitude and policy toward intellectuals (declaring that intellectuals were the bourgeoisie and were subject to thought reform) coupled with the tenet that literature and art should first serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, set forth at the Yan'an Talks in 1942,4 had almost excluded from fiction the urban intellectual protagonists who had
been prominent figures in May Fourth literature. In 1950, Xiao Yemu's short story Between Husband And Wife (Women fufu zhijian) was the first to be criticized for "beautifying" the image of the "bourgeois" intellectual (husband) at the expense of the peasant (wife). The attack on the depiction of the intellectual's "bourgeois idiosyncracy" was carried further in the criticism of Zong Pu's Red Bean (Hongdou), Deng Youmei's On The Cliff (Zai xuanya shang), Liu Shaotang's West Garden Grass (Xiyuan cao) and several other stories during the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. For the next two decades, except in historical fiction concerning the civil war period such as Yang Mo's The Song Of Youth (Qingchun zhige), which is about students joining the revolution in the early 30's, urban intellectual youths seldom played central roles in fiction. Even if they were portrayed as protagonists, they were without exception objects of ideological remolding and re-education.

In the meantime, mandatory adherence to current political policies coupled with the application of socialist realism and the "double combination" had resulted in narrow subject matter and stereotyped characters in Chinese fiction. The struggle for individual aspirations and ideals characteristic of the May Fourth intellectual hero had been taken over by subject matter directly related to economic production. Prescribed values and the stress on conformity had put
an end to any search for alternative significance in life. Youth stories of the fifties and early sixties tend to depict how the young people through the help of the Party, convince their old folks to join in collectivization [Not That Path (Buneng zuo na tiao lu) and to give up old ideas [Red Plum (Hongmei)]; how they untiringly work to increase production [Spring Planting, Autumn Harvest (Chunzhong, qiushou)] and serve other members of the commune [Bright Clouds (Caiyun)]; and above all, how they altruistically build socialist society. During the Cultural Revolution, under the influence of ultraleft literary theories, the already-limited subject matter was further narrowed to class struggle. In characterization, the mechanical application of the "three prominences" method resulted in the "high, great, and perfect" heroes completely detached from reality.

Following the rehabilitation of intellectuals and their subsequent rising social status in the post-Mao era, the fictional image of the intellectual has made a comeback. While middle-aged writers (such as Lu Yanzhou, Shen Rong and Cong Weixi) endeavour to write on the fate of intellectuals since the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign and on their current professional life; young writers, most of them former rusticated youths, tend to write about their life since the Cultural Revolution -- the Red Guard Movement, rustication, and life after
returning to the city. By 1981, stories using rusticated young people as protagonists had become a distinctive thematic category.

The subject matter of Zhiqing Fiction did not remain static throughout the years 1979-1984. It underwent changes and transformation. Based on my reading of about five hundred short stories, novellas and novels, my conclusion is that Zhiqing Fiction has progressed along a cyclical path. This pattern of development was shaped not only by the literary nature of Zhiqing Fiction itself, but also by extraliterary factors.

The task of this chapter is to trace the formation of this body of fiction and its thematic development. For the sake of convenience in discussion, Zhiqing Fiction of the post-Mao era will be dealt with chronologically in three stages. Because of the time lag between the actual writing and publication, this demarcation should not be taken as definitive. Before we deal with these works, it is instructive to digress for a moment and look at their predecessors.

A. EARLY ZHIQING FICTION: 1966-1976

After the mid-fifties, there were scattered stories about youths sent to work in the countryside. The plot structure of these stories, following a time-worn formula, takes the protagonist, originally unhappy about his assignment, through an encounter with local
peasantry or a dramatic incident, and soon reveals that his job is significant for the people he was assigned to help. The simplified process of conformity to Party ideology leaves no room for the revelation of the deeper psychology of the character. During the Cultural Revolution, in order to promote the "Going up to the mountain and down to the countryside" movement, a number of novels and short stories eulogizing the life of "sent-down" youths were published. These works were largely written by those assigned to the task, and some were even produced by writing teams. They are much more stereotyped and heavily charged with political slogans and messages than those in the fifties. Though much smaller in quantity, since they deal with the same type of characters in the same type of setting as those in the post-Mao era, they should be regarded as early Zhiqing Fiction (though the term Zhiqing Fiction did not come into use until 1982).

The prescribed themes of these works can be reduced to the "steeling" of urban youths in the countryside through the struggle against nature, class enemies and urban petty-bourgeois thinking. These antagonistic forces, from a structural perspective, resemble the rituals of a myth. Based on the reading of several representative novels on this theme, a master plot (a set of rituals) can be deduced: departure for the countryside -- warmly assisted by Party secretary and
the poor-and-lower-middle peasants -- participation in work projects -- interference from class enemy -- arrest of enemy -- completion of project -- resolution to stay in the countryside. Youths wanting to be "reborn" -- i.e., to be completely rid of their "bourgeois" temperament and to become one with the masses -- must endure hardships and overcome ordeals as pilgrims do. Every time they pass a test, they are one step closer to spiritual reform. Those who are determined to set roots in the countryside are portrayed as positive characters. Those who are restless are without exception linked with and used by the villain. When the dark scheme of the villain is exposed, the ones "gone on the wrong path" will confess their mistakes and resolve to stay in the countryside.

There is also a set pattern for characterisation in early Zhiqing Fiction. The model for emulation is the principal hero created according to the "three prominences" method. He is surrounded by "secondary characters". His mentor is usually an impeccable and all-round Party official or an experienced poor local peasant. The hero is usually a son of worker parents brutally abused by the capitalist. He is endowed without abundant energy and can, after long hours of physical labor, study works by Marx, Lenin and Mao until daybreak. His good class origins and his abiding by the teaching of Mao imparts to him a high political consciousness. His alertness to class struggle always
makes him the first to disclose the vicious schemes of the villain.

The villain is frequently a previous landlord or his associate, a spy (particularly in the early years of the Cultural Revolution), or a "capitalist roader" in disguise (in works in the later period of the Cultural Revolution). He does not directly carry out his schemes, but usually works through the production team leader who has the actual power to mobilize the young people. The scheme of the villain, no matter how secret and devious, cannot escape the eyes of the hero who is equipped with Mao's thought and class awareness. The fore-ordained arrest of the villain serves to consolidate the faith of rusticated youths, persuading them to stay in the countryside, and further affirms the victory of Mao's line.

Guo Xianhong's The Journey (1973) and Zhang Kangkang's The Demarcation (Fenjie xian) (1975) represent novels bearing the above characteristics. Written at the beginning period of the Cultural Revolution, The Journey depicts the first stage of the rustication movement. The action of the plot takes place in December 1968 in Shanghai after Mao's proclamation of the rustication program. A group of Red Guards led by the principal hero Zhang Weihua enthusiastically respond to Mao's call. This is followed by a series of romanticized scenes of the Red Guards parading along
The streets of Shanghai, singing revolutionary songs, beating gongs and yelling slogans, drawing new members to the Great Barren North like soldiers to war.

The plot shifts to the rusticated life proper after they arrive in the Great Barren North. The title of this novel has the connotation of a pilgrimage, though not in a religious sense. The ritualistic toughening process includes walking seventy miles in 40-below weather, harvesting crops covered in ice, cultivating a virgin island, escaping from a forest fire, building a mountain road and harnessing a flood. The relationship between the young people and their physical environment is one of human beings overcoming nature, class enemies and "bourgeois thinking". Assistance comes predictably from the Party (Commissar Tian) and the local poor-and-lower-middle peasants (Granny Guan's whole family). The "golden sentence" for the "pilgrims" is the awareness of class struggle and Mao's quotations. The general spirit of the young people is continuously high and optimistic, embodying, in Mao's phrase, the spirit of revolutionary romanticism.

The "steeling" of the principal hero Zhong Weihua embodies the typical process in the making of a revolutionary hero. For instance, upon arriving in Heilongjiang province, he leads his fellow youths in a march to their destination, the farm of the Pine Brigade (which is at the Sino-Soviet border) in 40-below weather, instead of taking the carts offered by that
production team. He overcomes natural obstacles (poor weather), petty bourgeois habits (the comfort of riding a cart) and undermines the scheme of the villain Zhang Shan (a disguised former translator for the Japanese and a Soviet spy in poor peasant garb) who wants to erode the youths' spirit of "not fearing hardship or death" by offering them a comfortable ride on the carts. After leading a series of work projects and disclosing the villain's schemes, he rises in the Party hierarchy, and the high point of his success or rather, the reward for passing the ritual tests is, as in many Communist stories, his admission to the Communist Party.

Zhang Kangkang's The Demarcation bears a great deal of similarity to The Journey. The fact that Zhang Kangkang is one of the very few young writers who began publishing before 1976 and still continues to write in recent years makes this novel worthy of our attention. Her work provides us a window looking into the changing attitude toward rustication by the same author under different political climates. Originally from Hangzhou, Zhang Kangkang voluntarily asked to go to the Great Barren North after graduating from junior high school. She was stationed in the Heli River State Farm in Tangyuan County, Heilongjiang province. During her eight-year stay in the countryside she was a farmer, a worker in a brick factory, a reporter and writer for a literature and art propaganda team. Her first short
story was Light (Deng)(1972) and The Demarcation was her first novel.18

The Demarcation, written in the later stage of the Cultural Revolution, reflects another ongoing political struggle. After the Tenth Party Congress in August 1973, Deng Xiaoping once again returned to a leading position with the support of Zhou Enlai. The pragmatic faction represented by Zhou and Deng became the target of the radicals. The antagonists in fiction from 1973 to 1975 are not Liu Shaoqi's followers, Soviet spies or previous landlords but the "capitalist roaders" of this pragmatic faction.

The story takes place at a state farm in Heilongjiang province. The central conflict of the story revolves around whether to cultivate the waterlogged East Swamp in order to produce more grain (which fits Mao's slogan "grain as the key link") or to abandon it and engage in other kinds of sideline production (which is considered as "money-mindedness" and "revisionist"). The "correct" line is represented by the hero Geng Changjiong, Party secretary Zhou Pu, Youth League branch secretary Zheng Danjing, the old worker Li Qingshan, along with the other rusticated youths; the "wrong" line is represented by the "revisionist" Huo Li (Director of the Agricultural Department of the district), the villain You Fa (head of the tractor team), and the Party Branch secretary Song Wang (who later changes to the "correct" side). The title of the novel,
"Demarcation," has multifold meanings. Physically, demarcation refers to the boundary line dividing cultivated land and the abandoned swamp. But symbolically it refers to the division between the alternatives of staying in the countryside or leaving it, between "money-making" or "abiding by the line", between Marxism and "revisionism".

The story line is developed on two interwoven levels. On one level, there is the "steeling" of youths through a series of arduous tasks led by the hero — draining the swamp, digging ditches, harvesting beans, harnessing a flood; on the other level, there is the scheming of the villain to undermine the rustication program and projects. The expansion of the villain's scheme is counterbalanced by the heightened class consciousness of the hero. Finally, through Geng's strategem, You Fa is caught red-handed when recovering his stolen goods from the swamp. The reason for his objections to cultivating the swamp is laid bare. The "revisionist" official Huo Li finally confesses that she was misled by the villain.

Because the action of this novel takes place five years after the beginning of the rustication program, it touches upon youth problems not existent in The Journey which is set in 1969. In the latter, only Wan Lili, daughter of a former capitalist, is restless in the countryside. In The Demarcation, this problem is more
acute. Yang Landi, a twenty-five-old female, begins thinking of returning to Shanghai to find a husband. Xue Chuan, a gifted son of a professor, longs to go to university. These are genuine desires, but, in the eyes of the hero and the Party cadres, they are "bourgeois thoughts" and must be corrected with Mao's Thought.

The "correcting" process of these young people exemplifies how individual aspiration is suppressed and how reality and human sentiment are purposely distorted to fit ideological demand. In order to set Yang up as a "negative example", the author arranges for her to be blamed by her parents upon returning to Shanghai -- a phenomenon which disappears in post-1976 fiction -- and to be involved with an "opportunist salesman" and used by the villain to do illegal dealings. Piling up these misfortunes on this "negative" character, the author's intention is to warn others not to follow Yang's example. But I feel that the effect is opposite. Ironically, because Yang's desires seem genuine, she receives more sympathy than condemnation. It makes those (Geng and the Youth League branch secretary) who want to "win her over" appear unnatural and insensible.

The change of attitude on the part of Xue Chuan is also forced and abrupt. Eager to attend university, he has been studying secretly. A vacancy finally is allocated to the state farm. But he realizes that his old friend Geng, son of a martyr, will have priority. This plunges him into an extremely restless state, and
his hostility toward the hero intensifies. The villain takes the opportunity to stir up his hatred against Geng in order to undermine the rustication program. In The Journey, the main conflict is between the villain and the young people. In The Demarcation, personal relationships among rusticated youths become more complex. To speed up Xue Chuan's change the author arranges for him to overhear that Geng has given up the chance to attend university in order to stay in the countryside. Feeling ashamed of himself, Xue Chuan bursts into tears in front of Geng and the Youth League branch secretary,

I... I don't want to attend university anymore, not anymore![p.298]

Xue Chuan's change of attitude, abrupt and unconvincing, is only a forced solution to fit the ideological demand, but not a natural outcome of the development of the character.

Ironically, characters such as Wan Lili, Yang Landi and Xue Chuan who are intended to be negative examples are much more realistic, and hence, more likely to receive sympathy than the so-called positive ones. The more pressure they are under, the more the reader identifies with them. It is not surprising that in the post-Mao era, such characters move the readers and emerge as dominant figures in Zhiqing Fiction. By contrast, the principal hero Geng Changjiong when judged by post-Mao literary standards, is hardly a likeable
figure. No doubt he is endowed with tremendous energy and zeal in saving the waterlogged swamp and making it into fertile land, yet his persistence, by hindsight, only reflects his dogmatic adherence to Mao's words without considering the actual economic situation. Therefore, his working for seven days and nights does not enhance his image, on the contrary, it only reveals reverence for hard work. His ignorance of economic principles, or in post-Mao terminology his "ultraleft" thinking, is also shown in his objection to growing hemp on part of the field. The suggestion is made by the "revisionists" who know that a nearby town will need their hemp and hence it will bring in more income to the state farm.

The reversal of many policies by the Communist Party after Mao's death has also reversed the role of fictional characters. The good guys turn out to be "not that good", and the bad guys are not bad after all. This is an embarrassing and painful fact for many Chinese writers to face. In late 1975, reporting on her writing experience of The Demarcation Zhang Kangkang said,

Through detailed survey and study as well as collating the material, I gradually discovered that although the line struggle in the state farm was complex and varied it actually could be boiled down to the problem of whether to follow the Marxist line or the revisionist line, and whether to follow socialism or capitalism." 19

However, six years later (1981), she made the following
The details of the novel might be true, but the overall social contradiction was not true. This is a product of that era and a necessary yet twisting path for naive young people like myself to go through. However, because we were sincere, we felt all the more pained; because our path was twisting, our feelings were all the deeper.

Zhang Kangkang's confession, like the confession of many other writers, shows the sadness of Chinese writers who, because of Party pressure, adhere to ideology rather than to the truth of reality.

In short, before 1976, because of its small quantity fiction with young people as protagonists never formed a distinctive category of its own. In these works, young characters were used to bring forth a certain ideological and moral lessons rather than to be treated as characters in their own right. The peculiarities of youth, their unique desires, ways of thinking and emotions, were not unveiled until the Second Hundred Flowers Movement in the post-Mao era.

B. THE RE-EMERGENCE OF ZHIQING FICTION AND ITS THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST-MAO ERA

1. Stage I (mid-1978 to mid-1980): The Wounded

During the transitional stage from 1976 to 1978, very little was heard about rusticated youths. It was not until after mid-1978 that fiction about rusticated youths began to appear. The story which marked the
significant resurgence of Zhiqing Fiction, was Lu Xinhua's The Wound which appeared on August 11 in Wenhui Daily (Wenhui bao) in Shanghai. The plot centers upon the agony of a rusticated female who has cut off relation with her mother who was accused of being a "traitor". Its revelation of family tragedy inflicted by the Gang of Four and the Cultural Revolution laid the foundation for Wound Literature which dominated the Chinese literary scene at least until 1981 and still continues to assert its influence to a lesser extent. Specifically, this story, with its particular concern for the fate of rusticated youth due to political vicissitudes sets an example for later Zhiqing Fiction.

The reaction of the public was overwhelming because of its unprecedented exposure of tragedy under the socialist system. However, there were also adverse opinions from the dogmatic sector. The sole complaint (though not published), a very common one at this stage, was that this story depicts socialist tragedy and hence is a work of "exposure literature", a term having a negative connotation at this stage. The dogmatists' logic was that the "essence" of socialist society is good, so, to expose its dark side is to "distort" its "essence". To refute this criticism, comparatively "liberal" critics said that this opinion was a vulgar one and argued that every historical stage has its own social "essence" and what was revealed in these works...
was the "essence" of the era. One critic, applying Deng's dictum that "practice is the sole criterion in testing truth," pointed out that reality [practice] has proved that there are tragedies in socialist society, and to expose these tragedies will only deepen the criticism of the Gang of Four and strengthen the people's spirit to accomplish the Four Modernisations.

The official affirmation of this story as well as of the earlier The Class Teacher (which appeared in People's Literature [Renmin wenxue] in November 1977) reflected the interplay between the leadership and the writers. During 1977-78 the Chinese leadership, for the consolidation of its power, needed literary works to expose the "wounds" inflicted by the Gang of Four. In particular, the image of the illiterate hooligan in The Class Teacher was beneficial for the preparation of public opinion for education reforms put forth by Deng Xiaoping in autumn 1977. The Wound was similarly helpful in preparing public opinion for the rehabilitation of older cadres who were purged in the Cultural Revolution. Its attack on "class background theory" was also timely in clearing the way for the policy of removing the labels of the rightists. Because Wound Literature matched the need of the leadership, it received general approval.

The development of Zhiqing Fiction is also inseparable from the life of young writers. By late 1978, rusticated youths who had been in the countryside
for many years demanded through rallies and demonstrations to return to the city. The new leadership realized that the accumulated problems of the rustication program might cause potential danger to national stability. Hence, after the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee, policies to improve the treatment of rusticated youths were implemented. By late 1979, the majority of rusticated youths had returned to the city. The comparatively favorable conditions in the city coupled with the more relaxed literary policy enabled young people to engage in cultural pursuits. Encouraged by the leadership to expose social ills (most of which were supposedly caused by the Gang of Four), they followed the example of Lu Xinhua and truthfully depicted their bitterness and anguish. The topics which appealed to them were those of their own experience -- the Red Guard Movement, rustication, and life after returning to the city.

One dominant feature of post-Mao literature, and particularly of Zhiqing Fiction, is the predominance of the love theme. In July 1978, Liu Xinwu's short story The Place Of Love (Aiqing de weizhi) formally rehabilitated the love theme which had been completely wiped out since the Cultural Revolution. But this story, like his others written in 1977-78, is more of an illustration of a concept. The theme of this story is that revolution and love should not be mutually
exclusive because the latter can encourage a person to better serve the revolution -- in the current context, the Four Modernisations. This story was, as expected, well-received by a long-expectant audience because of its revival of a forbidden theme. In April 1979, artistically superior to The Place Of Love, Zhang Kangkang's story The Right To Love marked a greater breakthrough in the theme of love in that aside from a call for the return of romantic love, it stresses the right of an individual to love one's career and everything to which each citizen is entitled.29 From early 1979 on, romantic love has become an indispensable element in post-Mao fiction. The majority of Zhiqing Fiction include some descriptions of love.

With successive breakthroughs into "forbidden zones", Zhiqing Fiction of 1979-80 encompasses a variety of subject matter of which the Red Guard Movement and rustication life occupy the most pages. Stories on Red Guards do not present a glorious picture of revolutionary heroism, as those in the Cultural Revolution had done; but a panorama of violence and horror, blind loyalty and "modern superstition". An outstanding example is Zheng Yi's Maple (Feng) (February 11, 1979)30 which depicts the tragic aspect of factional fights among Red Guards. The female protagonist Lu Danfeng, who is in a faction opposing her boyfriend's, takes her life by jumping from a building in order to show the latter her loyalty to Mao and the
revolutionary line. This tragedy is further compounded at the end of the story when her boy friend Li Honggang, accused of causing the death of Lu, also faces execution. In The Bloody Sunday (Xieran de zaochen) (May 1979),31 the protagonist is killed by his own brother who belongs to another Red Guard faction. Through the tragic death of these Red Guards, these stories question the meaning of revolution and reprove the deification of Mao and the subsequent "modern superstition" which alienated young people from their normal path of life.

During 1977-80, the fact that the Gang of Four was blamed for all the dark aspects in Chinese society legitimized young writers' negation of the rustication program in which they had been constrained during the most precious period of their lives. Zhiqing Fiction of the first stage tends to concentrate on revealing the mistreatment of rusticated youths who are generally from unfavorable class backgrounds and their struggle to realize personal aspirations and ideals in a harsh and suppressive environment. In these stories, the magnificent picture of rustication life created in the Cultural Revolution is replaced with scenes of gloominess and desolation. The dominant tone of these stories is a mixture of anger, anguish, bitterness and condemnation. For instance, Kong Jiesheng's On The Other Side Of The Stream (March 1979),32 the second story on
rusticated youth to arouse national attention after *The Wound*, deals with the destruction of families and the vulnerability of rusticated youths to fate in the vicissitudes of politics. The incest occurring between the brother and sister is an indirect criticism of the topsy-turvy political situation. Xu Mingyu's *Transfer* (February/1979) combines the negation of rustication and criticism of bureaucratic corruption. It depicts how the continuous political discrimination forces a rusticated youth to degrade himself to flatter and bribe practically every official at many levels to ease his way out of the countryside.

The first novel to portray the negative aspect of the rustication program by fusing the Red Guard Movement, family tragedy, official corruption, love and death is Zhu Lin's novel *The Path Of Life* (1979). It relates how an idealistic female youth Juanjuan from "bad" class background, raped by a local cadre, is driven to suicide in a remote county. Her death, though an extreme case, highlights the cadre's serious abuses of power.

These works, though dealing with the lives of the same kind of protagonists (rusticated youth) and settings similar to those in the Cultural Revolution period, are characteristically different from or even opposite to the latter. The glory of the rustication program has completely faded and has been replaced by a devastating experience. Hard physical labor which was to...
be exerted in tests of the steeling process is condemned as inefficient, laborious and a waste of time and talent. The "masterly spirit" of the poor and lower-middle peasants is reduced to petty-mindedness and ignorance. The central conflict is not with nature or the "class enemy" but with local officials who tend to be corrupt supporters of the Gang of Four factions. The concern of the protagonist is no longer class struggle or settling in the countryside, but returning to the city to pursue his ideals. This reminds us of the negative examples, Wan Lili in The Journey and Xue Chuan in The Demarcation, both of whom are condemned for their intention to pursue higher education. Now this type of young person has re-emerged as protagonist in Zhiqing Fiction. The struggle against oppression and the search for individual aspirations and ideals endow this type of protagonist with a strong sense of romanticism. By contrast, the revolutionary heroes, such as Zhong Weihua or Geng Changjiong, have either receded to oblivion, or like Cui Haiying (villain of The Path Of Life), the former Red Guard, are depicted as a corrupt power-seekers. The general impression of Zhiqing Fiction of the first stage is that the stories are spontaneous and moving and with a high degree of critical realism, but they suffer from an inadequacy of artistic refinement.
2. Stage II (mid-1980 to early 1982): Rethinking and Searching

After mid-1980, with anger and grief gradually vented, the high tide of Wound Literature began to recede. Now, temporally more distant from their bitter experience, young writers recognized that mere condemnation of the Gang of Four was not enough. It was necessary to find the roots that fostered the emergence of this radical group as well as the Red Guard Movement and the Cultural Revolution. At the same time returned young people, confronted by more urgent problems such as employment, marriage and education, began to shift their attention to readjustment in their new lives. Hence, a retrospective look at past life and recent history and the search for a new point of reference in life mark the two characteristic concerns of this stage.

The characteristic description of the horror and violence of the Red Guard Movement of the first stage is now replaced by painful recollection and confession. In Zhang Kangkang's The Fire Spirit (Huo de jingling) (June/1981), the rusticated first-person protagonist is haunted by a sense of guilt in having burnt the novel script of a writer who subsequently dies of a heart-attack. A greater breakthrough in the Red Guard theme is Li Ping's novella When The Sunset Clouds Diasappear (Wanxia xiaoshi de shihou) (February/1981). It is not only the record of a confession of a former Red Guard, but also an intellectual probing into the significance
of life, human nature, religion and civilization. The first person protagonist Li Huaiping unknowingly raids the home of Nanshan with whom he is infatuated. This event causes him to lose her and causes him a long-lasting remorse. The probing into human nature (particularly in the life of the former Nationalist general) and religion (as shown in the exchange of conversation between the old scholar on Mountain Tai and Nanshan) caused this story to be continually criticized by "conservative" critics as "showing a wrong tendency" and revealing the "crisis of faith" among contemporary Chinese youth. Despite adverse criticism, this work exemplifies the search of Chinese youths for a new faith in life.

In stories on rusticated life from the first stage, the central theme is the hopeless struggle of the rusticated protagonist under the combined pressure from antagonists representative of "class background theory" and local corrupt officials of the Gang of Four. The main action frequently involves the corrupt local cadres preventing the youth from attending institutions of higher education or transferring to a city job. At the second stage, the tragic aspect of rusticated life is reduced with the decline of Wound Literature. The relationship among rusticated youths in a confined community, on the contrary, receives more attention. There is also an increase in the depiction of the youth-
peasant relationship which has been largely neglected. What is also noticeable is that the "local emperor" has 
retired somewhat to the background, or is even portrayed 
in a comparatively positive light.

In pre-1976 Zhiqing Fiction, for the purpose of 
presenting an optimistic picture of rustication life, 
any incongruity among rusticated youths is generally 
avoided. In the first stage, the emphasis on the 
conflict between local cadres and rusticated youths 
leaves no room for that among young people themselves. 
In the second stage, the change of thematic emphasis 
leads to the frequent depiction of the dark side of 
human nature in a confined community of educated 
youths. For instance, the short story *Forever And Ever* 
(Dijiu tianchang) (August/1981) depicts a conflict 
between friendship and morality. It shows how a young 
rusticated female is betrayed by a friend in stiff 
competition for a position that leads to a university 
vacancy. Even love is at the mercy of self-interest. In 
The Dragon Eye Lake (Longyan Hu) (August/1981), the 
protagonist and his girlfriend are caught when they are 
alone in the woods. During investigation, he betrays her 
and causes her to be locked up for months.

Zhiqing Fiction at the first stage rarely describes 
a love relationship between urban and rural young 
people. The general impression is that rural youths have 
been ruled out of urban youths' living circle. In 
reality, there have been intermarriages between these
two groups. But when such a love relationship is depicted, it frequently ends with separation and the loser is always the rural youth. Lu Yao's Older Sister (Jiejie) (January/1981) tells of an unbridgeable gap between rural and urban young people through an unhappy love relationship. It shows how a rural girl is betrayed by an urban youth after his father resumes power. In Xiao Fuxing's Purple Fragrance (Dazixiang) (June/81), a rural youth deliberately breaks up with his beloved so that she can return to the city. Here, we first see the emergence of a lofty image of rural youth.

Gu Xiaoyan's novella What Are You Thinking (Ni zai xiang shenme) (April 1981) is one of the first to elevate the hitherto low image of Party cadres. The protagonist, a newly-arrived leader, assumes a father-image for the rusticated youths in a coal mine in the Great Barren North. He improves the food quality, fixes the shabby dormitory, increases cultural activities and personally helps arrange for an older young person to find a spouse in a nearby town. In the end, he even assigns leading positions to some able young people. The message of the story is clear: youths should not worry in the countryside; the Party will take good care of them like a father taking care of his son. Here we first see the re-emergence of the positive evaluation of Party members and a reconciliation between local officials and rusticated youths.
The number of Zhiqing stories using the urban environment as spatial setting naturally increased after the rusticated youths returned to the city. The problems they encountered soon became prevailing themes, though to a certain degree still fused with their past experience. The increasing re-emphasis on education and the development of man power for the Four Modernisations in stage two has brought the studious intellectual image to the central stage of Zhiqing Fiction. Zhang Kangkang's The Wasted Years (Kongbai) (June/1981) touches the theme of the acquisition of knowledge for self-fulfilment. It depicts how a book-loving returned youth switches from one job to another until he finds a "suitable one" -- boiling water at night -- which gives him less money but more time to pursue his interest in the subject of history. In Please Walk With Me (Qing yu wo tongxing) (May/1982), the protagonist, a returned youth, sells popcorn in the market while diligently writing his article on international relations. Aside from the book-oriented characters who strive to gain knowledge, there are those who fight for survival under social and financial pressure. Gan Tiesheng's The Modern Tea House (Xiandai pai chaguan) (October/1981) depicts how a young female struggles to maintain her tea house despite the conservative officials' attempt to close it down by withdrawing her food supply. In these stories, rustication life has receded to the background. What one sees is a protagonist struggling to heal past wounds and
make up his loss in a new but still unfavorable milieu.

In the second stage of Zhiqing Fiction, problems of love and marriage were treated as independent themes rather than subthemes of family tragedy or rusticated life of the first stage. Zhang Kangkang's Northern Lights (February/1981) first raises the search for ideal love to a central theme through a description of the fluctuation in the heroine's affection for three youths. Xiao Cha's The Moonlit Stream (Shuangzhe yueliang de xiaohuo) (June/1981), depicts how a returned rusticated female, who has passed dating age, is pressed into an engagement by "social opinion". Her final decision to remain single rather than marrying someone she does not love manifests her belief in the purity of love. Zhang Xinxin's The Dreams Of Our Generation (December/1981) is the first to deal with the absurdity of life itself through the anonymous protagonist's search for a childhood lover who turns out, ironically, to be her neighbor whom she despises. In another earlier story Where Did I Miss You (Wo zai nar cuoguo le ni) (October/1980), through an unsuccessful love relationship, Zhang Xinxin calls for the return of femininity.

A general impression of the stories of the second stage is that they have lost some of the spontaneity and sharp, negative criticism of the first stage, but show a more objective and more profound probing of life.

113
Those depicting current daily life are full of vitality and rich in social content related to present-day China. There is also more experimentation of artistic technique. For instance, the de-emphasis of plot and new emphasis on the inner life through internal monologue and "stream of consciousness" in characterisation can be seen in works by a small number of young writers such as Zhang Kangkang and Zhang Xinxin.

3. Stage III (early 1982 - late 1983): Affirmation and Return To The Countryside

Zhiqing Fiction entered a third stage in early 1982. By late 1981, the Red Guard Movement (which had been negated in many stories of 1979, 1980 and early 1981) has receded to the background. But, rusticated life, which was slightly overshadowed by immediate personal problems and social concerns at the second stage, has re-appeared with a different tendency. Most conspicuous is the nostalgia for and affirmation of rusticated life. Accordingly, the hitherto gloomy landscape of the countryside is tinted with a pastoral color. The relationship between rusticated youths and local peasants receives more intense description. Local officials, who still occupy an important position in stories of the second stage, have "disappeared" amidst the local peasants -- they have become members of the rural community. More significantly, the protagonist, having gone through all the trouble of returning to the
city, begins to find positive values in rustication life. Beginning in the spring of 1982, and particularly in 1983, an increasing number of stories have portrayed protagonists returning to help develop the countryside. At the same time, for the majority who remain in the city, stories depicting their devotion to the Four Modernisations have increased tremendously.

The affirmation of rusticated life in Zhiqing Fiction can be explained by several factors. For many youths, returning home did not necessarily bring them a better life. Unemployment, shortage of living space, and other frustrations have alienated them from the "new" environment. In moments when they suffer these inadequacies, they tend to idealize the rural landscape. Further, the government's revived recognition of the value of educated youths in modernising the rural areas has increased the appointment of capable youths to more technical and cultural posts in rural areas. Meanwhile, the continuous promotion of patriotism and the call for youths to return to the countryside to build the Four Modernisations in these few years (and particularly since 1982), have inevitably moved those who have ideals to take this means to help build the nation. But those who actually return to the countryside are few despite the fact that they present an idealized picture of the countryside.

The thematic tendency towards greater conformity to
Party ideology in the third stage was also caused by the fluctuation of the "cold winds and warm breezes" on the literary scene. The accumulated pressure from the various criticisms of certain individual writers by top government leaders has inevitably affected the psychology of Chinese writers who are still feeling residual apprehension from previous campaigns. Specifically, the stress on the observation of "social effects" since spring 1980, the formalization of the call to portray the so-called "socialist new man" in the building of the Four Modernisations in mid-1981, the proclamation of the "Writers' Communique" in July 1982 which requires writers to observe many patriotic and moral obligations, all have begun to show their effects in works published in 1982 and 1983. What is noteworthy, however, is that despite the increase in ideological conformity, there has also been an increase of literary diversity.

The problem of whether it is worthwhile to return to the city is first raised in Wang Anyi's short story The Destination in October 1981. Wang Anyi is quick in grasping the trend of Party ideology. Through a description of a former rusticated protagonist Chen Xin's unhappy life after returning to Shanghai from Xinjiang, the author conveys her message that returning to the city is not the final solution; one should advance to a further "destination".

During the first and second stages of Zhiqing
Fiction, since physical labor was generally described as a waste of youth and talent, nothing positive was said about rusticated youths' contribution to cultivation and construction. Liang Xiaosheng's *A Land Of Wonder And Mystery* (Zheshi yipian shenqi de tudi) (August/1982) is one of the first works in the third stage to affirm the merits of rusticated life. It depicts how a group of Shanghai youths conquer a virgin land -- the notoriously dangerous Ghost Lake in the Great Barren North. Though the ending is tragic with the death of three youths, the story recaptures the ideal and zeal of youths at the beginning of the program. This story shows the dialectic of rustication: out of the unpleasant aspects of rustication life arise the positive values created by the rusticated generation.

The first story to formally announce the return to the countryside is Kong Jiesheng's *The Southern Bank* in the second issue of Shiyue in 1982. This novella is a watershed in the development of Zhiqing Fiction. Since its publication, many stories of the same theme have appeared, taking Zhiqing Fiction in a new direction. Yi Jie and his girlfriend Muzhen, feeling alienated from their current urban life decide to return to Hainan Island where they were rusticated for a decade. What is the consequence of their choice is not known because the novella stops at their departure. But their action shows the affirmation of rustication life and a search for a
new destiny.

Aside from the nostalgia for and returning to the countryside, there are also works depicting young people's revived confidence and faith in life and in the Party. For instance, in Kong Jiesheng's An Ordinary Female Worker (Putong nugong) (June/1982) the female protagonist He Chan, a returned youth, strives to perfect her skill in making locks despite adverse rumours about her because she is a single parent. In her, we see the image of an ordinary worker who quietly does her job, in Lenin's phrase, performing the function of a "screw" in society. The same theme is also dealt with in Wang Xiaoying's The Starway (Xinghe) (February/1984) through a dedicated female worker to her new job in a watch factory.

The general trend of the third stage is toward greater conformity. In stories recollecting rusticated life, the pessimism and the lack of outlet which prevailed in the first and second stages are replaced by a general note of optimism and certainty. The thematic emphasis is no longer on the protagonist's struggle for individual aspirations but his acceptance of rusticated life. Hence, the sole conflict of the plot is not between the protagonist and the overwhelmingly powerful antagonists represented by corrupt cadres and "bad" class background, but among young people themselves. Not only have the corrupt officials who were the villains in stories of the first stage been greatly lessened; they
have been endowed with positive traits. The peasants who were ignored in the first stage and looked down upon in the second stage now appear as respectable individuals. The elevation of the peasant image is particularly obvious in the portrayal of the rural youth. In stories about current life in the city, the depiction of social darkness, particularly bureaucratic corruption, is greatly reduced. Instead, there has been an increasing emphasis on the affirmation of life.

C. A TENTATIVE CYCLICAL PATTERN

It is thus evident that from early 1973 to 1984, Zhiqing Fiction has developed according to a cyclical pattern which can be drawn in the following manner:

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--- negation 1
/ (stage I)
affirmation 1
(Cultural Revolution)
\ critical negation
(stage II)
affirmation 2
(stage III) \ /
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In the above chart, the Cultural Revolution represents the first affirmation of rustication and Party ideology. This affirmation, however, is crudely negated by Zhiqing Fiction during the first and critically negated during the second. Toward the third stage, what has been negated in the first and second stages regains its positive evaluation.
Why is rusticated life, a single historical experience, though with many manifestations, being evaluated so differently at different stages? This diversity reflects the change in rusticated youths themselves and the change in the social and political environment.

The themes contributing to the pattern as we have seen in the above discussion reflect the experience of young people over the last decade. Undoubtedly, the common path of Chinese youth -- Red Guard Movement, rustication, return to the city, getting a job, getting married, re-evaluation of past life -- to a large extent shapes the basic progression of Zhiqing Fiction.

Political, social and literary factors are also decisive. Mao's proclamation of December 1968 that it was necessary for urban educated youths to go to the countryside to receive re-education from the poor and lower middle peasants decided the direction of Zhiqing Fiction during the Cultural Revolution. Hence, as in The Journey and The Demarcation, the plot structure and characterization were accordingly devised to promote this policy. The unpleasant side of reality was accordingly suppressed or distorted under the pretext of "revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism". In the development of Zhiqing Fiction, this was the first affirmation of rustication.

However, in the post-Mao era, with the new
government's promotion of denunciation of the Gang of Four, and with the return of critical realism and humanism, the unpleasant side of reality surfaced. What had been affirmed in the Cultural Revolution was now condemned. The first expression of condemnation by Lu Xinhua in The Wound in 1978 and the Wound Literature which developed from this story marked a drastic change in the direction of Chinese fiction. From Maple to On The Other Side Of The Stream and to The Path Of Life, young writers, relying on their own experience of life, exposed the violence of the Red Guard Movement, the deceitful nature of the Cultural Revolution, and the darker aspects of rusticated life. The general trend was the total negation of what was promoted in the Cultural Revolution. This is the first negation of the first affirmation.

After mid-1980, the new government had consolidated its power and called for a change of emphasis to the Four Modernisations. Accordingly, the critical exposition of negative aspects of society gradually decreased. In Zhiqing Fiction, new subject matter drawn from the immediate problems of youth soon mixes in varying degrees with past wounds. The self-struggle theme, as shown in The Wasted Years (Zhang Kangkang), and Please Walk With Me, is a product of this change of milieu. There also arose the deeper probing into the roots of the "unprecedented historical disaster" of the Cultural Revolution as shown in The Fire Spirit and
When The Sunset Clouds Disappear. This stage represents the critical negation of the first affirmation.

In 1982, the accumulated effect of personal, political, social and literary factors began to have an impact. More distant in time and space from their rustication life, returned youths tend to idealize what they once despised. Moreover, rusticated life indeed provided this generation of Chinese youth a precious opportunity to see the lower strata of Chinese society. The feeling of nostalgia is further enhanced by their personal frustrations (caused by unemployment, lack of living space, limited education and marriage opportunities) of current life. In recent years, the government's increasing promotion of patriotism (asking youths to go where the nation needs them most) and the increase in the demand for writers to serve the Four Modernizations have resulted in literary works emphasizing the affirmation of rustication and Party ideology. As embodied in fiction, the renewed recognition of the merits of agricultural cultivation in A Land Of Wonder And Mystery and the decision to return to the countryside in The Southern Bank represent a new affirmation. The new affirmation is by no means a simple reversion to the previous affirmation, but a product of combined factors in the development of history.

At this point, it is instructive to single out some
young writers whose work can embody the cyclical development of the Zhiqing theme. Kong Jiesheng's fiction is a distinctive example. From his On The Other Side Of The Stream in March 1979 which depicts the pitiful fate of an individual during the Cultural Revolution to his The Past which describes a rusticated female's unwillingness to return to the city and to The Southern Bank (1982), which depicts the actual return to the countryside, we see the gradual change from negation to affirmation of rusticated life and society. His article "Old Dreams And New Shore" published in the fifth issue of Shiyue in 1982 sums up the psychological transformation of rusticated youths in various stages -- their hatred and indignation, hesitation and perplexity and finally their search for a new destiny.

Another example is Zheng Wanlong. His trilogy The Young Friends (Nianqing de pengyou men) (April/1981), Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light (Hongdeng, huangdeng, ludeng) (June/1982) and Tomorrow, Goodbye (Mingtian, zaijiang) (February/1984) traces the path of a rusticated youth which illustrates the pattern of development of the cyclical pattern. In the first, we see the deep wounds of the female protagonist as she attempts to commit suicide because of her father's political problems in the Cultural Revolution and mourns the accidental death of her boyfriend in the Great Barren North. In the second, we see her devotion to work
and her unsuccessful love relationship, and in the third, we see what brings her to a decision to go to work in a remote area. These three stages in the development of the female protagonist -- which the author calls "The Trilogy Of Youth" exemplify the changes from condemnation to affirmation in Zhiqing Fiction.

Because Zhang Kangkang had already published a novel in the pre-1976 period and because her work closely reflects the path of rusticated youths, she is the most comprehensive example for examining the transformation of the Zhiqing theme. From The Demarcation (1975) to The Right To Love (1979), to Summer (Xia) (1980), to The Fire Spirit (1981) and to Pagoda (Ta) (1983), each story represents a stage in Zhiqing Fiction. In The Right To Love, she calls for the individual's right to love what has been negated in The Demarcation; in Summer, she deals with the emancipation of individuality; in The Fire Spirit, she evaluates the Red Guard Movement through the hero's confession and search; and in Pagoda, she depicts the dialectical revelation of rustication life. The basic difference between Demarcation and Pagoda is that in the former she abides closely by the Party policy, asserting that there is no way out for youths unless they work in the countryside, whereas in Pagoda, the author has the freedom to say that there is value in either returning to the city or
remaining in the countryside.

Within the thematic change of Zhiqing Fiction, the portrait of youth also changes. In the following chapters, I attempt to divide Zhiqing Fiction into five major thematic categories and examine the portrait of youth from each. The first two chapters will cover stories mainly from the first and second stage, with focuses on the Red Guard Movement and the rustication program. The third and fourth chapters will deal with young people's search for human values and happiness, focusing on the quest for love and the realisation of the self and individuality. The last chapter covers stories from the third stage, with a focus on the new axis of life in terms of devoting one's talent to the Four Modernisations.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIRE SPIRIT: RETROSPECTION AND CONFESSION

Sometimes, when memories of the past
quietly invade my heart
when distant pains
knock at my door, like a spirit
I want to run up to the peak
and yell out loud:
I committed a crime because I was too naive
I want to run up to the peak
and yell out loud:
I committed a crime because I was too naive

Su Ye: Forget Me Not (Wuwang wo)

The Red Guard Movement was the first that greatly affected contemporary Chinese youth. This movement not only initiated Chinese youth into the complexity of politics, but also physical violence, bloodshed and power struggle. However, during the Cultural Revolution, because this movement was upheld as a "revolutionary" action the dark side of it was not allowed to appear in literature. It was not until early 1979 that stories about the actual situation of the Red Guard Movement began to appear. In these works, for the first time, one sees the depiction of the inhuman aspects of the movement and how much these aspects have alienated Chinese young people from their normal life. In the first stage of Zhiqing Fiction, the Red Guard stories tend to depict the actual violence and horror of the movement and the damages of "modern superstition"; in
the second stage, they turn to deal with the retrospection and confession of Red Guards and their search for a new spiritual outlet. By 1982, the Red Guard theme had receded to the remote background.

In the fiction of the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guard protagonist is a revolutionary hero created according to the "three prominences" method. Physically, he is without exception robust and energetic. He is usually the son of worker parents who had been exploited by capitalists before 1949. His sole concern in life revolves around class struggle. He does not compromise with anything he regards as detrimental to class struggle. He proudly claims that his revolutionary ideal is to "save the whole of mankind". Since Mao's little red book is his spiritual nutrition, his speech is made up of slogans and quotations. When he is in doubt, his mentor, the Party member who plays the father-instructor role, is always there at the right time to solve his problems.

From 1979 to 1981, a number of works of Zhiqing Fiction evaluating the Red Guard Movement and the Cultural Revolution appeared. These stories characteristically tend to depict the actual scenes of factional battles and the horror and cruelty of political struggle. Almost without exception, these stories end with an unhappy outcome for the Red Guard protagonist. The Red Guard protagonist usually begins as
a courageous revolutionary, and loyal fighter of Mao. He destroys and kills in the name of revolution. His enemy is usually the Red Guards of the other faction or newly-sanctioned "targets of political struggle" which consist of the people from "bad class background". The key episode of the story is the home raid, the struggle meeting, or the factional battle. The glory of the Red Guard protagonist tends to be temporary. Following a drop in his parents' political status, he changes overnight from a "red" to a "black" element and consequently loses his Red Guard status and suffers from social and political discrimination. This sudden change gives him a tremendous blow psychologically and emotionally. He soon ends up joining the rustication program. From then on, regrets and confession form his prevailing mood. The confessional Red Guard protagonist is, in a sense, a Satanic hero in his characteristically destructive and then remorseful temperament. Awakened from "modern superstition," he embarks on a journey in search of a new faith. In the following paragraphs, we shall look at the transformation of the Red Guard protagonist in the Red Guard theme.

On February 11, 1979, the former Red Guard leader Zheng Yi published his short story Maple. Through the violence and horror of a Red Guard factional fight, it was the first to uncover the effect of "modern superstition" on Chinese youth. The story is told by a teacher-narrator, a reluctant participant in factional
fights, who witnesses the tragic death of two of his students on two occasions within two years. The teacher-narrator serves as a link, because it is through him that the love of Lu Danfeng is conveyed to Lu Honggang and it is through him that the life and death of both young people are threaded together.

At the beginning of Maple, the tension is immediately felt with the depiction of a war-like situation in which the Rebel Headquarter Corps Faction (to which Li Honggang belongs) is about to be counter-attacked by the Jinggang Mountain Faction (to which Lu Danfeng belongs). This tense situation sets the stage for the upcoming conflict between the two main characters. Lu Danfeng exemplifies a typical female Red Guard: short hair, round rosy cheeks, sparkling eyes and tough bearing. Through a flashback, the narrator reveals Lu's "revolutionary spirit" through her ability to recite from memory passages and their page numbers from Mao's Quotations. Her conviction that "there must be sacrifice in struggle, and death in revolution" [p.415] is dramatically ironic because it foreshadows her death. However, what makes the reader side with Lu is not her fighting spirit, but her love for Li Honggang. The twin maple leaves which she asks the narrator to deliver in the midst of intense fighting to Li Honggang as a token of love are symbolic of love transcending politics.

The climax of the story occurs not at the battle, as
one would expect but after it is over. Through the scene witnessed by the narrator from the vantage of a high building, we see the dilemma between love and revolution. The Jinggang Mountain Faction is suppressed under the leadership of the Li Honggang. Proud of his "revolutionary" action, Li says to the narrator, "This is how steel is made". [p.423] But this remark which he uses to justify the fighting and violence is, ironically, immediately followed by a tragedy created by his own "revolutionary" action. Unexpectedly, Lu suddenly stands up among the bodies of the defeated opponents. The irony is that if Li wants to be "steeled", he must forsake or kill his beloved. Li is plunged into an unbearable dilemma. He cannot bear to shoot her, yet he cannot betray his faction which he believes is following Mao's line. The conflict between love and "revolution" which has haunted him since their split months ago suddenly comes to the forefront of his consciousness. The same conflict also torments Lu. But love is overshadowed by "revolution" in both of them. At this tense moment, she screams at him, "Why did you come! Why did you come! Why!... Your hands are running with the blood of members of the Jinggang Mountain Faction -- killer, killer, killer!" [p.423] In a hysterical manner, she yells a slogan and jumps from the fifth floor, believing she is sacrificing for the "revolution". Actually, as one critic rightly observes, she is a victim of "modern superstition". The red
maple leaves on which Lu Danfeng's body lands, previously a symbol of love, are now a symbol of her blood and death. The "blood veins" that the narrator sees in Lu Danfeng's twin maple leaves which he gives to Li Honggang further signals the "bleeding youth" which was originally like the leaves "pure, bright and lively." [p.426]

The tragedy of the story is further strengthened with another horrifying scene witnessed by the narrator after an ellipsis of two years. The Jinggang Mountain Faction now gets the upper hand in the factional struggle and accuses Li of forcing Lu to commit suicide. Herein lies the absurdity of the movement and the vulnerability of individuals in the vicissitudes of politics. When Li is paraded to the execution ground, the narrator who happens to be on the street cannot bear to watch, but instead, walks into an alley where he comes upon red maple trees "bleeding" in full autumn color. The sight of the maple leaves echoes Lu's death, and signals the loss of another victim. The closure of the story is worthy of attention. First, the absence of a "bright tail" separates the story from works of 1978 which frequently retain an element of optimism characteristic of socialist realism. Further, the parade to the execution ground is reminiscent of the execution of Ah Q in Lu Xun's modern classic The Story Of Ah Q (Ah Q zhengzhuan). Both Li and Ah Q die for the
revolution. The difference is that when Ah Q dies, he still does not understand what has happened to him. But in the case of Li, the fact that he has left the Red Guard organization after Lu's death implies his awakening to the ugly aspect of the factional fight. The execution of an awakened youth thus intensifies the tragic aspect of the story.

Red Guard factional fights not only destroy youthful love, but also normal family relationships. Lu Lei's The Bloody Morning relates how a seventeen year old Red Guard is shot by his older brother who belongs to another Red Guard faction. Both of them have cut off relationship with their "capitalist roader" parents; both try hard to impress their fellow Red Guards with their brave "revolutionary actions". When the story begins, the protagonist has been locked up for two days for having protected a Red Guard Commander in a battle. He was wounded in the fight and his head is almost completely wrapped in bandages except for his eyes. Suffering from thirst, hunger and pain, he hopes that his brother will come to rescue him. By using flashbacks, the author effectively conjures up the past intimacy of the brothers -- the scene of the brothers sharing one candy and the scene in which the older brother saves the protagonist from drowning under a bridge -- and then destroys this intimacy with the ugliness of the present split, thereby revealing the harm done to normal family relationships by the Cultural
Revolution.

The lawlessness, violence and inhuman aspect of the Cultural Revolution are shown in the execution of the protagonist. He is taken to the execution ground without being forewarned. The climax of the story occurs when the older brother, not knowing the one to be executed is his brother, makes a "timely" arrival before the execution and insists on doing the shooting himself in order to show his "revolutionary spirit". His shout awakens the half-conscious protagonist who thinks that his older brother is coming to the rescue. The execution is ironically set at the bridge where the older brother saved the protagonist from drowning years ago. The story closes with the older brother's sudden recognition of the protagonist's cry after the death-dealing shot, thereby creating an effect of lingering agony. The fate of the older brother can be conjectured. He may be executed like Li Honggang in Maple by the opposite faction if the latter gets the upper hand; if not, he will suffer from a deep sense of guilt and remorse for the rest of his life. In any case, both of them are victims of political struggle. The protagonist's cry, "I've been deceived!" resounding in the air before his death, expresses the voice of a victimized generation.

If the above two stories criticize the Red Guard Movement through an objective depiction of tragic
events, Jin He's Reencounter (Chongfeng) (May/1979) tackles the problem from a more historical perspective. This story reveals the fates of previous "revolutionary" Red Guards after the fall of the Gang of Four. Under the new leadership, in 1977-1979, many of those involved in violence or killing during the Cultural Revolution were arrested in order to assuage the anger of the people. The author who worked for the Public Security Bureau was inspired by some of the cases he encountered. The plot revolves around the psychological conflict of a Public Security officer Zhu Chunxin, triggered by an unexpected reunion with Ye Hui, a former Red Guard who protected him during the Cultural Revolution. The title "reunion" itself is ironic because it does not carry a happy connotation of a normal reunion of friends, but anxiety and psychological agony. The reunion takes place at the security office where Ye Hui is indicted for murdering another Red Guard during that particular factional fight. The ironical situation is that Ye "killed" the other Red Guard in order to protect Zhu, but now Zhu has the responsibility of handling the murder case; in the past Ye was Zhu's "comrade-in-arms" and "benefactor", but now is his "criminal". The author's underlying ironical comment is that the Red Guards, naively and feverishly devoted to "revolution", ended up being the accused, whereas the officials for whom they fought and killed became their accusers. The Red Guards had sacrificed for nothing; and they had been deceived by
the "revolution".

The cool and defiant attitude of Ye contrasts sharply with the anxiety and worry of Zhu, who is debating within himself whether to tell the truth or not. His decision not to reveal his past shows that he keeps his power and status at the expense of the life of his benefactor. Zhu's meeting with Ye alone is thus only a self-comforting action. Through Ye's defiant remark to Zhu the author shows the unjust treatment of Red Guards.

After you made a mistake, you could blame it on Lin Biao and the Gang of Four, but for my mistake, I'm required to admit that I was their follower. [p.178]

This story provoked a heated discussion in China because of the sensitive nature of the issue. Those who praised the story tended to applaud its realism. Those who reprehended it said that the author avoided criticising the Gang of Four but instead "slandered the image of government officials" by depicting Zhu's self-blame. Another opinion said that the author idealized the image of the Red Guard protagonist Ye Hui at the expense of a Party official. In defending the story, the author said that both the officials and Red Guards were victims of the Cultural Revolution and hence, none of them should be blamed. But who should take the blame? The answer is not too far to seek.

The story that paints the negative side of the Red Guard's "Grand Exchange of Revolutionary Experience" during the Cultural Revolution is Li Keling's Total
Solar Eclipse (Riquan shi)  In contrast to the glorious expedition of Red Guards in fiction of the Cultural Revolution, it depicts the ordeal of several female Red Guards during their expedition to Yan'an. This "pilgrimage" to the revolutionary holy land ironically turns into a misfortune. They unknowingly enter an ungoverned remote district in which, because of poverty, men have to abduct women passing by to be their wives. The negation of the Red Guard Movement is conveyed through the mishaps occurring to the female protagonist Wenwen and her friend Sisi. Sisi hangs herself when forced by the rural youth Erguo to marry him. Wenwen protests with a "hunger strike" but fails to move Daguo, Erguo's older brother to let her go. From then on, she has lost all the hopes and ideals of her life.

The cruel fate has destroyed my budding heart and soul. We've come here to attack the old world, but who would have expected that before we could do anything, it has given us a severe lesson. Far away from our home and school, from our parents and our beloved, our pure, beautiful and faithful heart and soul have painfully and prematurally withered overnight. [p. 28]

The symbolic title "Total Solar Eclipse" refers to the complete destruction of social order and loss of hope during the Cultural Revolution. It is reminiscent of Mao Dun's trilogy Eclipse. The irony is that in Mao Dun's work, there is still room for young people to search for high ideals when China was under the rule of
the KMT Government, but in this story which is supposed to take place in socialist society, there is no outlet.

Another point of contrast is that the fresh and fertile countryside depicted in the fiction of the fifties and sixties is here totally replaced by superstition, backwardness and barbarism. Although Wenwen's chance encounter with Sisi's boyfriend, a surveyor, brings her back to new life, everything precious is gone forever. Her outcry "Return my youth!" is the voice of those physically and mentally damaged.

A more controversial story on the tragic fate of Red Guards which also takes place during the "Grand Exchange of Revolutionary Experience" (Da chuanliang) is Li Jian's Drunk Amidst The Flower. Li Jian, originally a supporter of the "praise virtue school", suddenly turned to expose the ugliness of the Cultural Revolution. Already notorious because of his article "Praising Virtue And Lacking Virtue" he had great difficulty in having his work published. This story somehow got published in a local literary magazine Zhanjiang Literature And Art. The story tells of the misfortune of a female Red Guard Ye Li going to the countryside to "make revolution". She lags behind her team in a remote village and is received by a local peasant who demands that she be his wife. She consents, thinking that it is a revolutionary action. Later she is raped by a local cadre. What makes her fate worse is that she gives birth to two daughters which displeases her husband who wants
a son. Totally disillusioned, she continues to survive like a living corpse. The most controversial part of the story is the naive female protagonist's reaction to the demands of the poor peasant. As in Total Solar Eclipse the bright outlook of the countryside and the healthy, honest, kind, and selfless peasant image in fiction of the fifties and sixties is totally supplanted by grotesque backwardness and ignorance. For instance, because of poverty, the women who are married to this village are either blind, crippled, or have other physical defects. Having never seen any physically healthy woman all his life, the peasant kneels down and pleads with Ye Li to let him kiss her. She refuses at first, but Mao's words come to her:

If there were not the poor peasants, there wouldn't be any revolution. To deny them is to deny the revolution; to attack them is to attack the revolution. [p. 51]

She helps him up and at this moment, a series of Mao's words continue to flow into her mind,

The poor and lower middle peasants' agony is my agony; their difficulty is my difficulty. I must struggle against the slightest selfish idea of mine. I must do what they are anxious to do. [p. 551]

She gives herself over to his demands. The next day when she is about to leave, he pleads with her to stay. Again, a dictum of Mao comes to her,

Only after the whole of mankind is emancipated can the proletariat emancipate themselves. [p. 51]

She consents, regarding it as a "revolutionary" duty.
The attack on Li Jian and this story was vigorous. Because of the contradiction between his own "theory" (as expressed in his article "Praising Virtue Or Lacking Virtue") and "practice" (the exposure of darkness in socialist society), he was criticized as "insincere" and "unserious" toward life and the masses. He was generally attacked for depicting the overwhelming ugliness of society. More specifically, the linking of Ye Li's tragedy with Mao's words was, as expected, blamed for slandering the image of Mao and showing "a wrong attitude toward Mao Zedong Thought", and for linking the "modern superstition" with a woman's "loss of virginity". The depiction of the husband's stupidity (in regarding the term "love seed" (child) as "wild seed" (bastard)) and backwardness (mistreating Ye Li and their two daughters) was attacked for slandering the lofty image of the peasantry. Further, the recurring wine motif, an unconventional symbol signifying the omniscience of political indoctrination, which "intoxicates" people and "paralyses" their minds, was attacked as "comparing Mao's thought with 'wine' and the corrupt local committee secretary with a surrogate making the masses drunk". As is often the case in post-Mao literary criticism, it was also attacked for not "depicting or implying that the local committee secretary is the remnant element of the Gang of Four".

Wenwen and Ye Li in these two stories are victimized
Red Guard youths because both are naively sincere in what they believe and both sacrifice their happiness for nothing. Both begin with an ideal to make revolution, but both end tragically. Artistically, both characters suffer from the oversimplified depiction of their personalities. The authors do not give enough details about the thinking and action of the central characters. These two stories exemplify the weakness of the "problem fiction" of the first stage of Zhiqing Fiction in which authors are more eager to expose the problem than to engage in the work of artistic writing.

More concrete depiction of characters than the above is found in Love Of A Mad Woman (Fengren zhi lian) by the young writer Wang Yaping. The story pierces the absurdity of "modern superstition" by demonstrating its effect on the lives of young people through an unsuccessful love relationship. The story starts at the end of the relationship and, through a recollection, recounts from the beginning the events that lead to the present situation. A sense of suspense is created by holding back information about the female character whom the protagonist Shi Tao takes a special trip to see. Her name Lanxi is revealed only when Shi Tao arrives at the mental hospital. More suspense occurs when he is told that Lanxi is not in her room. By using a "prop" -- an old picture taken ten years before at the Tienanmen Square during the Red Guard Movement -- the author smoothly reveals Shi Tao's past relationship with Lanxi.
The pivotal incident that alters the fate of Shi Tao and Lanxi is his accidental breaking of a Mao badge at a negotiating meeting with another Red Guard faction. Originally a trivial matter, it turns into a "counter-revolutionary" action at a time when Mao was upheld as a god. All the other Red Guards, highly charged with "revolutionary spirit," demand that the perpetrator step out. While he is still debating whether to admit the "crime" or not, Lanxi, in order to save her boyfriend, takes the blame for him. Their different reactions to this pivotal incident foreshadow the later development of their personalities. The "protector" image of Shi Tao gradually shrinks from this point on whereas Lanxi increasingly gains more sympathy from the reader because of his loftiness. Shi Tao's cowardice (or selfishness) in failing to admit what he did contrasts sharply with Lanxi's bravery and selfless devotion to him. This sinister aspect of his personality foreshadows his later refusal to take Lanxi home and help her to recover from mental illness for fear that she will be detrimental to his official career. To him, she is only one of his "stepping stones" for career advancement. Hence, Lanxi is not only a victim of "modern superstition", but also of her onesided devotion to an undeserving and ungrateful lover.

The pivotal scene is expanded because of its importance to the later development of the plot. After
taking the blame for Shi Tao, Lanxi is immediately locked up ready to be paraded the next morning with half of her hair cut off — a common practice in debasing a "counter-revolutionary" during the Cultural Revolution. In such a tight situation, Lanxi thinks of a method used by many desperate people to get away from danger — to pretend insane. The fact that the mental hospital is safer than the outside world is an scathing criticism of a politically and morally deteriorated society. But the fact that Lan Xi actually does turn insane later in the hospital further implies that even this safe refuge is eventually contaminated.

The unhappy and unfruitful reunion of Shi Tao and Lanxi is the denouement of the pivotal episode and an aftermath of the chaotic Cultural Revolution. When Shi Tao sees Lanxi again, she has changed greatly. Her youth, her beauty and her healthy mind have been lost forever; she has really turned insane over the years. There is a deeper implication in the fact that they cannot recognize each other. That Shi Tao cannot recognize Lanxi reflects how much she has been physically and mentally "deformed" in an abnormal milieu over the past decade; that Lanxi cannot recognize Shi Tao is on the surface because of her illness but on a deeper plane hints at the change in Shi Tao's mental outlook: he has climbed up to a high position and has betrayed her. What is ironic is that his job is to help youths find their ideal and faith.
Lanxi's sudden insane reaction to Shi Tao has a double significance: it is a reproach to Shi Tao and class struggle.

 Aren't you a class enemy? You should be shot, boiled to death in hot oil, stabbed a hundred times, dragged out and stamped on by millions of people and donkeys, nailed through the palms, so that you can't ever turn around...I'll use Chairman Mao's magic mirror to reveal you, white bone demon! I'll strike you with a thousand-pound club! I'll beat you, traitor, spy, enemy agent, robber, historical counter-revolutionary, reactionary academic authority, stinking landlord! ....

As is often the case in fiction (eg. Lu Xun's Diary Of A Mad Man), the words of the insane character are supposed to carry a deep significance and truth. Lanxi's words are the revelation of the extreme hatred involved in class struggle and the over-politicization of society.

The plot is tightly structured. It closes with Shi Tao leaving the mental hospital, resuming his life where he "left off" before he went to see Lanxi. His "disturbed" emotions now return to equilibrium. His mixed feelings of regret and guilt, which have dominated him throughout his visit, now recede to a distance. Thoughts of Lanxi are quickly overshadowed by his plan to meet his date the same night. While Lanxi remains forgotten in the mental hospital, Shi Tao, profiting by Lanxi's sacrifice, continues to rise in the rank of officialdom. The story thus juxtaposes the fate of two former Red Guards, one riding on the wind of the Cultural Revolution and rising to high position while
the other suffers as a result of her sacrifice for love -- the highest form of human sentiment -- and remains forgotten by society.

In the above story, we see, though briefly, a sense of guilt in the former Red Guard Shi Tao. However, his high-ranking position in officialdom has prevented him from identifying his true feelings and interests with the ordinary majority. He begins as a rebel but ends a conformist in the bureaucratic hierarchy. In the following stories, we shall turn our focus to the other aspect of the Red Guard theme -- the theme of confession.

One of the first stories to touch upon the theme of confession is Su Ye's Forget Me Not (Wuwang wo), which, through a story of unsuccessful love between two young people, portrays the unhappy fate and confession of a Red Guard leader. During the Cultural Revolution, the protagonist Han Zhao, son of a military officer, quickly becomes the leader of the "Red Hurricane", a Red Guard faction. His unbounded energy and ambition raise him in power but at the same time take him away from normal life. Contrarily, the female protagonist Yanming, daughter of a history teacher, is inactive and disagrees with Han Zhao's radical action. On the eve of a struggle meeting against the department head, Yanming begs Han Zhao to call it off. Han Zhao's reaction to her request is a manifestation of naive loyalty to the revolution.
"In a situation like this? Take back your humanitarian sentiment! I won't let you nag me like an old lady!..." His sharp tone suddenly changed. He held my braids and said slowly, "You should support me. Do you know how heavy my responsibility is? How can I be wrong to march forward with the red sun?"

[p. 126]

Ironically, it is Han Zhao's "marching with the red sun" that causes his downfall as we shall see later.

The struggle meeting, like the one in Love Of A Mad Woman, is the pivotal incident that alters the fate of both characters. Yanming's letter to Han Zhao, which begs Han not to struggle against the department head and expresses her view of humanitarianism, has fallen into the hands of another Red Guard who makes it known at the struggle meeting. In such a tight moment, Han Zhao, like Shi Tao though unwillingly, sacrifices Yanming in order to protect his status in the organization. In stories on Red Guards in the first stage of Zhiqing Fiction, it is characteristic for a power-hungry Red Guard hero to sacrifice his lover in order to protect his own position. This usually causes the break-up of his love relationship and becomes a source of his remorse and melancholy which is characteristic of a Red Guard hero.

What moves the reader is the sad fate of Han Zhao due to political vicissitude. He joins the army after the high tide of the Cultural Revolution. But in 1972, his uncle's connection with Lin Biao causes him to be discharged from the army. He has to take up a lowly job.
of boiling water for a guest house. Ten years later, he has greatly changed. His originally "piercing eyes", "unbound energy" and "happy nature" which made Yanming feel that he "was born to sing the beauty of flowers and morning clouds" [p. 123] have disappeared. Here is a description of the pitiful image of Han Zhao through the eyes of Yanming at the train station, the final scene of the story.

The following morning a middle-aged man with a bent back stood at the foggy train station. He was wearing a grey jacket on which were spread holes burnt by sparks of fire. A thick layer of coal dust was on his shoulders. He was Han Zhao. On his wrinkle-ridden face, there was no trace of his former pride, carefreeness and purity. His dispirited eyes appeared dull, as if in deep thought. He lightly shook my hand, speechless, and lowered his head, showing his white hair. [p.136]

Critics had differing opinions on the image of Han Zhao. One critic said that Han Zhao was a sympathetic figure because he had been deceived by the "revolution" and had recognized his mistakes. Another critic, however, said that Han Zhao was not worthy of sympathy because of his radical actions and that the pathetic description of his later image was only an "exaggeration" for the sake of criticizing the present government's inability to help young people. The problem, I think, is not whether or not Han Zhao is worthy of sympathy, but rather what has brought a pure and hopeful youth to such a deplorable state. Further, the portrayal of the withered Han Zhao is a natural
outcome of the plot. Without intensifying the contrast in Han Zhao before and after the Red Guard Movement, the dramatic effect could have been greatly reduced. Without such drastic changes in him, the emotional impact would not be so strong. A line from a poem that Han quotes for Yanming at her departure: "I committed a crime because I was too naive!" expresses the awakening voice of the Red Guard generation. The "forget-me-not" flower that Han Zhao gives to Yanming, a note of romanticism, signifies not only his love and confession but his hope that such a broad deception of young people will never happen again.

Among the many stories focusing on the Red Guards in the first stage, Feng Jicai's The Wayward Path Strewn With Flowers (Puhua de qilu) stands out in its comparatively greater range and depth with the use of the novella form. The author goes beyond the depiction of violence and horror into the psychological process of a "mentally-distorted" Red Guard protagonist in her awakening to humanitarianism.

The innocent, zealous, "revolutionary" traits of the seventeen-year-old Red Guard Bai Hui are brought to the fore through a description of her military fatigues, red armband, and wooden gun. These details prepare the reader for the pivotal event of the story -- Bai Hui's violent beating in the struggle meeting against "reactionary" teachers. Like many Red Guards, Bai Hui
has been indoctrinated to believe in the use of physical punishment for "class enemies". To her, like Lu Danfeng in Maple, revolution means "killing and knifing, bleeding and cutting heads off", and to her "it is not a mistake to kill a counter-revolutionary. [pp.55-56]

The horror and violence of the struggle meeting is vividly depicted through the massive yelling of slogans and the beating of the "reactionary teachers". In the midst of this feverish yelling, Bai Hui angrily raises her wooden gun and strikes it against the temple of a woman teacher. But when she hears someone say that the teacher is dead, her whole body trembles. As observed by a critic, her trembling signifies "a seed in a frozen soil" and a signal of "indestructible" human nature.

Yet, having been indoctrinated with the "ultraleft' dogma of class struggle from childhood, her awakening is not a smooth one but goes through a series of psychological fluctuations.

The character who represents the dark forces trying to drag her away from humanitarianism is Hao Jianguo, leader of a Red Guard faction. In great contrast to the Red Guard heroes of the Cultural Revolution such as Zhong Weihua (in The Journey) and Geng Changjiong (in The Demarcation), Hao is depicted as a selfish power seeker and later even as a follower of the Gang of Four. (Identification with the Gang of Four is one of the main devices in the portrayal of the villainous youth characters.) Hao's reproaching Bai Hui because of her
hesitation in the beating of a woman teacher is a manifestation of the dark force to prevent her awakening to humanitarianism.

We're not afraid of anything, for the revolution, we dare to take responsibilities, dare to rush forward into the enemy's barracks, and fight with all our might! Victory will belong to us!" [p.43]

His "revolutionary" incitement immediately relaxes her tension. But the fact that she still feels uncomfortable about her violent action leads her to a series of inquiries into the significance of class struggle. She first asks her father, a former military officer, whether it is proper to beat a captive. His answer that only enemies hit their captives because they cannot win them over with convincing argument "turns on the switches of her mind's 'light'". [p.46] But in another struggle meeting the following day, Bai Hui is again plunged into confusion by Hao JIanGuo's "revolutionary" talk.

You must be alert to the rightist conservative thinking! You must be alert to the invasion of bourgeois humanism!... Revolution means 'large scale killing and knifing, it must be shown in blood...'" [p.49]

The kernel episode in which Chang Ming saves Bai Hui from drowning in a park marks a turning point of the plot. Chang Ming exemplifies the image of a post-Mao protagonist with two outstanding characteristics. On the one hand, he is a victim of political chaos, and on the other hand, he is representative of the thinking
generation in his ability to see through the conspiracy and ugly distortion of the notion of revolution during the Cultural Revolution. This image contrasts sharply with the negative Red Guard image as represented by Hao Jianguo. Both types of youth later become dominant images in the first stage of Zhiqing Fiction in that the former represents the early awakened anti-Gang hero and the latter is a power hungry "fervent revolutionary" used by the Gang. Bai Hui, who fluctuates between the two, represents a transformational youth image.

Through the awakened Chang Ming, the author exposes Bai Hui's distorted thinking which is characteristic of her age. The conversation is triggered by Bai Hui's discovery of Chang Ming's literature books.

She picks a book and flips through the pages. It is worn and the pages have turned yellow. She throws on the table, and says, "Why didn't you burn this kind of lousy stuff?"

This is a translated version of Jack London's Love Of Life. Chang Ming glances at her. "Lousy stuff? Have you read it?"

"I won't read it. It is bourgeois stuff!" Bai Hui conceals her misgivings.

"Suppose Lenin read it?"

"Him?" Bai Hui is astonished, but immediately makes up a reason "That was only for the sake of criticism."

"Only for the sake of criticism? Who said that?"

"I just thought, it must be for that purpose."

"Suppose Lenin liked this book?"

... "I... I don't know, maybe it was a good example for teaching .... No matter what one should not read bourgeois stuff."

"Shouldn't? Who set up this rule?" Chang Ming turns serious.

"Revolution." She mutters the word....[p.55]

Here we see the resemblance of Bai Hui to Xie Huimin, a
victim in Liu Xinwu's The Class Teacher who holds the same prejudice against books written in foreign languages. As the conversation continues, the author exposes the shallowness of Bai Hui and her "slogan-ridden" mind [p. 56] while endowing Chang Ming with exceptional coolness and enlightenment.

[Chang]: "Where do you draw the line between comrade and enemy?"
[Bai]: "Enemy?" she tries to find a proper word, "Anyone who opposes the revolution is an enemy. Enemies are counter-revolutionary!"
[Chang]: "Which kind of enemies is considered counter-revolutionary? And which kind isn't?"
[Bai]: "After all, whoever opposes the revolution is counter-revolutionary!"

... "Revolution means large scale killing and knifing, use the iron fists of revolution to smash them! Use red violence to bury the enemies!" [pp. 55-56]

This argument plunges Bai Hui deeper into a re-examination of her "crime". Later, seeing more violence between factions and seeing that her father is also being criticized, she decides to leave the Red Guard organization. Her sense of guilt is deepened and confirmed after she finds out "by chance" that the woman teacher that she hit was Chang's mother. [In the Wound stories, one formula in plot structure involves the infatuation of a central character with someone whom he or a member of his family has harmed during the Cultural Revolution. This type of coincidence constitutes the central conflict of many post-Mao stories. This kind of plot structure not only makes these stories melodramatic, but also restricts a fuller
development of characters.] Knowing that Chang Ming will not forgive her, she is heart broken and secretly leaves for Inner Mongolia.

If the story had ended with Bai Hui's leaving secretly for the countryside, it would have been more coherent and realistic. But the author, eager to expose the Gang of Four, extends the story to make it twice as long. An ellipsis between the first and second part is used to speed up the chronological development of the plot. The characterisation of Bai Hui which seems complete in the first part of the story is expanded to include somewhat deeper self-blame. Chang Ming's image remains stagnant since his breakup with Bai Hui. The only one that develops is Hao Jianguo. He has changed from a zealous "revolutionary" to a power-hungry careerist. It is a pity that the author does not dwell on the mental state of this once "revolutionary" youth, but slips into the triangle-of-love conflict. The sudden growth of love in Hao Jianguo for Bai Hui and his interest in locating her five years later is too abrupt and unconvincing. One wonders why he did not approach her when she was in the same faction with him; and why he did not try to locate her right after she left for Inner Mongolia.

The reunion of Bai Hui and Chang Ming is also too contrived. Chang Ming has been sent to Inner Mongolia to fix some tractors and lives in a hostel where he meets a musician. This character is apparently introduced for
two purposes. First, through the complaints of this persecuted musician, the author condemns the Gang of Four. Second, the unnatural arrangement whereby the musician asks Chang Ming to buy him some sleeping pills sets up his reunion with Bai Hui. This reunion episode serves to rekindle Bai Hui's love for Chang Ming and also lengthens and deepens her remorse because of his unforgivingness.

The ending of the story is characteristic of the early Wound fiction in which the fall of the Gang of Four serves to resolve the conflict. The deadlocked relationship between Bai Hui and Chang Ming is hastily reconciled. The exposure of the "crime" of the Gang of Four makes Bai Hui feel ashamed of her being used by the Gang. She leaves home, leaving behind a confessional letter to her father and Chang Ming. The author's voice speaks through the confessional letter, reiterating that Bai Hui, like many youths, is a victim of the Gang of Four. The author also poses the question: Why do people kill each other in the name of revolution? Either because of the limitation of the author's "thought emancipation" at the beginning stage of the thaw period or because of his abiding by the demand of the leadership, he puts all the blame on the Gang of Four. This limitation prevents Bai Hui from going beyond blaming the Gang of Four for her "sin" to see that the Chinese political system has caused the violence to
happen.

The final scene is an optimistic one characteristic of the early Wound fiction. The reunion at the previous dating place at which Chang Ming failed to show up before their separation signifies a happy ending for the lovers.

Suddenly Bai Hui turns around as if she has found an outlet, a broad path bathed in bright sunshine. She shakes off everything that burdened her just a while ago. Eagerly and forcefully, in warm tears, she is running towards Chang Ming, towards him...

During the second stage of Zhiqing Fiction, the emphasis of Red Guard stories has shifted from the depiction of violence and horror to a probing of the roots which caused the Cultural Revolution as well as the search for a new spiritual outlet. The Fire Spirit by Zhang Kangkang is one such example. The reader is immediately arrested by the description of the barren and arid Great Barren North, which foreshadows the forthcoming forest fire. The protagonist Yu Mida, a rusticated youth, is cutting dry wood in a forest with his friend Little Beard. Many stories have dealt with forest fires which cause the death of rusticated youths. For instance, Kong Jiesheng's An Ordeal (Shengsi jie) has described how rusticated youths escape from a forest fire.

The sight of fire, as the title suggests, has a special significance for Yu Mida. It triggers in him a series of painful recollections of the past. During the
Red Guard Movement, Yu raids the home of a "reactionary" writer and burns his novel manuscript causing him to die of a heart attack. As is often the case in post-Mao Fiction, this writer turns out to be the father of Yan Bing, his childhood friend. More coincidentally, they belong to the same state farm several years later.

The second recollection related with fire is set five years later. Ironically, Yu, a previous Red Guard, is now a member of the "five black categories" because of his father's political problems. Suffering from the same kind of political discrimination, Yu tries to resume his friendship with Yan. But Yan who still hates him for causing the death of her father keeps a distance from him. What brings them into contact again is another coincidence. One night Yan walks by Yu's dormitory, she sees a fire starting because Yu has fallen asleep while watching a stove fire. Despite her hatred of Yu, she extinguishes the fire for him. But the cadre blames Yan for setting the fire to vent her "class hatred". The fact that Yu is pressed to expose her "class revenge" pushes her further away from him.

The third recollection is set in the more recent past when Yu Mida and Little Beard are left behind by a tractor thirty miles from the state farm. Hungry and cold, they hope that someone will come to help them. Again, coincidentally, it is Yan Bing who brings them beans and matches. By this point, the author has built
up a humanitarian image of Yan. Despite the fact that Yu has more than once caused her great pain, she acts according to her conscience.

Through subsequent flashbacks and inner monologues of the protagonist narrator, the author is able to alternate the three recollections with the present scene in which the fire is rapidly approaching. By so doing, several effects are achieved: first, the closeness between past and present tightens the structure of the plot; second, the recurrence of the fire image intensifies the theme of the story; third, the two rescues of Yu by Yan foreshadow her arrival to rescue him for the third time. This structural principle of alternating past and present achieves greater tightness and intensity than The Wayward Path Strown With Flowers. Although Feng Jicai tries hard to sustain Bai Hui's guilty feeling over the period of ten years, the violent incident has already become remote for the reader. The intensity of Bai Hui's confession has turned thin in the second part of the novella. This makes her writing of the confessional letters and her intention to commit suicide after the fall of the Gang of Four somewhat unnatural and overdone.

Yu's obsessive fear of fire is reinforced through the occurrence of the fire motif. The motif of fire appears in many forms, ranging from the physical to the symbolic. The physical images of "match", "fire stone", 

156
"forest fire", and "ash" together set the atmosphere of horror and destruction. On a more symbolic plane, the fire image is associated with "the red flag", "the Red Guard armband", "Mao's red book", and above all, the "burning blood" and "burning zeal" of revolution. Ironically the "fire of revolution" which Yu Mida upholds turns out to be a destructive force endangering his life. Another irony is that Yu who destroys Yan father's novel is later saved by her three times.

The ending of the story reiterates the key theme of the story -- search. The fact that the two lines of the title page of the fictitious novel Search by Yan's father,

I seek for what I cannot attain;
I attained what I didn't seek.

...can escape fire and be carefully kept by Yan hints that despite everything that has been destroyed, the searching spirit of youth still remains, as Yan Bing remarks,

What has been burnt cannot be revived, but we can write -- write another Search. Perhaps, we've learned how to search and what to search for....[p.47]

The Fire Spirit ends with the awakening of the chief characters to the search of a new journey, leaving the story with a note of hope. This type of closure is quite typical of Zhang Kangkang's fiction as shown in her The Right To Love, The Light Morning Fog, Northern Lights and others.

Most representative of the Red Guard theme in
the second stage of Zhiqing Fiction is the novella *When The Sunset Clouds Disappear* in which the male and female protagonists have gone further to find their destiny, though this destiny has provoked much criticism from orthodox critics since it appeared in April, 1981.

The outline of the story is rather simple. In a sense, it is not very different from the plot development of many Zhiqing stories in which genuine friendship, or love, is destroyed because the Red Guard protagonist unknowingly raids the home of the female protagonist (very rarely the reverse). After going through much suffering, they meet again and are finally reconciled. But the conception and vision of this novella surpasses any other work on the same theme. It is not confined to the confession of an individual but has fused individual fate with philosophical probing. This theme is set forth at the beginning of the story by a symbolic dream in which the dazzling butterflies, the distant songs and the tranquility of the mountains and lakes constitute a picture of mystic beauty. The search for the source of the songs is in a sense a preview of the protagonist's searching journey.

The progression of plot is indicated by the natural image of the four seasons. These four symbolic stages represent the maturing and awakening process of Li Haiping and Nanshan. Spring represents "truth, goodness and beauty" and the happy days before the Cultural
Revolution; summer represents the burning irrationality of the Cultural Revolution. What follows summer is not autumn but winter. This change of sequence fits perfectly the thematic development of the story. Winter, with its cold destructive force, shatters the hopes and dreams of the young generation. Autumn, traditionally associated with sorrow in Chinese poetry, is here associated with the agricultural meaning of harvest.

In the "spring" section, though the elapsed time is only an hour or so, the author gives an elaborate description of Li Huaiping's encounter with Nanshan. The reasons for the elaboration are: first, this is the only occasion in which Li Huaiping and Nanshan express their youthful thinking and emotion; second, the issue of barbarism and civilization they bring up sets the key argument of the novella; third, the revelation of Nanshan's profound knowledge in foreign languages prepares her to become an interpreter in the "autumn" section, anticipates their future reunion. However, despite the elaborate description, this encounter itself remains temporally short hence appearing unjustifiable for Li's long-held feelings for Nanshan.

The summer section advances the plot to the first climax of the story. When the Cultural Revolution begins, Li Huaiping actively participates in raiding the homes of the so-called class enemies. When Li Huaiping meets Nanshan again, it is in an embarrassing and deplorable situation: he is a Red Guard leader, and
she, granddaughter of a former Nationalist General, who has been labelled a "historical counter-revolutionary." Shocked to see his "revolutionary" actions which contrast sharply with his eloquent discussion on the issue of barbarism and civilization, Nanshan's infatuation for him is shattered to pieces. This encounter remains a source of regret for the Li Huaiping for many years to come.

The long digression on the life of Chu Xuanwu, grandfather of Nanshan and former military general of the Nationalist Government who surrendered before 1949, is meant to raise the issue of human nature, which is related to the argument between civilization and barbarism brought up in "spring". In order to present an elevated image of Chu Xuanwu, the author exaggerates his self-control and calmness in front of a group of violent Red Guards by telling his past in great detail.

The "winter" section, which is set two years after the raid, further reveals the personality of Nanshan and Chu Xuanwu through their conversation. The conversation takes place in a compartment of a train when Nanshan and her younger brother are about to leave for the countryside. The author arranges, though unnaturally, a vantage point from which the first person narrator Li Huaiping can hear the conversation between the two. The revelation of personality through "telling" instead of "showing" makes the image of Nanshan a bit
insubstantial. It is entirely through their conversation we know about her family background (her parents are in France), her temperament (book-loving, introverted, self-abasing, sensitive) and her religious tendency (Christianity). This image of Nanshan differs drastically from the one presented in the "spring" in which she is lively, confident, open, bold and argumentative. It is a pity that the author does not include more interaction (while withholding her family background) between Li Huaiping and Nanshan before the raid.

Chu Xuanwu, who strikes Li Huaiping as "kind, brave, and intimate" [p.97] in "summer" now gains more admiration from him.

Chu Xuanwu is a deep contradiction. This contradiction is shown in the confrontation between his pure, upright temperament and his sinful socio-political history. In the past, I could not reconcile this contradiction. Even when I raided his home, after listening to his confessional recollection I still maintained that, no matter what these KMT generals later changed into, they were devils when they destroyed the lives and properties of thousands and millions of people. But now, the hitherto clear demarcation of good and evil begins to blur. Does a person always have a vicious heart once he commits a crime? No, things are not so simple! No doubt, Chu Xuanwu had been involved with merciless killing, but all this wasn't his original idea. Fate has fooled him. [p.106-7]

The favorable description of Chu Xuanwu has been unanimously criticized by orthodox critics. Their opinions can be summed up thus: the story "incorrectly describes the battle between the KMT and the CCP", 

161
"judges good and evil without considering class nature and political background", "propagates abstract human nature", and "idealizes Chu Xuanwu as a god". All these opinions can be boiled down to the notion that, as a loyal follower of the KMT, hence a class enemy, Chu Xuanwu is supposed to be condemned despite his good nature. It manifests the orthodox Communist view that class nature surpasses human nature, and that humanism should not be used to treat class enemies, otherwise, it is "bourgeois humanism." [This view is later shown in the criticism of Zhang Xiaotian's Unending Grassland (Lili yuanshang cao) and A Female Captive (Nufu) for their attempt to find good human nature in Nationalist officials.]

The affirmation of human nature in this novella represents the attitude of this generation of Chinese youth against the overemphasis on class struggle at the expense of humanitarianism. The affirmation of religion represents further the "faith crisis" in Communism and socialist ideals. Nanshan's turning to Christianity is a manifestation of a search for a new spiritual outlet.

The "autumn" section signifies the fruit of search. It is set twelve years after their last "meeting" in the train and fourteen years after the raid. Now, Li Huaiping is a military official. On his way home to see his father, he passes by Taishan Mountain. The spatial setting of Taishan Mountain in which the last part of the story takes place has a symbolic suggestion. Taishan
Mountain represents the maturity in the quest of the characters as shown in the progression from the Gate of the Central Heaven to Gate of the Southern Heaven and finally the peak. It is here that Li achieves his final realization and peace.

Li Huaiping's meeting with the monk-scholar is a device to bring more philosophical depth to the story. Reminiscent of the "wise old man" in traditional Chinese fiction, this character serves as a "mentor" in the searching journey of Li Huaiping. It is through him that the theme of the search for "truth, goodness and beauty" is expressed. It is through him that religion is affirmed.

The quest for truth, goodness and beauty is the complete content of human beings' spiritual life. Science quests for truth, art for beauty, and religion for good. [p. 119]

The meeting with Nanshan at the peak of Taishan Mountain marks another high point of the story. It echoes the beginning by having Nanshan bring up again the issue of the relationship between civilization and barbarism. Ironically, while Nanshan has been trying for fifteen years without success to find the answer to this question, Li Huaiping has totally forgotten it. Though Li Huaiping claims that "no answer is the best answer", the entire conception of the story seems to suggest that the answer to the issue of civilization and barbarism lies in human nature and religion.

The calmness and stillness of Nanshan embodies the
final faith (religion) she has found after a turmoil of the soul. Her final choice, on the other hand, represents a total renunciation of Communist ideology. Criticism of the image of Nanshan is thus expectedly harsh. One critic said that her self-perfection and indulgence in religion was "individualism" and "alienation from the masses and social 'practice' (reality)". The narrowness and absurdity of this criticism is that it seems to imply that anyone who has a religion is bound to be detached from reality and that only Marxism and Communism can bring people back to normal life.

Nanshan's peacefulness and transcendence has converted Li Huaiping, as he says to himself, "To me, Nanshan is not a name or a person, but a faith, a faith that will profoundly change my life!" [p.133] Li's declaration caused more condemnation to the story. One critic commented,

"[Li's] belief has turned from Communism to religion. What will become of him? Even if he still wears his military uniform, but as a member of the Communist Party, his revolutionary soul has disintegrated, collapsed".36

This narrow view seems to imply that Party members are excluded from religion. An ironical effect is achieved when Nanshan and Li Huaiping, both descendents of the deadly enemies KMT and CCP, have found the same conviction which is not Marxism or Communism but Christianity. The "fruit" of "autumn" is thus heterodox.
in the eyes of conservative critics. One critic questioned,

Why does the author indulge in such a profound and difficult argument? Is it because people after ten years of civil chaos need to search for a new theory and spiritual belief? Do you mean Marxism cannot explain all this? Must one seek the answers in religion? 37

It was with this logic that conservative condemned the work as "confused in thought", "alienated from the masses and divorced from Marxist thought", "a negation of the Party", "perverse and onesided" and so forth. The story has been criticized for its "mistake in the search for ideals, faith and life view" which in turn produced a bad social effect. Because "at the time when [Chinese] young people are confused in thought, and when there is a need to strengthen Marxist education, to propagate the idea of god and religious belief makes the contamination stand out more conspicuously."

The author Li Ping's bold attempt represents a detachment from the political dogmatism which is felt to be bankrupt by many youths. He affirms humanity, religion and the notion of "truth, goodness, and beauty"; all of them have been distorted and abandoned under the name of revolution. Perhaps due to the many criticisms of this work since it appeared, there has not been another Red Guard story that deals with the spiritual aspect of youth to such an extent.

In sum, from 1979 to 1981 (first and second stages)
Red Guard stories manifest their characteristic condemnation of "modern superstition" and excessive politicization during the Cultural Revolution which debased human dignity and alienated young people from normal life. These negative forces represent the antagonists for the Red Guard protagonist. Because of the abstract and overwhelming nature of these negative forces, the Red Guard protagonist does not have any resistance but unconsciously becomes their victim. The awakened victim hence is particularly bitter and defiant. In the following chapter on rustication life, we shall see how youths fight against more tangible villains represented by local Party cadres. It is through the struggle for individual goals and ideals that we see a more concrete portrayal of individual character.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE PATH OF LIFE: RUSTICATED LIFE

I can't stay here any longer. No doubt, people here are pitiful. But can we change their lot only with our own strength? Do you mean we're going to waste our youth in this poverty-stricken mountain village?

Zhu Lin: The Path Of Life

Rusticated life is without doubt the central subject matter of Zhiqing Fiction. In comparison to the Red Guard stories which tend to center upon factional battles, raids and the subsequent agony between the main characters, stories about rustication encompass much broader social and psychological dimensions. In much greater number, these stories cover events of longer span and wider geographical space, as well as characters of more variety and complex interrelationships. Further the thematic emphasis on the dignity and value of man as well as on the struggle for individual freedom has endowed this body of fiction with a more profound vision.

The rustication program, which mobilized seventeen million urban youths to go to the countryside in the late sixties and early seventies, was upheld as a revolutionary movement during the Cultural Revolution, and rusticated youths were acclaimed as "successors of
the revolution". Adherence to political policy and extreme application of "revolutionary realism and romanticism," coupled with the Gang's literary theories, resulted in a deliberate cover-up of the unpleasant side of rusticated life. Beginning in mid-1978, with the gradual relaxation of literary policy, young writers began to unveil the cosmeticized nature of previous presentation of "reality". The pain, frustration, and anger, accumulated by the uncompensated loss of youth, of family life, of education and other benefits now found a channel of expression. Accordingly, Zhiqing Fiction of the first stage (mid-1978 to mid-1980) or of the "first recollection" as it was termed by some Chinese critics, is dominated by the dark aspects of rusticated life. The poverty of the peasantry, the corruption of local officials and the suppression of rusticated youths contrast sharply with the optimistic and bright picture of rustication given during the Cultural Revolution.

The portrait of the post-1976 rusticated protagonist is accordingly different from his Cultural Revolution counterpart. Unlike his pre-1976 counterpart who has distinctive "proletarian blood", high class-consciousness, and unquestioning loyalty to Mao and the Party, the post-1976 rusticated hero is usually the son of "counter-revolutionary" parents, politically "backward", and cynical about political dogmas and the rustication program. Whereas the former is a robust and
indefatigable leader of labor projects, the latter is often a weak participant in a low position. Whereas the former relies on the works of Marx, Lenin and Mao for spiritual support, the latter seeks comfort in literature or other forms of academic pursuit. The difference between the labor-loving hero and the book-loving hero is a distinctive difference between pre- and post-1976 rusticated heroes. Whereas the former unquestioning vows to stay for the rest of his life in the countryside, the latter treats personal aspiration, particularly returning to the city, as his ultimate goal for which he is willing to sacrifice even his morality and his beloved.

If the Cultural Revolution protagonist is a conformist to Party ideology, post-1976 protagonist is a rebel. Against the overwhelmingly oppressive antagonists represented by the "local emperors" as well as against political discrimination, the post-1976 rusticated hero is seen vigorously and desperately struggling for freedom and the realization of personal ideals. If "self awareness, a recognition of the demands and complexities of his own private being" is basic to the position assumed by the romantic hero, then the post-1976 rusticated protagonist is certainly one such person. Aside from his definitive spirit of fighting against oppression, he also bears other traits of a romantic hero. Being a second class citizen because of his
unfavorable class background, he is constantly supervised by local cadres and even his peers. This continuous discrimination and oppression gives rise to a lonely, melancholic and sensitive temperament. He also possesses a profound intellectual power and a unique charm which attract culturally-inclined and beautiful women. His tenderness in dealing with women differentiates him from the Cultural Revolution protagonist who abstains from romantic love. The above characteristics are also generally applicable to the rusticated female. The main difference is that because of her attractiveness, she suffers much more deeply from the corrupt "local emperors".

The predominant image of rusticated youth is that of victim. The first young writer to depict such an image is Lu Xinhua in his short story The Wound. The story is commonly acclaimed as the founder of Wound Literature, even though its plot and characterisation are simple when measured against later works. Its narrow concern centers upon the rusticated female Wang Xiaohua's change in attitude toward her mother, an alleged "traitor" during the Cultural Revolution, but its broader concern is the exposition of the anti-humanistic political dogmas which alienate people in normal family relationships.

The story can be structurally divided into three parts -- present, past and present. It begins with the present: Xiaohua is on a night train returning to her
Shanghai home. After a description of her feminine beauty (unseen in Cultural Revolution fiction), a flashback is smoothly introduced to reveal her past history. As is frequently the case in Zhiqing Fiction, the most remote point of the flashback is set at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Xiaohua, at that time a zealous Red Guard, discovers that her respectable mother, a school headmistress, has been charged with treason. This immediately puts Xiaohua in one of the "five black categories" and, based on the "class background theory", she is dismissed from the Red Guard organization. Because of the profound damage of the "class background theory" to human dignity and individual development, condemning such an irrational practice has been a major theme of Zhiqing Fiction.

Xiaohua's split with her mother in order to maintain her class purity forms the central kernel of the plot. Feeling ashamed of her mother's "crime", like many youth characters in Zhiqing Fiction, she "draws a clear line" between herself and her mother and secretly leaves for the Great Barren North. Later, to show her complete break with her mother, she even mails back unopened all her mother's letters and parcels. Yet Xiaohua's loyalty to the "revolutionary line" does not help remove her "black label". On the contrary, she continues to be discriminated against. First, she is rejected by the Youth League (and only conditionally accepted four years
later); second, her boyfriend is asked by the Party organization to break up with her. The treatment of Xiaohua is in sharp contrast to that of Geng Lan, daughter of a former landlord and Soviet spy in The Journey. Geng Lan is finally given recognition by the Party because of her hard work.

The continuous discrimination destroys Xiaohua's already faded conviction. From fervent devotion to "revolution" to disillusionment with reality, Xiaohua's process of realisation is typical of the Red Guard protagonist. Xiaohua's weakness (or rather, the limited "emancipation of thought" on the part of the author) is that despite her disillusionment, she shows little questioning of the way things are run in China. Indoctrinated since childhood to trust the Party and the leadership unconditionally, she returns to Shanghai only after she receives a letter from her mother's work unit (a representative of the Party), but distrusts her mother's own words. Her hesitation to believe in her mother shows how politics has alienated her from normal personal relationship. Xiaohua is certainly wrong to cut off relationship with her mother, but the crucial point is: even if her mother were a traitor, did the authorities have the right to force or even encourage her to take such an action?

The train motif, a frequent device in Zhiqing Fiction, here produces an ironic effect. As the train is going forward, the narration is going backward to trace
the path Xiaohua has trodden. The train image thus serves as a point of linkage between the past and the future: during the Cultural Revolution, Xiaohua took the train to the countryside, full of hope and idealism. Now, ironically, she takes the same train home, full of regret and disillusionment.

The plot reverts to the present with Xiaohua arriving in Shanghai. The heart-breaking scene at the hospital in which she grieves over her dead mother, though a bit melodramatic, is touching in its genuine expression of familial love, an emotion which had been suppressed in fiction since 1949. Considering that death in pre-1976 Chinese fiction is usually limited to the heroic sacrifice of the selfless labor-loving heroes or brave soldiers, this depiction is a breakthrough in itself. The key image, a scar on her mother's forehead, which signifies the suffering of the older generation, is also an emblem signifying the suffering of the young.

Written in 1978 when the anti-Gang of Four campaign was at its height, the story had to perform an immediate political function. Hence Zhang Chunqiao, one of the Gang of Four, is mentioned as the one who framed up charges against Wang Xiaohua's mother. A note of optimism is inserted abruptly at the end of the story through Xiaohua.

Mother, dear mother, you may rest in peace. Your daughter will never forget who left the wound on you and me. I'll never forget my gratitude for Chairman Hua. I'll closely
follow the Party Central Committee he led. I'll devote my whole life to the enterprises of the Party![p. 238]

Here, the device of the "bright tail," a common device in the Wound stories, destroys the emotional intensity built up to this point. It must also be pointed out that the appearance of her boyfriend Su Xiaolin at the hospital is as unnatural as Xiaohua's pledge. The coincidence is merely used to ensure a happy reunion of the lovers.

The appearance of this story was very significant. The enthusiastic support of The Wound gave an immense encouragement to young writers to use their rusticated experience as a creative source. Throughout 1979 and 1980, varied images of suffering rusticated youths continued to appear with increasing sensitivity, individuality and rebelliousness.

If Wang Xiaohua is a passive victim who shows no sign of protest, the following young people are more daring in their questioning of unpleasant reality. After The Wound, Kong Jiesheng's On The Other Side Of The Stream is the second well-received short story on the sad fate of rusticated youths. The action of the story is set in a remote state farm on Hainan Island where the last remaining two sent-down youths, Yan Liang and Mu Lan, both from "bad" class background, seek consolation in each other's company in an isolated locale. The story consists of seven small sections, a structure commonly used by the Wound stories. Section one is a narrative
summary of the past history of Yan Liang. With the appearance of Mu Lan from section two on, the episodes are expanded to include more concrete descriptions and actions. On a windy night after a flood, in a situation when Yan Liang's chance of return has been destroyed, they spend a night together. It is in this episode that a highly suggestive sexuality seldom seen in pre-1976 Chinese fiction is revealed.

The turning point of the story occurs the following morning when Yan Liang finds out (simply through exchange of their original names) that they are long separated brother and sister. The quick revelation of their relationship, though hasty, fits the rhythmic flow of the story. The use of the incest theme which was forbidden in the pre-1976 period was probably one of the main factors accounting for the commotion caused by this story throughout China. The author is careful in preparing the reader for the incest episode from the beginning. First, he states that Mu Lan grew up in the countryside because Yan Liang's father did not like to have her at home, and that they only saw each other once a year until the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. And second, both Yan Liang and Mu Lan have changed their names. The discovery of their incest immediately throws them into extreme shame and agony. The repeated question: "Whose mistake is it?" is a strong criticism directed at Mao. The incest episode can be viewed as a symbolic
reference to the chaotic situation of the Cultural Revolution in which harmonious family relationship is destroyed. The tempo of the story picks up speed after the incest. The discovery of the deceased mother's letter which reveals that Mu Lan is actually her foster child who grew up in the countryside (due to the objection of Yan Liang's father), manages to solve the problem. The plot is contrived, but this weakness is balanced by the tightly knit emotional flow.

Both Yan Liang and Mu Lan, like Wang Xiaohua, are typical of those young people whose fates fluctuate along with their parents' political status. Yan Liang's case is especially dramatic, as shown in the first section of the story. He is from a high-ranking cadre family, his father being a follower of Lin Biao and his mother a headmistress. When the Cultural Revolution breaks out, Yan Liang immediately joins the Red Guard movement. Soon his father divorces his mother after the latter has been labelled "counter-revolutionary". His parents' split plunges him into an agonizing situation. If he sides with his mother, he becomes a member of the "five black categories". But his conscience won't allow him to cut relations with his mother. The death of Lin Biao soon causes the downfall of his father. Now Yan Liang is an "out-and-out" descendant of the "counter-revolutionaries", suffering from social and political discrimination. His name changing from Gu Yanyan to Yan Liang is a necessity for the plot. But it has a symbolic
significance as well. The name "Yan Liang," which is taken from a Chinese proverb "shitai yanliang" (the vicissitude of human sentiment) indicating the lack of feeling in human relationship, also corresponds to his complete alienation from others.

In 1979 Zhiqing Fiction, it is common to see criticisms directed at the Gang of Four or indirectly at Mao. The protagonists are frequently endowed with the temperament of a social critic. The most controversial lines of On The Other Side Of The Stream occur when Yan Liang and Mu Lan exchange their views on the future of China. Through Mu Lan, a daring criticism is directed at the unnamed Mao.

Our country has gone through a massive disaster these last ten years, and why did this happen? If it was only because of Lin Biao or the Gang of Four, then tell me how all those opportunists got to the top! Did anyone ever ask the people if they wanted these opportunists or not? Okay, so they got kicked out this time -- but if the people don't have democracy, then what's there to stop a "Gang of Five" or a "Gang of Six" some year bringing another big mess? [p.379]

This sharp criticism has gone beyond what is suggested in The Wound and other stories of the same time. Instead of blaming the Gang of Four for all mistakes like Wang Xiaohua, Yan Liang and Mu Lan have gone further to point out the roots of China's political catastrophe. In the images of Yan Liang and Mu Lan are manifested the traits of defiance, cynicism and disbelief typical of contemporary Chinese youth.
Such criticism provoked adverse reactions from conservative critics. One critic blamed the story for slandering Mao as the back-stage manager of the Cultural Revolution and as a supporter of the Gang of Four. He also criticized the author for not considering the "objective effects", that is, the notion of "social effect" which began to be used in 1980. But the denial of the existence of socialist tragedy was refuted by liberal critics as "another cold wind in spring".

In Zhiqing Fiction of 1978 and 1979, the solution of the conflicts is achieved mainly through the fall of the Gang of Four. Wang Xiaohua's agony and the incest between Yan Liang and Mu Lan are both cleared up by the rehabilitation of their mothers after the demise of the Gang of Four. In another story, The Unsatisfactory Brother-in-law (Bu chengxin de jiefu) by Guan Gengyan, the fall of the Gang of Four is immediately followed by the release of Siping, a rusticated youth who was put in custody because of his secret experimenting of rice seedlings. His in-laws, who have never accepted him because of his "bad class background", now welcome him with open arms because he is the son of a rehabilitated cadre and has been hired by an agricultural science organization. In these works, since the main antagonist is either the Gang of Four or their followers, the fall of the Gang is used as a convenient device for solving the protagonist's problem. Consequently, the protagonists do not show any vigorous,
concrete action in fighting for individual aspirations. They verbally condemn reality, but passively rely on external political change to improve their fate. In the following paragraphs, we will examine other types of rusticated youths who show some form of resistance and struggle in asserting individual needs and ideals.

Returning to the city has been the goal of most rusticated protagonists. For this purpose, great sacrifices have to be made. In The Wedding Night (Xinhun zhiyen), a rusticated female gives up her lover for a cadre's son in the city. In Noon (Zhongwu) the female protagonist marries the son of a high-ranking official because the latter helps her to transfer back to the city. But these works tend to rush to the outcome rather than deal with the psychological process of the characters in obtaining their goal.

The first work that deals in detail with the complex and difficult process of transferring back to the city is Xu Mingyu's The Transfer. The novella has at least three main thematic aspects: first, it shows how the moral integrity of an individual deteriorates under suppression; second, the protagonist's entangled, elaborate procedure in obtaining the transfer permit manifests the pains and anxieties of rusticated youths; and third, through his dealing with the authorities, the story reveals the corruption of the bureaucratic system.
In sharp contrast with pre-1976 Zhiqing Fiction, in which former landlords, Soviet spies and revisionists are responsible for all the bad deeds, post-1976 antagonists are the Party members and cadres whose power allows them indulge in even more severe crimes under the name of revolution. Instead of being "guides, mentors, and fathers," as in the Cultural Revolution fiction, they are now like capitalists, landlords and spies in pre-1976 fiction, responsible for every bad deed under the sun. They rape, take bribes, and abuse their power in every possible way.

In The Transfer, the sole antagonist is represented by the crude, vicious and corrupt county Party secretary Niu Chaojie, who is stereotypically portrayed as having a "long dark face full of pockmarks" and "a pair of fierce triangular eyes like a wolf". The relationship between Niu and Li is that of the oppressor and the oppressed. After Li, originally a student of a shipbuilding institute in Shanghai, is sent to Yuanxi county in the northwestern part of Guizhou, he is assigned to a small factory to fix watches. But his "peaceful" life is shattered one year later when he is unexpectedly accused of being a member of the "May sixteenth counter-revolutionary group" because he joined a student study group during the Cultural Revolution. Niu, who takes charge of Li's case treats him as a "struggle target" whenever possible. Li is demoted to be a coal worker and suffers from discrimination in the community. "Robinson
Crusoe in the human world" [p.327], as he mocks himself, signifies metaphorically the alienation he suffers in socialist society. After the fall of the Gang of Four, Li's is not solved as in many Zhiqing stories. Niu paradoxically turns into an anti-Gang of Four hero and continues to exert his power to an even greater extent.

The story begins in the middle of Li's transfer process. Li is returning to Yuanxi county after a new year visit to Shanghai. Through a flashback, the narrator recounts Li's misfortune which serves to justify the actions he has engaged in up to this point. With help from a distant relative, he has been engaged, though unwillingly, to a beautiful nurse in Suzhou so that he can leave Yuanxi county. What he needs to do now is to get a transfer permit from the authorities. But this is not an easy thing to do. Therefore, he has brought back packs of cigarettes (yan) -- "cannons" -- and bottles of good quality liquor (jiu) -- "grenades" -- as his "weapons" to "bombard" the "yamen" (ancient government office). "Yanjiu" (cigarettes and liquor) which is also a pun on the expression "yanjiu" (consider, research) adds a satirical tone to the story.

As the story unfolds, the reader is shown one after another the unmasked faces of the bureaucrats through Li's ardent effort to obtain the permit. He bribes the officials, one by one from the bottom up, with wine, cigarettes, food, money and even with his virginity (he
is seduced and used by the wife of an impotent official to have a child). Li even gives up Han Xiaowen, another rusticated female youth with whom he has just fallen in love. In the process of doing all this, he constantly censures himself. But his sense of shame is often overcome by his desire to return to the city. For instance, after he discontinues his love relationship with Han, he blames himself for being selfish and shameless. Two voices, one representing his conscience (the young voice) and the other his immorality (the old voice) debate within him.

The old voice angrily says:
"It is not that I want to abandon her, but that the situation won't allow me to love her. If I cannot give her happiness, I may as well not cause her any trouble."

The young voice gives a cold laugh,
"It sounds good! But can't you see how much she loves you? Look at how much agony you've brought her! Do you have a conscience?"

[pp. 338-339]

The old voice then cites all the horrifying incidents of physical insults and killings in the Cultural Revolution to prove that human beings are selfish and they will do anything to protect themselves. The young voice initially disagrees but soon gives in. This inner debate shows Li's inner contradictions and reveals how an innocent individual turns ruthless in an environment where normal channels of mobility are lacking. The next morning, Li's good conscience comes back again but is soon overshadowed by his desire to return to the city. The recurring inner debate intensifies Li Qiaolin's
emotional agony. Despite the fact that Li flatters and bribes the officials, sleeps with an officer's sex-hungry wife, and even gives up his beloved, the reader still sympathizes with him. This is because he is a victim of social oppression and his struggle against it makes us sympathize with him. Li's moral deterioration can be viewed as an involuntary moral adjustment by an individual to an oppressive environment. Instead of conforming passively to Party ideology, he fights against it in attempting to maintain his individual will. Viewed from this light, he can be viewed as a noble outlaw and a rebel.

Li finally succeeds. On his way back to the city, the narrator comments:

Li Qiaolin begins thinking about his future. "What am I going to do for the rest of my life?". He is perplexed by this question. p.397]

The zigzag path on which the bus carries Li away from Yuanxi county recalls the convoluted process he has gone through in obtaining his permit. Now his "mission impossible" is achieved, but the uncertainty and pessimism hinted at in the last sentence is reminiscent of Lu Xun's question "What will happen to Nora after she leaves her husband?" Indeed, what is in front of Li is only another kind of unhappy life: he has to marry a woman with epilepsy, and, more painfully, he does not love her. The bleak future implied here strikes a strong note of critical realism.
The fictional world presented in this story is greedy, corrupt, ugly and vulgar. The sexually-deprived, ugly wife of the personnel officer, the greedy director of the Industrial Bureau, and many other corrupt officials in Li's work unit are indications of degeneracy and contamination. Friendship is replaced by mistrust, mutual abuse and avarice. Even love is impure. Han Xiaowen has been slandered by her unsuccessful suitors, marrying someone she does not love in order to leave Yuanxi county is just as pitiful a choice as Li Qiaolin's. The only character with some beauty is Li's fiance but she is an epileptic.

The relentless exposition of bureaucratic corruption and social darkness provoked some adverse opinions from conservative critics. One said that the story lacks verisimilitude because too many ugly features are piled up in one piece of work. Another critic said that the story is not typical because the geographical setting of Yuanxi county is not an epitome of Chinese society, especially after the central government has begun to wipe out the corruption. These two opinions are typical of Chinese literary criticism. They can be boiled down to the commonly held notion that any work that exposes social darkness must be "correctly" proportioned: that is, the bright side must dominate the dark side, or else it is a case of slandering socialist society.

One critic praised the story for revealing the fate
of this generation of Chinese intellectuals under the control of the Gang of Four. It is certainly convenient to blame all Cultural Revolution mistakes on the Gang of Four. But the reality is that the government policy of distributing and assigning jobs to individual citizens limits an individual in the choice of profession and place of residence. On top of this, there are tenured bureaucrats who can exercise their power uncontrolled by law.

Li Qiaolin exemplifies those "lucky" ones who succeed after making sacrifices in the search for the fulfillment of individual ideals. In reality, there are numerous cases that end in failure or even tragedy.

Zhu Lin's The Path Of Life represents the first in Zhiqing Fiction that combines the tragic fate of rusticated youth with the poverty of rural life and bureaucratic corruption. Zhu Lin, originally from Shanghai, was sent to Fengxiang county, Anhui province in 1966. This novel, which was based on real life, was first written during her rustication days. But because of its exposition of the dark side of reality, Zhu Lin burnt the preliminary manuscript to avoid getting into trouble and rewrote the novel after the fall of the Gang of Four. Before its publication, a debate took place in publication circles as to whether the manuscript was suitable for publication because of its revelation of the rustication program. Some thought that because a
large number of rusticated youths had begun flowing back to the city since early 1979, to publish this novel at such a time would, according to their logic, increase the "return to the city wind". Others thought that it was "a poisonous weed" and was "detrimental to the 'up to the mountain and down to the countryside movement'" and hence, should not be published. Since 1979, blaming literature for social problems has been a pretext for attacking works of critical realism. The veteran writer and editor Wei Junyi, enthusiastic supporter of the novel, refuted these one-sided views by saying that the "return to the city wind" had begun even in the early 70s when only novels eulogizing the rustication program were published. The best method to handle this, she suggested, was not to hide the truth, but tell the truth and let the youths choose what they want. Zhu Lin was lucky to have her manuscript approved by Mao Dun. After making some changes -- for instance, the title from Juanjuan, Oh Juanjuan (Juanjuan a, Juanjuan) to the present one, and adding more positive elements to the ending-- the novel was published in October 1979.

The action of the story takes place in the Tiger Mountain Brigade of Hongyang county, Anhui Province during the later part of the Cultural Revolution. The main event that links various human activities throughout the story is the collapse of a dam. When the story begins, the protagonist Zhang Liang is returning
to the village of Tiger Mountain Brigade after graduating from an agricultural college in the hope of reuniting with his girlfriend Tan Juanjuan and devoting his knowledge to the construction of the countryside. But what he sees upon his return is a flood scene which hints at the forthcoming problems concerning the collapse of the dam.

By beginning the story in the middle of an event instead of presenting it chronologically, the author is able to cut directly into the essential conflicts of the novel: the clashing ideals of Zhang Liang and Juanjuan, and the confrontation between Zhang Liang and Cui Haiying. Then the author, through the use of flashbacks and recollections, works backwards to fill in the details and events that led to the collapse of the dam.

As the story unfolds, the reader is told that the collapse of the dam was actually caused by the poor quality of the cement. In the construction of the dam, Cui Haiying has collaborated with the bricklayer in switching a lower grade for good quality cement for personal benefit. Juanjuan, who suspects Cui's scheme, dare not tell Zhang Liang for fear that the latter will get involved in the complex political struggle. Furthermore, she is more concerned about leaving the countryside with Zhang Liang than anything else. In the mean time, Cui, taking advantage of Juanjuan's eagerness to attend university, rapes her. She is given a
recommendation to attend university, but pregnancy found in the physical examination disqualifies her. By this time, her relationship with Zhang Liang has deteriorated because of his decision to stay in the countryside. When Cui refuses to take the responsibility for her pregnancy, she writes down all his crimes in a letter and then drowns herself.

The story is complete up to this point. But, compelled to foretell the fall of the Gang of Four which is represented by Cui Haiying, the author (probably by fiat) tacks on a "bright tail". At the end, Zhang Liang, assisted by the rural youths Little Li and Dahan along with the villagers, chases Cui Haiying out of the brigade after his crimes have been exposed in Juanjuan's letter. This episode is contrived and unreal. It is hard to believe that at a struggle meeting against Zhang Liang (for raping Juanjuan), he can turn around and lecture Cui Haiying. Also contrived is the abrupt change in the peasants. All the way along, they have been depicted as timid and passive; now, they suddenly stand up for their own rights. This kind of contrived device often appears in post-Mao fiction in which the author prophesises the defeat of the Gang of Four through the exaggerated action of the characters.

What endows this novel with greater realism is the inclusion of details of the daily life of local peasants, unseen in Cultural Revolution fiction. Aside from the three central characters, more than ten peasant
characters are portrayed: for instance the timid, honest and hard-working Lou Wa and his wife Duo'er, the forthright Little Li, the righteous Dahan, and the pragmatic Lao Ma. The sincerity, misery, narrow-mindedness and the lack of political consciousness of the Chinese peasantry depicted here are more similar to their traditional counterparts before 1949 than to their optimistic, confident and politically conscious counterparts in fiction of the fifties and sixties. The continuity in the poverty of the Chinese peasantry since 1949 is manifested in the tragic deaths of Little Fortune, Zhang Liang's cousin, in the early fifties and Shuhai in the early seventies: Little Fortune (whose name ironically did not bring him any fortune) died because his father, who became ashamed and angry in the market when he had no money to buy his son a deep-fried twisted dough stick, knocked him off the wagon; Shuhai was drowned when searching for barley in a swamp.

Zhu Lin also brings folk symbolism from local legends into the novel. Tiger-and-Wolf Mountain overlooking the brigade is a symbol of a bad government, and in this connection, a reference to the Gang of Four and its supporter Cui Haiying. The Golden Phoenix, a legendary bird, which brings people good harvests, is a symbol of freedom and happiness. It is also a metaphorical reference to Zhang Liang who returns to the village with science and technology.
The characterisation of the three main figures invites an interesting comparison with their Cultural Revolution counterparts. Cui Haiying, a former Red Guard leader, is portrayed as a cunning, greedy, corrupt, and above all, power-hungry official who is quite different from the revolutionary hero image of the Cultural Revolution fiction. In order to bring forth these traits, the author withholds the actual intervention of Cui Haiying until chapter seven. By the time he actually appears, Cui Haiying's villainous image has been established through the complaints of the villagers among themselves. His most conspicuous trait, however, is revealed in his own words to his mother,

*Power is a good thing. When I get hold of it, I can even build you a garden mansion, let alone building a stone house.* [p.146]

In Zhiqing Fiction from 1978 to 1980, the villainous Red Guard is generally linked with the Gang of Four. In *The Wayward Path Strewn With Flowers* we have seen Hao Jianguo's alliance with the Gang of Four, and here Cui Haiying is no exception. By linking Cui Haiying with this group, Zhu Lin has conveniently achieved the portrayal of a villain. This device, however, has its pitfalls. For instance, dictated by hindsight, the author sets an unbelievable scene in which the villagers bitterly criticize Cui Haiying in the public struggle meeting and finally chase him out of the brigade.

No matter from what angle, Zhang Liang is in great contrast with Cui Haiying, though both of them are
former Red Guards. Compared to Cui Haiying and Juanjuan, Zhang Liang's image is more static. He begins as a devotee of the countryside, and ends as one. The lack of change in his character makes him appear pale and unrealistic. In many ways, he is reminiscent of Geng Changjiang in The Demarcation: both are keen for rural construction; both have a chance to remain in the city, but return to the countryside voluntarily. But there are also marked differences. One conspicuous difference is that Zhang Liang finds political slogans invalid in explaining and solving social problems whereas Geng relies on them as his spiritual reference. Zhang Liang is capable of showing romantic feelings whereas Geng is totally insensitive to anything concerning the opposite sex. Geng's only conversation alone with Nan Jin is concerned with nothing but pledges to set down roots in the countryside.[pp. 213-216] Conversely, the romantic and sensational tryst between Zhang Liang and Juanjuan is unprecedented in any fiction during the Cultural Revolution or in the fifties and sixties.

A feminine fragrance penetrated Liangzi. A warm wave suddenly surged up and spread all over his body. In a moment, his blood burned, and an urge and curiosity toward the opposite sex grew in his chest. In Juanjuan's glittering eyes, her flushed face, and her nicely figured breasts there was a passionate longing. He understood as soon as he stretched out his arms, he would get her like picking a ripe fruit. [p. 107]

Another marked difference between them is that Zhang Liang accepts a recommendation to attend the
agricultural college whereas Geng flatly gives up his student permit in favor of staying in the countryside. Geng's choice is mainly a manifestation of the then current slogan, "There is no use in studying".

Zhang Liang's intention to stay in the countryside is more justified than Juanjuan's. Despite the fact that Zhang Liang grew up in Shanghai, his deceased grandfather was a peasant in the Tiger Mountain Brigade. Therefore his feeling toward his home village is as strong as toward the city. Improving the livelihood of the peasants in his home village has been his ideal since the tragic death of his cousin Little Fortune in the fifties. Little Fortune's death serves then as a motivating force for Zhang Liang to stay in the countryside. But for Juanjuan who has no personal ties to the place, who has been politically discriminated against, and who has a different intellectual interest, the desire to leave is understandable.

The conflicting ideals of Zhang Liang and Juanjuan are disclosed at their first meeting after the former's return. When Zhang Liang asks Juanjuan about the reasons behind the criticism of the old Branch Secretary (Cui Haiying's rival), the omniscient narrator describes the Juanjuan's inner reaction.

Really, she doesn't want to waste time on this tedious topic. How the democratic faction turned into capitalist roaders; whether the old Branch Secretary is correct or Cui Haiying is correct, how the dam collapsed, only heaven knows. She has many
other concerns. For instance, where has Zhang Liang been assigned, how long does he plan to stay? and does he know someone in the student recruitment office in the county... [p. 33]

It is in this concern for the self (love and education) rather than for politics that characterizes the post-1976 rusticated protagonist. But the ironical situation is that Zhang Liang has volunteered to return to the village. This shatters Juanjuan's dream of returning to the city with Zhang Liang. This disparity of ideals sets the stage for the deterioration of their relationship. Later when Zhang Liang tells her his plan, her long suppressed thought and feelings explode:

...Don't think I'm afraid of hardship. I'm not afraid of the lack of material things. I can eat taro and sorghum. What I fear is the long, cold winter night, the spring whirlwind that darkens the sky. I don't have a home; I'm alone in this strange land. I don't have any one that is close to me except you.... I made it, totally relying on my own strength. In these years, I've seen it through. I don't care what others say. No matter how good it sounds, it's useless. I must rely on myself. No doubt people here are pitiful. But can we change all this with our own strength? Do you mean we're going to waste our youth in this poverty-stricken village?....I beg you, leave here, for me and for you.... Leave this place, leave this place! [192]

Juanjuan's disillusionment and pessimism about changing the lot of the peasants contrasts sharply with the "revolutionary romanticism" and idealism of the rusticated youths in Cultural Revolution fiction. After eight years in the countryside, Juanjuan has become cynical toward any mention of "revolutionary ideals". After Zhang Liang tells her that there is no possibility
for her to attend university because of her "bad class background",

Juanjuan's heart was trembling, as if she knew Liangzi for the first time. She thought: You're no different from Cui Haiying, it turns out that you're also a power seeker, you're also trying to stop me from going to university; you've graduated from university, and now you object to me going; you're cruel! .... Life has taught me, people who talk in high-flown political language are in fact climbing up the ladder on other's shoulders; they're the most selfish! selfish! selfish! You want to take advantage of my loving you, and use me to struggle for power. This is extremely selfish! ....[p.194]

Juanjuan's inner monologue is effectively rendered to show her feelings of being deceived, her distrust of others, and her spite toward her boyfriend. This confrontation marks their split and expedites her move toward Cui Haiying, which leads to her tragic death.

Juanjuan can be considered the rehabilitated Wan Lili and Yang Landi, her Cultural Revolution counterparts. Her resemblance with Wan Lili is particularly striking. Both are artistically talented; both are eager to return to the city for post-secondary education; both fail in their pursuit of their ideals. But the treatment of these two characters is totally different. Wan Lili's private dream is condemned as "bourgeois", whereas Juanjuan's is upheld as an individual right. Interestingly, whereas Wan Lili is victimized by a traitor, Juanjuan is victimized by a Party member. The final outcome for both women also indicates a disparity in the fictional treatment of
reality. The compulsory adherence to Party ideology in The Journey means that Wan Lili is ordained to fail and then be saved by the Party and the masses. She is to "become aware" of her "mistakes" and express her determination to stay in the countryside regardless of the logical tendency of her personality. But for Juanjuan, the use of critical realism makes it impossible to distort the unpleasant reality for a simplified optimistic ending.

Juanjuan is similar to the protagonists Wang Xiaohua and Mu Lan in many respects. All of them are originally naive and zealous Red Guards; they without exception cut off relationships with their politically-troubled parents (who are, as is frequently the case, intellectuals) and hence suffer from political and social discrimination. Several aspects differentiate Juanjuan from the other two. First, she is trapped in an intricate power struggle, whereas the situation of the other two is much simpler; second, she meticulously works towards her goal whereas the other two passively wait for external change; third, her beloved Zhang Liang, unlike the lovers of the other two, does not share the same ideals with her. She has to face a dilemma, either choosing to stay in the countryside with her boyfriend or giving up the love relationship in order to return to the city. All these elements make Juanjuan a more complex and concrete image.

Juanjuan's succumbing to the manipulation of Cui
Haiying is similar to Li Qiaolin's debasing his own morality, though the outcome is opposite. Juanjuan, however, is inherently more vulnerable than Li because of her sex. Li remains intact after being seduced by the impotent official's wife, but Juanjuan's pregnancy only leads her to desperation. Juanjuan dies a tragic death. Her death is partially the responsibility of Zhang Liang who offers her no help. Even more, she is a victim of the villain Cui Haiying, who represents official authority. Indirectly, she is both a victim of the anti-humanistic "class background theory" and of the Cultural Revolution, or rather, the system as a whole. Juanjuan's death is a form of protest against oppression, her "victorious death" hence carries a sense of nobility.

We have seen above how Li Qiaolin and Tan Juanjuan fight against overwhelming oppression for individual aspirations. But for some characters, the fighting spirit is gone. They remain passive. The feelings of depression, helplessness and lack of outlet among rusticated youths are vividly illustrated in The Get Together (Juhui) by Gan Tiesheng. Several rusticated youths who are unable to return to the city after most of the others have left get together in a small mountain village. Qiu Xia, the female protagonist and hostess of the get-together, tries to cheer everyone up by setting up a taboo: no one is allowed to say anything unhappy. But her good intentions are shattered one by one as the
night goes on. The happiness usually associated with a gathering ironically is dominated by sadness and despair, it also turns out to be the last gathering for Qiu Xia.

The progression of the night reveals the deepening of despair among the participants. To relieve the silent and unbearable atmosphere, Qiu Xia orders everyone to talk about the happiest event in life. But the result is a disaster because everybody's story includes many sad elements. Qiu Xia tells her story. But paradoxically the story, which comes out with a slip of the tongue, is also a sad one. She tells how one day when she was studying by the reservoir she saw a mouse run into the water and drown. The fact that she breaks her rule signifies her deep-seated pessimism about the future.

The story ends with a twist. After an ellipsis of one year, another get-together is held at Qiu Xia's boyfriend's place. In a few lines, he surprises the reader with the news of Qiu Xia's death. He says that "she was studying by the reservoir but somehow, she fell and drowned." [p. 155] From the hint in her story about a mouse and her expression of hysteria at the party, it may be conjectured that she committed suicide. Her death, which foreshadowed by the death of a mouse, signifies how the value of human life has been debased in Chinese society during the Cultural Revolution. What further arouses sympathy is that Qiu Xia died only a few months before the fall of the Gang of Four.
In the stories discussed above, the general impression one gets is that the protagonist either fights alone against powerful antagonists represented by corrupt local cadres and the "class background theory", or wastes away passively and bitterly in constraining and hopless situations. No doubt the concentration on the fate of one individual gives greater emotional intensity to the story, but it also hinders the presentation of the panorama of rustication life which is usually lived in a group setting. In Song Xuemeng's Forever And Ever we see how friendship is betrayed due to attempts at personal advancement in a confined community. The narrator is one of four rusticated young women in a dormitory. The friendship song which opens the story is itself ironical because of the imminent breakup of friendship. Harmony is destroyed when two members of the group, Xu and Guo, are toplisted candidates for the single available position of team secretary which would lead to a direct transfer to university.

The turning point in the story occurs when Xu suddenly falls ill because she has been working too hard to impress the authorities. She is too weak that she cannot eat the coarse food in the dining hall. Although, according to regulations, no one is allowed to cook in the dormitory; Guo and two other roommates take the risk of being criticized as "petty bourgeois" and secretly
cook some rice for her. The secret somehow leaks out and Guo has to confess in public and consequently loses the competition. But who revealed the secret? The author does not indulge in complicated plots but simply allows one of the characters in the dormitory to reveal this information to the naive narrator. Xu herself was the informer. The resolution of the suspense is accompanied by the disintegration of the originally harmonious group.

Ye Xin's two novels Youths Of Our Generation and The Wasted Years of 1979 and 1980 are among the first in post-Mao Zhiqing Fiction to depict the panorama of rusticated life. Originally from Shanghai, Ye Xin was sent to Guizhou in 1969. As revealed in more than one article, Ye Xin's became a writer by dint of diligence and practice. With only a grade nine education, he made use of every chance to read and write sketches of his experience in the countryside. Living conditions were so bad that frequently he had to write on a wash board under an oil lamp. He had to rely on his friends in Shanghai to mail him writing paper. From 1977 to 1983, he published more than a dozen novels and novellas and a number of short stories. Since 1982, he has been editor of Mountain Blossom (Shanhua), a literary magazine of Guizhou province. The above two novels were well-received by the public as indicated by the five hundred letters he received from his readers. The Wasted Years was even made into a television play.
Ye Xin represents those young writers who have a more comprehensive view of rusticated life. He does not one-sidedly dwell on the depressing aspect of rusticated life, nor is he contemptuous of local peasants. He is also one of the few young writers who draw on a wealth of folklore and local customs to concretize the spatial setting of his works. For instance, comments about the stick snake that bounces its body to strike and the method of tying one's veins with hair to stop snake poisoning are smoothly intertwined with the plot in Youths of Our Generation.

Perhaps due to the limitations of his early experience, these two novels are very similar. Both are set in Guizhou, and both portray many types of rusticated youths; both have protagonists who are victims of the "class background theory"; both describe a harmonious relationship between the protagonists and local peasants; both depict villains who are followers of the Gang of Four. Because the first novel covers the period from 1968 to 1971, and the second that from 1972 to 1978, the second can be seen as a sequel to the first and they can rightly be considered together.

Youths Of Our Generation depicts the lives and ideals of rusticated youths, concentrating on the love relationship between Cheng Yu and Murong Zhi. The story can be structurally divided into two parts: the first part (from section one to twelve) is dominated by the
suspense triggered by the unconfirmed news that Cheng Yu, son of a "counter-revolutionary" is to be arrested by the public security bureau. This device, according to Ye Xin, was inspired by a true incident. Murong Zhi's roommates Liu Sulin and Zhou Yuqin vigorously try to persuade her to break up with Cheng Yu. They even write her mother in Shanghai and ask her to come to help them persuade her. The news turns out to be false and the one to be arrested is another youth. The tension created by the suspense is released at this point. In terms of characterisation and plot, the story would have been complete if it had ended here, leaving the reader to fill in the necessary gaps. Strictly speaking, then, the second part of the novel serves to unveil the mystery of Cheng Yu. Several months later, Cheng Yu and an old former Party secretary who have been secretly experimenting with a new type of rice seedling for high land planting are successful. Murong's mother, seeing Cheng Yu's success, feels guilty about her interference, but still insists that her daughter leave him. Cheng Yu, who does not want to drag Murong down because of his class background, decides to discontinue their relationship. The story ends with a sense of uncertainty.

The portrait of Cheng Yu is vivid in the first part of the novel. The suspense concerning his "arrest" effectively arouses the reader's interest in Cheng Yu. Through three emotionally charged recollections
(sections two, three and four) of Murong Zhi, the author traces their interaction from their first encounter to their present love relationship. The fullness of Cheng Yu's character is gradually revealed. Because he is the son of a "counter-revolutionary", he is looked down upon by other rusticated youths. His quiet, melancholic, brooding and introverted temperament further distances him from the others. After he has been excluded from the dormitory because of his nonparticipation in cooking duties, he is a complete loner. As the story unfolds, the mystery surrounding him turns out to have a strong attraction for Murong Zhi.

Through their differing reactions to the news of the impending "arrest", the author portrays the images of other youths. Chen Jiaqin, Cheng Yu's schoolmate, a former active Red Guard leader represents those youths who climb up the political ladder at the expense of their peers. His disregard of friendship, his flattery of local cadres, his hypocrisy toward love, and many other unfavorable traits are in great contrast with those of the politically-minded positive hero of the Cultural Revolution. All along he knows that Cheng Yu cannot do heavy work because of a spinal disease, but in order to accumulate "political capital" he vigorously criticizes Cheng Yu's "laziness" and urges other youths to exclude him from the dormitory. He even collaborates with a corrupt official, Yao Yinzhang, to expropriate
the merit Cheng Yu gained by cultivating the new rice seedlings. Chen Jiaqin, like Cui Haiying in The Path Of Life, is insulted in a mass meeting at the end of the story.

MURONG ZHI'S roomm.ate LIU SULIN represents another pragmatic type. Aiming at transferring back to the city, she works hard to impress the authorities. Her urging MURONG ZHI to "draw a clear line" with Cheng Yu shows her concern for Murong Zhi but also the vulnerability of personal relationships to political pressure. Another youth, SHEN ZHAOQIANG, unwilling to settle in the countryside, turns into a hooligan. The inconsistent reactions of others to Cheng Yu reflect the vicissitudes of personal relationships in a confined community. At first, they ostracize him because of his "bad" class background and later flatter him because of his success. The disharmony among rusticated youths contrasts sharply with that in The Journey and The Demarcation in which the sole conflict among youths is that between the progressive and the backward.

The first contact between Cheng Yu and Murong Zhi is one of the most tender moments described in the Zhiqing Fiction of 1979. On a sunny day when other youths have gone to the market town, Murong takes a walk in the woods. Suddenly, she hears someone reciting:

Ah! Murong Zhi almost utters a sound. Like being held by a magnet, she stands still behind a tree. The sun is shining on Cheng Yu's face. The spring breeze is kissing his black hair. She can see dew drops on his
hair. He raises his eyebrows; a pair of radiating eyes are deep in thought. At the edges of his eyes, a string of teardrops are falling. Oh, he is sobbing! Why is he sobbing? Just a while ago, he was reading a book on rice planting. Obviously he sobbed not because of what is said in the book. [p. 183, Sh,5(1979)]

This scene is reminiscent of Yu Dafu's Sinking in which the psychologically oppressed youth recites William Wordsworth's poems. The loneliness, melancholy and alienation felt by both youths are similar. The difference is that Yu Dafu's romantic hero escapes from reality and vents his emotions in poetry while Cheng Yu, who also has a romantic temperament, stays away from others and buries himself in a book on rice planting. The former is completely detached from society whereas the latter is portrayed as a Promethean type with social obligations.

Cheng Yu's social concerns explain his close relationship with local peasants from whom he draws his courage and wisdom. The fact that he gains confidence in life; makes him different from the victimized youths discussed above who are totally on their own. This explains why Ye Xin has been praised by many Chinese critics for creating an image of "progressive" youth whose success comes from the help of the masses. It should be pointed out, however, that the image of Cheng Yu lacks coherence. His nonconformity and the sense of mystery created about him in the first part of the novel are removed too abruptly in the second part. The silent
Cheng Yu suddenly speaks up fluently in front of Murong Zhi's mother and at the mass meeting. In front of the former, he appears as a prematurely-awakened youth criticizing the irrational practices of the Cultural Revolution. In front of the latter, he loudly exposes the dark scheme of Chen Jiaqin and his supporter, the corrupt official Yao Yinzhang. What is more incongruous to Cheng Yu's personality is seen in his high-flown pledge to Murong's mother on her departure at the railway station,

"You should trust us. With scientific Marxism, we definitely can differentiate between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and we will walk on the bright broad path!" [p. 254, SH, 6(1979)]

But before this, there has not been any hint of his conformity to and belief in orthodox ideology. In fact, Cheng Yu is portrayed as a rebel in the first part of the novel. The intrusive moral comments, one of the most obvious artistic weaknesses of the author, can be seen in another episode. After Liu Sulin refuses Chen Jiaqin's kiss, the author depicts Chen's reaction with a moralizing exposition.

"If it were another youth, at such a moment he would examine his emotional impulse and rudeness so as to learn the lesson and correct his mistake but Chen Jiaqin does not think this way; he does not feel any unease as a result of his mistake."[p. 212, SH,6(1979)]

In fact, after five pages of description, Chen has not made any mistake. The emotions culminated at this point should lead smoothly to an intimate action. It is the
author's didacticism that restrains him from depicting more freely the logical development of the characters' emotions.

The Wasted Years is artistically superior to Youths Of Our Generation in terms of its tighter and more coherent structure as well as its fuller and richer characterization. Temporally ranging from 1972 to 1978, the novel depicts the fate of rusticated youths under the influence of the "class background theory". Son of a "historical counter-revolutionary", Ke Bizhou, like Cheng Yu, is discriminated against by his peers in the dormitory. Du Jianchun, daughter of a high ranking military officer, drops him after she finds out his family background. After a period of distress, Ke Bizhou regains his confidence in life under the influence of the peasantry represented by the rural girl Shao Yurong, her father (head of the Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants Association) and the Party, represented by Shao's uncle, an old party member. Not long afterwards, ironically, Du Jianchun becomes a member of the "five black categories" and is demoted to the same status as Ke. The author indicated that he wanted to give a happy ending to the protagonists. With such an idea in mind, he unnaturally inserts the episode in which Shao is killed by a tiger while saving a village girl. This allows Ke and Du to rekindle their love. After the fall of the Gang of Four, Du's father is rehabilitated. As is
frequently the case in fiction (and in reality) the change of family status affects the relationship among characters. When they return to Shanghai for a visit, Du is asked by her mother to break up with Ke because of his class background. But Du refuses. The story ends with Du returning to Guizhou with Ke, hinting that love transcends class background.

Ke Bizhou is quite similar to Cheng Yu in the melancholic, sensitive, quiet, introverted and deep-thinking temperament characteristic of a romantic hero. Both are ostracized by their peers but helped by the local peasantry and old cadres. Both of them are rewarded with success because of their concern for the masses. Cheng Yu succeeds in rearing the new rice seedlings and Ke in persuading the cadres to use the bamboos in exchange for money to build an electric plant as well as in the publication of his prose. The success of both youths seems a bit contrived. The fact that other rusticated youths and the local cadres do not know about Cheng Yu's experiment is unbelievable, particularly when he is an "object of dictatorship" in such a tight community. Moreover, the scientific experiment appears too easy and simple. The "success" of Ke is somewhat exaggerated in that he is transferred to a cultural organization solely on the basis of one piece of prose. This simplified process leading to success by the intellectual protagonist is a common weakness in characterisation in Zhiqing Fiction.
Though Cheng Yu and Ke Bizhou share many similar characteristics, they are different in many aspects. In comparison to Cheng Yu, Ke Bizhou is a more rounded character. Cheng Yu, from beginning to end, is so sure of what he wants -- to develop rice seedlings suitable for the dry highland. There is no recollection or flashback to explain how he arrives at the present state. His coolness before the "arrest", his aloofness from other youths, his dissatisfaction with the local cadre Yao Yinzhang, his defiance of "modern superstition" and criticism of the "ultraleft" phenomena of the Cultural Revolution all contribute to his surpassing other youths.

By contrast, Ke Bizhou has gone through many twists in his emotion and thinking until he finds his point of reference in life. After he is abandoned by Du Jianchun and his only belongings taken away by the hooligans, he has lost all interest in life and he even attempts to commit suicide.

Thin, depressed and pale, Ke has been hurt physically and mentally. He is perplexed, complaining and condemning his birth into a "historical revolutionary's" home? Why did his mother give birth to him? If she had not given birth to him, he would not have suffered all this hardship! In these few years, he has been treated with indifference, contempt, sarcasm and even insult. After a long time, he has become used to such a lowly, insulting position. [p. 52, SH, 5/80]

The rural girl Shao Yurong is of great significance to Ke's rejuvenation. She is the embodiment of truth,
goodness and beauty, a symbol of the Chinese peasantry and the "great earth". It is through her that the author conveys his ideas and beliefs. When asked by Du why she loves Ke despite his "bad" class background, she says,

I love him. It's not because of his family background, it's him. He is the most important. Wasn't he born in the new society, under the red flag? Do you mean this society can't influence him as much as his deceased father's? [p. 167, SH, 6/80]

Thus, as soon as Ke Bizhou shakes off his pessimism and self-pity, he discovers that the area is abundant in August bamboo which can be sold to the nation. With the money the commune gets, an electric plant is built.

I've discovered that the pathos of an individual is trivial. Youth can only shine when used in the construction of the mountainous area. [p.189, SH, 6(1980)]

The revival of Ke's courage to face reality is ironically contrasted with a drop in political status for Du Jianchun. It is in this change that the author exploits his skill of characterisation. The change in the fate of Du is reminiscent of Yan Liang in On The Other Side Of The Stream, but there is no delineation of the latter's inner feelings during those changes. By contrast, Du Jianchun receives a detailed psychological treatment. In the beginning, she is a duplicate of Bai Hui in Feng Jicai's The Wayward Path Strewn With Flowers. She is daughter of a high cadre, a zealous Red Guard, and also a fervent supporter of the rustication program. Her reaction to Ke after he says, "I came to the countryside because I had no other way out" shows
her pride:

What? What? Du Jianchun says loudly in surprise and interrupts him, "Do you mean you did not come voluntarily to make revolution? To receive re-education from the poor and lower middle peasants? Oh, you're so backward, so backward!"[p. 8, SH, 5(1980)]

She then continues to lecture Ke,

I came here voluntarily. Think! how can this generation of youth be unmoved by the magnificent "going up to the mountain and down to the countryside" movement? How can we stand outside this tide? No, absolutely no! We must throw ourselves into this great revolution, and become pioneers of the era. We must pour our lives into the mainstream of the era. Therefore, even if I was qualified to stay in the city, I asked to come to set root in this mountainous area. [p. 8]

Her ironical drop in political status immediately deprives her of her chance to attend university despite completing all the necessary procedures. On top of this blow, she is heavily beaten by some scoundrels acting on orders from the Rusticated Youth Officer who takes revenge for her criticism. The omniscient narrator depicts her change in outlook after the incident,

Her straightforward, crisp and vigorous temperament, and her shiny and bright face have totally disappeared; instead, what appear are sunken and tightly-shut lips and a lined forehead. [p. 178, SH, 6(1980)]

Du's drop in political status also means a loss of love. Before, she abandoned Ke; but now, ironically, it is her turn to be abandoned. Su Daonan, the son of a high ranking cadre, the one who informed her of Ke's class background, now retreats when she is in despair. This deeply hurts her ego and changes her view of life.
Through Du's sister's letter, the author reinforces his thematic attack on the absurdity of the "class background theory", and at the same time hints at Du's confession of her previous attitude toward Ke:

Originally we were the sons and daughters of the "five red classes"; now, suddenly, without preparation, although we haven't changed, we've become descendents of the "five black classes" discriminated against by everybody. Dear sister, now I've come to realize: during the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, we were so proud and we looked down upon everything and discriminated against those from bad class backgrounds. How naive we were! How stupid we were! Now, whenever I receive contemptuous glances from others, I feel as if I were being stabbed in my heart...[p.176, SH, 6(1980)]

Three years later, Du's total outlook has greatly deteriorated.

Now, she has become a sad and solitary person, bearing injustice without utterance, not saying a word all day. She walks like a criminal, with sinking shoulders, lowering her head and not wanting to see anybody on the road. [p. 205, SH, 6(1980)]

The harsh treatment of youths with unfavorable class background has never been depicted in such detail in Zhiqing Fiction. Local villagers are punished if they talk to Du. She is ordered to walk several dozen miles delivering fertilizer to the fields everyday. She lives in an abandoned mill vulnerable to rain and wind. One night the "local emperor" even tries to rape her. The agony and emotional tension built up in Du moves the plot toward the climax of her attempted suicide. The arrangement whereby she is saved by Ke in the nick of
time serves to break the deadlock in their relationship.

The strength endowed to Ke by Shao Yurong now passes on to Du. Once again, the author re-asserts the idea that only by relying on the masses and caring for the masses can an individual live a significant life. With the help of Ke, she regains her confidence in life. She begins making use of the medical techniques learned from the local people and gradually comes to be trusted by them. The fall of the Gang of Four and the subsequent fall of the local corrupt cadres at this time further enables Ke and Du to devote their talents to the rural community. The three suggestions they draw up to change the poor conditions of the area are accepted by the new local leadership.

Du's rise in political status in the latter part of the plot adds another dimension to the novel. After the fall of the Gang of Four, Du's father resumes office. The immediate action her parents take is to call her back. Du's mother, who has been discriminated against, now turns around and objects to Du's choice of Ke:

The reality I want you to face is: If you choose him, you are in a disadvantageous position in the assignment of jobs when you return to the city. Later, I don't suppose you can join the Party, pursue advanced studies or go abroad...[p. 249, SH,6(1980)]

The episode about Du's parents' negative reaction to Ke shows that the class background theory has penetrated into every corner of Chinese society: not only in the
remote countryside, but also in Shanghai; not only among old peasantry (as represented by Shao's father) but among high-ranking cadres. Even people who challenge it have no choice but to succumb to its power.

Du Jianchun and Murong Zhi's love experiences invite comparison and contrast. Murong Zhi loves Cheng Yu despite his "bad" class background. She does not want to "draw a clear line" between herself and him even when she hears that he is going to be arrested by the public security office. This makes her succumbing to her mother's request to break up with Cheng Yu unconvincing. If she can go against the tide and take political risks to love Cheng Yu, why does she give in so easily to her mother, especially after the latter is impressed with Cheng's success? By contrast, the attitude of Du Jianchun toward Ke Bizhou is more in accord with her personality. In the beginning, forthright and "revolutionary", she is contemptuous of Ke's "backwardness". It fits her personality that she gives up Ke when she hears that Ke is the son of a "historical counter-revolutionary". Her straightforward temper pops up again in the end when she rebels against her family and returns to Guizhou with Ke.

The ending of the novel also takes place at the railway station, as in Youths Of Our Generation. But the politically-charged pledges of Cheng Yu have disappeared. They have been replaced by a depiction of the affirmation of romantic love -- a tremendous
difference between Ye Xin's works of 1979 and those of 1980. Ke has been forced by Du's brother to break with her. After a painful consideration, he decides to leave her so that she can return to her comfortable home. Now he is about to leave for Guizhou when Du arrives at the railway station. Unable to calm Du, Ke jumps on the train which is about to leave. Du follows him:

"What are you doing?" Ke Bizhou was startled, and turned around to push her down. Du Jianchun raised her head, pursed her lips, and said firmly, "Don't push me! If you want to go, let's go together!"
"But you don't have a ticket. Go down quick!"
"Don't yell. I have the money for buying clothes. I can buy it later."
"But you haven't brought anything with you!" Du Jianchun's looked straight at Ke Bizhou and said passionately, "But I have you...."

[p. 254, SH, 6(1980)]

The rusticated protagonist of the first and second stages in the development of Zhiqing Fiction can be viewed as a victim of the Cultural Revolution. Disruption of normal family life, loss of education and career, and many other unpleasant experiences have caused them to view reality with a sense of cynicism, defiance and rebellion. To escape an oppressive milieu and search for physical and mental freedom is their common ideal. The outcry of Xie Dong in Goodbye Caltrops openly expresses all these sentiments:

We've come to the countryside. What for? Are we here to bridge the gap of the "three differences"? People who can use their brain are already too few. This method of leveling the differences will only take us farther and farther away from real communism. Are we here to be re-educated by the workers, peasants
and soldiers? People in our state farm all have their own problems. It's they who need to be educated. How can they represent progressive thought? Why put the intellectuals and the workers, peasants and soldiers on opposite sides? Why must the former be educated by the latter? .... Labor should create value. But our labor is only a waste of energy! Material gain is totally ignored but "political points" are counted! Therefore, I feel I have been deceived! [p. 210]

Thus in a sense the rusticated protagonist is a victim and a rebel. His suffering makes him melancholic and lonely. His struggles for individual freedom, knowledge and self fulfillment endow him with a Faustian and Promethean temperament characteristic of a romantic hero. But this image changes along with the transformation of the themes of Zhiqing Fiction. As rusticated life continues to be evaluated and re-evaluated, it is conceivable that this image will take on different colors.
CHAPTER SIX

THE RIGHT TO LOVE: A SEARCH FOR LOVE

Life without love is incomplete.

Zhang Kangkang: Northern Lights

Love as a literary theme has suffered a great deal in contemporary Chinese literature. Under the dicta that literature and art serve politics and serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers, in the fiction of the fifties and early sixties, the love theme is frequently linked with devotion to production and construction of the socialist nation. For the hero, the completion of a task is a precondition for winning a woman. If there is any conflict between the partners in the development of a love relationship, it is caused solely by the differing degrees of progressiveness in serving the collective good. And this conflict is usually resolved at the end of the story under the influence of a Party member or Party ideology. The complexity of emotional reality is simplified for the sake of optimizing the ideals of socialism. The myriad emotional changes in the romantic love of urban intellectuals, a major theme in May Fourth fiction, were banned as "petty bourgeois sentiment."

From 1957 to 1960, to promote the Great Leap Forward, the depiction of love was increasingly dominated by current political emphasis. In the early sixties, Ba
Ren's views on human nature were condemned as "human nature theory" in support of revisionism. During the Cultural Revolution, human nature was denounced as "a theoretical base for all counter-revolutionary revisionist lines". Since love was regarded as a reversion to "human nature theory" it soon became a "forbidden zone" in literature. Accordingly, works on this theme were forced to go underground. The popularity of Zhang Yang's handcopied novel The Second Handshake (Di er ci woshou) was an indication of the hungry demand for such literature. Du Ai, an official literary critic provided the alarming figures that in Guangzhou alone, about five to six hundred books on love were confiscated from high school students between 1977 and 1978.

In Zhiqing Fiction of the Cultural Revolution, as might be expected, the possibility of a love relationship between the male and female protagonist is totally eradicated. The interaction between them is political and task-oriented, limited to a discussion of work projects or political matters. In Liang Xiaosheng's The Master Of The Borderland (Bianjiang de zhuren) for instance, the plot revolves around an apprentice youth's strong interest in a rusticated female who is a skillful tractor driver. But his interest in her mainly on finding out why she is dedicated to her job. If there is any at all that love may develop between them, it is
only after he masters the skill of tractor driving. In the novels *The Journey* and *The Demarcation* mentioned above, romantic love is clearly avoided by the authors. Mei Yingzi's admiration of Zhong Weihua and Nan Jin's concern for Geng Changjiong are regarded merely as "revolutionary friendship". It is not surprising that many short stories only have either male or female characters. In *Red Cavalry Women Of The Changpai Mountain* for example, the central characters are two rusticated female youths who are concerned about nothing but how to master the skill of horse taming.

The denunciation of the "subject matter determinism theory" in late 1978 and the call for depiction of human nature throughout the years 1979 to 1981 enabled Chinese writers to vigorously broaden the domain of fiction. By late 1980, love had become an indispensible theme in fiction. The formula of "wound + love", as pointed out by critics, became a predominant plot structure. The abundant use of the love theme aroused the attention of top leaders. Hu Yaopang in a speech to playwrights in early 1980 tried to downplay the love theme by saying that love is only a long-term theme but not an eternal theme in literature because love is "determined by more important social life." Hu's words did not, however, discourage Chinese writers and audiences who had been deprived of "literature of sentiments" for decades.

In reaction to the resurgence of the love theme and the controversies aroused by certain works, diverse
opinions on the love theme proliferated by 1981. By late 1981, over twenty articles had been published on the topic. The "divorce from social reality and socialist morality" are the common complaints. Under the influence of Mao's view of the class nature of love, the harshest criticism was aimed at the depiction of love that transcends class nature. On November 4 of 1981 the "special commentator" of the Guangming Daily formally initiated a discussion on the "correct and healthy depiction of love". Since youths were the main readers of such stories, the Youth League sponsored a forum on the theme of love and marriage in December 1981. Cadres, young workers and students were invited to give their opinions. The fact that their comments tended to be concerned with moral rather than artistic merit reflects the general literary taste of Chinese readers. Further, their demand that writers pay attention to social consequences, go among the masses, and consider raising the moral level of contemporary youths stemmed from the traditional didacticism of Chinese literature as well as years of conditioning to ideology in literature since 1949.

Love is certainly a key theme in Zhiqing Fiction. From its resurgence in the second part of 1978 on, the element of love has been fused into Zhiqing Fiction in various degrees. In the previous two chapters, we have seen that in the first stage love was frequently used as
a subtheme in the Red Guard and rustication stories. But towards the second stage, with the decline of the description of the Red Guard Movement and rusticated life, the love theme not only was singled out and given more independent depiction but also expanded to include unprecedented emotional content in relations between the two sexes. The search for ideal and pure love, the problems of marriage, and the contradiction between love and morality had become dominant issues. In this chapter, we will focus on the love theme of the first and second stage of Zhiqing fiction.

The first writer to "rehabilitate" the theme of love was Liu Xinwu, whose work closely reflected the various social problems left from the Cultural Revolution. His story The Place Of Love (Aiqing de weizhi) published in summer 1978 quickly aroused the interest of the reading public, and was made into a radio play. The enthusiastic response to his story was not so much a result of its artistic quality as of just plain excitement at the appearance of a long forbidden theme.

Among the many artistic weaknesses of this story, the most annoying is the didactic intrusion of the author into the minds of characters. Liu Xinwu intends to create a female protagonist, a diligent worker, who is confused about the role of love. Yet, because of the author's intrusion, the thinking of the confused female protagonist becomes a didactic speech by the author.

To exlude love from literature and art and
other areas results in two phenomena: first, a small number of youths regard physical needs as love, and some individuals have deteriorated into hooligans. I don't want to study this phenomenon. The second phenomenon is a common one -- that is, the recognition of marriage but not love. Once over twenty-five, parents, friends and even enthusiastic neighbors will begin openly "finding a suitable mate" for them. [p.90]

The didacticism puts the female protagonist into a self-contradictory position: she is supposedly confused about the role of love in life, but, as reflected in her thinking and her lecturing her female colleague on the vulgar view of love, she seems to be clear-headed to know what she is doing. The use of the first person as narrator makes the contradiction even worse. A reader may wonder, since she knows so much about love, what she is so confused about?

The central issue of the story is: Is love detrimental to revolution? or should love be given a place in a revolutionary's life? Still governed by the literary style of the Cultural Revolution, the author brings in a Party member to provide the "correct" answer. Through Auntie Feng's love story -- for many years she has been writing letters to her deceased husband, a revolutionary, as if he were alive -- the author conveys his message:

I think if a person in love forgets about the revolution he is putting love in an improper position. If that is the case, he is trapped in the "over-dominance" of the bourgeoisie. If a person feels that love aspires him to work, he is putting love in a proper position. [p.196]
The problem of love or revolution had already been raised in May Fourth fiction, as exemplified in Ba Jin's works [such as Trilogy Of Love]. The solution he reached was that love and revolution are not mutually exclusive, on the contrary, love can enhance revolution. But this solution was put aside by the Communists with their one-sided emphasis of revolution over love. Hence, in a sense, one significance of Liu Xinwu's story lies in the reiteration of the problem of the relationship between love and revolution.

If Liu Xinwu's story still reflects the literary influence of the Cultural Revolution, Zhang Kangkang's The Right To Love which appeared in April 1979 represents a departure from it in terms of its sensitivity, emotional intensity and more elegant diction. Moreover, she does not include the political didacticism in the intrusive manner of Liu Xinwu. The use of a Party member to openly declare the "correct" answer is discarded and instead the author fuses nature images with emotion to evoke the spiritual revival of the character. More significantly this is the first work of Zhiqing Fiction to call for the right to love. The fact that The Right To Love is Zhang Kangkang's first work since her novel The Demarcation in 1975 and the fact that the bright and optimistic picture of the countryside in the former is replaced by a repressive atmosphere in the latter make Zhang Kangkang the first writer to negate what she upheld in the Cultural
Revolution. In the context of the cyclical pattern of the present dissertation, Zhang's two stories represent consecutively the first affirmation and the first negation.

The spatial and temporal setting of the story are skillfully devised to enhance the theme. The action of the story takes place in the northeastern city of Harbin two years after the fall of the Gang of Four. The introverted and sensitive female protagonist Shu Bei is returning from a small town to Harbin for medical treatment. Her fragile image is effectively accentuated against the bustling background of human activities along the Songhua River, which symbolizes the thaw in the mental state of Chinese people after the demise of the Gang of Four. The fact that she is young and yet haunted by a lengthy illness suggests the incongruity between her age and the amount of suffering she has endured. The tragic death of her intellectual (musician) parents during the Cultural Revolution -- her mother committed suicide, and her father died of physical tortures -- and the unhappy days in the countryside (she was discriminated against because of her parents, criticized in many mass meetings because she once wore a dress and sang a forbidden song), all accounted for the development of her timid personality. Her illness is also a reflection of her unhappy mental state. Still very much in shock and horror she is fearful despite the fact that
society has changed after the fall of the Gang of Four. This "residual fear", commonly shared by the Chinese intellectual, still controls her. Thus the process of physical healing is the process which facilitates a revival of her normal mental state.

The timidity of Shu Bei to express her genuine desires is a reflection of her father's tragic experience. The last words of her father to her and her younger brother on his death bed enhance the extreme disappointment of a Chinese intellectual due to deprivation of the right and dignity of man during the Cultural Revolution:

Mo'er (Shu Mo) should not learn violin anymore... Bei'er (Shu Bei) should choose a worker as husband... be an ordinary person... don't...get involved with... politics... don't love...[p. 103]

The unfinished expression "don't love" indicates not only romantic love, but also love for mankind, for one's interest and career, and many rights that one is entitled to as a human being. This episode is reminiscent of Li Chao's Spring Chill (Chunhan) in which the father, a long-suffered philosophy professor on his death bed, demands that his daughter leave her boyfriend who writes works of critical realism. Both of their worries are essentially the same -- the vulnerability of intellectuals to political persecution -- but Zhang Kangkang's story has a more profound significance in its underlying criticism of the deprivation of general individual rights.
Shu Bei's fear results in her painful suppression of the desire for love, an important part of human nature. This suppression is manifested in her timidity to accept love from Li Xin, an anti-Gang hero who participated at the Tiananmen Incident and is now a philosophy major:

She is not a little girl anymore. If she can, she wants to use an iron anchor to sink the word "love" to the bottom of the sea forever. Why does one need love? Is it that she can't give one hundred examples to prove that those who warmly love life all end in tragedy? And those who never love, or only love themselves all rise to prosperity? [p. 109]

Shu Bei's opposition to her younger brother's attending a musical institute is another manifestation of her fear. Shu Mo, the younger brother, quickly recovered from the "wound" of the Cultural Revolution, represents those who are adaptable to a new environment. Through a conversation between Shu Bei and Shu Mo, the author conveys the message of the story:

[Shu Bei said,] "But, brother, have you thought about this before. Do you mean we have the right to love? Do we? In the past twelve years, haven't our rights been taken away? From the day I was aware of society, I have never asked for any right from society. Even mother didn't have the right to love the people, even father didn't have the right to love his career. And have my right to return to the city and my right to love been all taken away?..." [p.112]

In Shu Mo reply, the author re-asserts the right of an individual:

Think about this. Why can't I love my career, why can't you love the person you love? As citizens of a socialist society, we should have all these rights.... how could
you give up your right? " [p.112]

Shu Mo's burning of his father's will is an action symbolizes the end of a dark age and the beginning of a new era.

The story closes with Shu Bei departing Harbin alone. The appearance of Li Xin at the pier adds a positive hint at the future development of their relationship. The fact that her health has been improved since her arrival has not only physical implications, but is a suggestion of change in her thinking. Her improved health prepares her awakening to the right to love, which is aroused by a new awareness of the spring scene on the Songhua River, a favorite nature image in Zhang's fiction:

Even if the river is frozen, only a few feet beneath, the turbulent water is rushing forward, isn't it? It is a trend that cannot be stopped, it is also a right that no one can take away." [p.113]

The above two stories represent the earliest work formally calling for the revival of love in post-Mao fiction. In these works, one sees the protagonists, particularly females, mentally contaminated by the Cultural Revolution, trying to come to terms with the sudden arrival of love. The male protagonists, however, do not seem to go through such mental changes. On the contrary, they demonstrate a high degree of confidence in life and the future. This difference seems to suggest that in China, men still very much have their way whereas women still have a long way to go in their
pursuit for happiness.

In stories about Red Guards, love is usually destroyed by the Red Guard Movement. The breakup of lovers is frequently the result of a home raid or a struggle meeting. The tragic death of Lu Danfeng and Li Honggang in Maple, the unsuccessful love between Yan Ming and Han Zhao in Forget Me Not, and between Nanshan and Li Huaiping in When The Sunset Clouds Disappear, are typical examples. The protagonist, highly charged with revolutionary zeal, gives love lower priority. With a deeper recognition of the deceitful nature of the Cultural Revolution, he often confesses and lives in remorse and regrets. The attitude of the authors is generally sympathetic toward the lovers and through the tragic endings, they condemn the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution.

In stories on rusticated life, love is affected by several important factors. The first is the protagonist's desire to return to the city. Li Qiaolin of Transfer and Juanjuan of The Path Of Life are typical of those who give up their lovers for the sake of returning to the city for personal advancement. The authors who emphasize the struggle of an individual against repression tend to sympathize with the protagonist's situation. The second factor is the "class background theory" which prevents normal interpersonal relationships. The unhappy love relationship between
Cheng Yu and Murong Zhi in Youths of Our Generation and the vicissitude of Ke Bizhou's love in The Wasted Years are typical cases. The third factor is parental influence. This is usually linked with the "class background theory" in that parents generally disapprove of their sons and daughters marrying someone from an unfavorable class background. The authors who deal with the second and third factors are inclined to be critical toward the parents and at the same time condemn the injustice of the socialist system.

In Zhiqing Fiction of 1979 and 1980, the quest for love is frequently associated with emancipation from dogmatism and anti-humanism. Ye Weilin's short story The 21st Blue Magnolia Stream (Lanlan de Mulan Xi) depicts how the spiritually suppressed broadcaster Zhao Shuanghuan, a woman from the Yao minority, rebels against the shackles of dogmatism in search for freedom of individuality and love. The Yao community may be taken as an epitome of China at large in the days of the Cultural Revolution.

The commune cadre Pan Jinqui, as is often the case in Zhiqing Fiction, is a representative of political dogmatism and an embodiment of tyrannic authority. The regulations he sets up to restrain Zhao Shuanghua -- that she has to report to him three times a day, study Mao's work two hours and produce a thought and study report every week -- and his sealing the wall to prevent young suitors from getting near her window, are
manifestations of his dictatorship aimed at preventing Zhao from living a normal emotional life. Furthermore, his harsh treatment of the rusticated youth Xiao Zhijun, making him work eighteen hours a day, and his objection to Zhao's falling in love with Xiao because of the latter's unfavorable class background are anti-humanistic. Zhao and Xiao are in a narrow sense victims of Pan, but in a broader sense, victims of politicization and anti-humanism.

Zhao's courage in rebelling against authority comes from humanism and romantic love, as demonstrated by her initial sympathy with Xiao and her love for him. The tension between Zhao and Pan reaches a climax after she spends a new year's eve with Xiao. The combination of "class background theory" and conventional morality has turned a friendly gathering into an "immoral behavior". Zhao is blamed for "lacking the concept of class struggle" and Xiao for "eroding the mind of a Party member". [p. 56] The author announces the theme of the story through Zhao's proclamation: "I am a human being, not an animal!" [p. 56] The escape of Zhao and Xiao to the mountains is an indication of disgust of existing social order which is ironically represented by Pan Jigui, the Party member. Moreover, the cadres and Party members who were looked upon as protectors of freedom of choice in marriage in fiction of the fifties and early sixties now appear as tyrants.
A note of pessimism is inserted in the concluding passage with the introduction of Mo Cuihua, Pan's new trainee after Zhao left and a double of Zhao. The implication is that as long as there is dogmatism and "feudalism" human dignity and humanism will be reduced to a minimum. Viewed from this angle, whether Zhao and Xiao can find a refuge is very much in doubt.

Another distinctive feature of the love theme in Zhiqing Fiction is the struggle of young people to free themselves from parental influence and manipulation. This age-old theme was dealt with in many works of May Fourth fiction as epitomized by Ba Jin's The Family. In the fifties and early sixties, many stories such as Zhao Shuli's Registration (Dengji) and Qin Zhaoyang's A Chance Heard Story were devoted to the promotion of freedom of marriage choice under the new marriage law. In these works, a happy ending is ensured with the help of a Party member who plays the role of an educator and guide to clear away the obstacles in the path of the lovers. Hence, the lovers do not go through a deep psychological process in search for individual happiness as did those in May Fourth fiction.

Ironically, in Zhiqing Fiction it is not backward peasants or landlords who interfere with their sons and daughters' marriages, but high-ranking officials or old revolutionary cadres. The lovers have to fight against official power as well as the obstacles of parental authority. The struggle for freedom of marriage is thus
linked with the criticism of bureaucratism and "feudalism".

One of the first stories in the first stage to depict rusticated youth's opposition to parental and official manipulation of marriage was Zhang Bin's The Youth Interlude (Qingchun chaqu) in which the protagonist Peipei fights against a secretly-arranged marriage agreement between her mother and Liu, Head of the Hygiene Bureau. Peipei is supposed to marry Liu's son Dayi, who has secretly admired her since high school. The secret deal is that Liu would transfer Peipei back to the city to be a nurse in his hospital. But Peipei already has an intelligent boyfriend, Chen Zhigang, son of poor teacher parents. To succeed in her plan, Peipei's mother, using Peipei's name, writes Chen Zhigang with the intention of breaking up their relationship.

Upon discovering the secret deal, Peipei strongly objects. Her mother's reply, which expresses her point of view, is also quite sad in that it expresses the common people's inability to control their own fate.

[If you don't agree] within three days, you've to get out of the hospital! You've forgotten how you returned from the countryside? and how you received nursing training? You think you're wings are strong enough to fly, but do you realize you are in the hands of Liu.[p. 35].

This passage immediately puts Peipei and her mother in a pitiful situation. Peipei explodes:
She never thought that a Communist cadre would be so base, using her as a commodity! Secret agreement, huh! it may as well be described as the indenture that Huang Shiren used to force Yang Baolao to sell Xi'er.

Peipei's criticism is no doubt a strong reflection of the author's opinion. But the danger of being openly didactic (as in the case of Liu Xinwu's early fiction) is avoided by the cumulated emotion of Peipei incited by her pushy mother. The ironical effect achieved is that the supposedly lofty Party member whose role is to help bring freedom of marriage to youth is now playing the tyrannical role of a landlord like Huang Shiren, the villain in the revolutionary opera The White-Haired Girl (Baimaon nu).

In this story, we find two dominant types of youth in post-1976 Zhiqing Fiction. Liu Dayi, son of the high-ranking cadre, and Chen Zhigang, who comes from a low class origin. Interestingly, sons of high-ranking cadres are usually objects of criticism in post-1976 fiction. They are depicted as lazy, ignorant, arrogant and dandy. Liu Dayi, for instance, is characterized as paying excessive attention to his clothing and relying on his father to get a comfortable and lucrative job for him as a truck driver. The fact that these negative traits are repeatedly seen in youths (particularly male) from high social status might imply common people's hatred of the privileged class. By contrast, youths like Chen Zhigang who is from a low social stratum, are portrayed
as hard-working, studious and often able to read a foreign language (usually English). Moreover, since The Youth Interlude is set before the fall of the Gang of Four, Chen is also depicted as an Anti-Gang hero who is critical of "anti-intellectualism".

As is frequently the case in Zhiqing Fiction of the first stage, the book-loving hero is frequently loved by a beautiful heroine, a plot reminiscent of the formulaic plot of "talented youth and beautiful lady" in Chinese traditional fiction. The rusticated hero tends to suffer from political discrimination, but his suffering brings him more affection from the heroine. Chen Zhigang in this story is no exception. Chen has mailed two translations of foreign articles to a magazine but they have fallen into the hands of local cadres. The news of his arrest hastens Peipei's decision to return to him. Though abrupt, her return indicates contempt for bureaucratic corruption and her uncompromising attitude toward parental interference with her love. A note of optimism, a frequent device of early Zhiqing Fiction, is inserted with the cliche description of the morning sun which shines on the pages of Peipei's decisive words in her diary.[p. 37]

Since social status is a determining factor in spouse selection, a change in social status is will affect love relationships. In Liu Fangsen's Clouds (Yun) 25 Xia Yun, daughter of high-ranking cadre parents, fell in love with Jianmin, a technician of a factory in a
remote town when her parents were in political trouble during the Cultural Revolution. After Xia Yun's parents have resumed office, her mother, though still feeling grateful for Jianmin's help, tries to convince Xia Yun to marry Huzi, son of a military general. But Xia Yun who treasures her love which was developed in times of difficulty opposes her mother's manipulation and returns to Jianmin. The same thing also happens to another youth in Goodbye Caltrops except that the one to be given up is a female. The rusticated female Sheng Xiaoxia helps Xie Dong, encourages him to review his lessons for the university entrance examination and even has a sexual relationship with him. All this happened when Xie Dong's father was locked up in a "cowshed". When his father resumes office, his social status immediately changes. Yu Min, Xie Dong's mother, uses her power to force Xie Dong to abandon Xiaoxia because of the latter's lowly origins (her father is a poor high school teacher).

In Zhiqing Fiction of the first and second stage, the mother character frequently performs the antagonistic role in marriage. This is especially so in high-ranking cadre families like that in Clouds and Goodbye, Caltrops. Also, in Bai Hua's A Bundle Of Letters the female protagonist Nannan's mother, wife of a general, even locks her up in order to manipulate her marriage. Through Nannan's five letters to her
boyfriend Ming, the author harshly exposes the bureaucratic corruption in society and suggests that in present-day China, the feudal concept of "family compatibility" stubbornly persists. Interestingly, in Zhiqing Fiction, while the mother is portrayed as a representative of corruptive power, the father, often a Party member, is usually an upright figure. This is perhaps due to the fact that authors are careful to balance harsh criticism by introducing a positive Party image.

One characteristic reaction to family pressure on rusticated youths is for a female youth from a higher social status to fight against parental influence in order to maintain her love. But if the same situation occurs to a male youth, he succumbs to his family in giving up the girl. Xie Dong's reluctance to maintain his love relationship with Xiaoxia is a case in point. This makes the female characters the central figures in the struggle for freedom of love and marriage.

Zhang Kangkang and Mei Jin's short story The Distant 28 Bell Tolls represents the earliest story to directly deal with the stubbornness of "family compatibility" with the mother, the first victim of this concept, as the central character of the story. The progression of time governs the movement of the plot. The story is divided into three sections and each is entitled with a time indication: 12 midnight, 5 am and 7 pm. Although the fictional time covers the activities of the
characters in less than a day -- from midnight to seven o'clock in the evening the next day, this slice of life is a compressed history of four decades.

A sense of suspense is immediately created through the anxiety of Ji Huan, the female protagonist, who is waiting for her son Dongping to come home at midnight. Dongping who has been rusticated for eight years, is now a worker in a factory. The central conflict is then revealed: she has pleaded with Dongping to break up with his girlfriend Ye Meng because of the big social gap between the two families. Ye's father Ye Heng, though persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, has resumed office and has been newly appointed Head of The People's Legislature in the district. On top of that Ye Meng's sister and brother are all married to high-ranking officials' children. In contrast to Peipei's mother in The Youth Interlude, Ji Huan does not want to benefit from her son's marriage. On the contrary, she tries to prevent the marriage. Peipei's mother uses her daughter's marriage for personal gain, whereas Ji Huan tries to stop the marriage to preserve her pride and dignity. However, they both fail because they do not consider the element of love. Peipei's mother fails because Peipei does not love Liu Dayi; Ji Huan also fails because Ji Dongping and Ye Meng truly love each other.

The gold watch, a time image, serves to link the
love stories of two generations. Thirty-two years ago, Ji Huan's father, a rich jewelry merchant, objected to her marrying Zhao Yeheng (who is actually Ye Meng's father Ye Heng), son of a coolie. Ji Huan managed to give Zhao a gold watch inscribed with her initials when the latter left for Yan'an to join the revolution. Coincidence, a crucial structural element of this story, has it that during the Cultural Revolution, when Zhao Yeheng was in political trouble, Ye Meng asked Dongping to keep the gold watch. Throughout the years, Ji Huan never knew Ye Meng's father was actually Zhao Yeheng until she found her old gold watch this very night.

The reunion of Ji Huan and Ye Heng occurs coincidentally below the clock tower, the same place she promised to elope with him thirty-two years ago. The time is exactly the same -- seven o'clock in the evening. The duplication of the meeting time and place itself bears an ironic significance. The fact that he cannot recognize her suggests that they belong to entirely different social strata. Ye Heng is no longer the Ye Heng that Ji Huan used to know, or wished to know. He now belongs to the bureaucratic class and has come with the intention of persuading Dongping to leave his daughter. Ji Huan, who is eager to find out whether Ye Heng is Zhao Yeheng, comes in place of her son. The irony is that even though Ye Heng suffered from the same social prejudice in his youth, he is playing the same role as Ji Huan's father whom he despised. In the past,
it was the inequality of division of property that divided lovers; now, in socialist society, it is power and political status.

Ji Huan's inner debate reflects the shattering of her long-held dreams:

She accidentally touched the cold gold watch in her pocket, and felt hesitant.... Perhaps she should take out the watch and tell him who she is, tell him everything, but what will happen then? Perhaps all this could be changed. She has been longing for him for so many years, how could she leave like this? There's not much time; if she loses this opportunity, she may never get another. Tell him, not because I want him to change something, but to make him feel ashamed of himself.... [p.123]

What makes Ji Huan a richer character than other mother characters in the above examples is that she undergoes psychological change. The story begins with her strong objection to her son's loving Ye Meng. She even demands him swear that he will break with her. Now, the complete shattering of her dream because of Ye Heng's philistinism awakens her. She now realizes that the gold watch, which is a symbol of her love, does not belong to her anymore, but to her son and Ye Meng. "Why should I make our children suffer what we've gone through?"[p.123] Her realization thus not only signals the triumph of love, but also anti-bureaucratism. The striking of the clock at seven at this moment echoes her past wound, and hints at a new future.

In rustication stories of the first stage, the protagonist tends to be portrayed as diligent,
knowledgable and talented. But he is usually from an unfavorable class background and is discriminated against by local cadres and fellow youths. Nevertheless, he is admired and loved by the heroine. Cheng Yu, Ke Bizhou and Chen Zhigang are typical examples of this type of youth. But this type of youth is usually disagreeable to the girl's parents.

With an increasing emphasis on knowledge and talents, scientists, researchers, degree holders and candidates for overseas study become favorable prospective husbands for girls. But for some girls, money, material possessions, power and foreign connections are more important and practical than intelligence and degrees. Female characters with such tendencies are usually portrayed as objects of criticism. In Chen Jinhong's The Scale Of Love (Ai de tianping), the passionate Li Xiujuan, a returned youth from a state farm, is dissatisfied with her technician boyfriend Liu Jiecheng because he pays more attention to his job and technological reform than to her desires. In her words, he is a "block", a "bookworm" and does not know how to live. The story begins with their last date in which Li tells Liu that she has a new boy friend and will not see him anymore.

The author then portrays a stock character Zhang Wei -- a youth supposedly from an overseas Chinese background. Such a person is frequently caricatured in
post-1976 Chinese fiction. He is usually seen carrying a camera, wearing either a western suit or blue jeans with a colorful T-shirt, a pair of sun glasses and leather shoes. He acts as if he is rich, and can leave the country at any moment, and his father or grandfather is without exception a rich businessman in Hongkong or in the United States. With such traits, the author easily creates a negative image of this character.

Li Xiujuan's vanity is revealed in her reaction to Zhang's appearance and overseas connections:

Looking at this handsome youth, she felt she could see her future: a happy marriage--going abroad--living the kind of life she wanted... [p. 17]

Too eager to show his didacticism, the author quickly piles more ugly characteristics on Zhang Wei. It turns out that he is the head of a gang of hooligans and that Li Xiujuan is but one of his playmates. In the meantime, the author endows Liu Jiecheng with all the socially acclaimed moral qualities -- his devotion to technological renovation and use of his knowledge of German to translate scientific articles. The juxtaposition of these two characters, one being identified with the Four Modernisations and the other with social crime, predestines Li Xiujuan's return to Liu Jiecheng without the latter's effort to win her.

A happy ending to the story is predictable. The use of coincidence -- the appearance of another girl and other hooligans -- makes it easy for Li Xiujuan to
discover Zhang Wei's true character. She gets physical satisfaction from Zhang Wei that she cannot get from Liu Jiecheng, but she soon feels a sense of emptiness. Her confession brings home the theme that material and physical satisfaction are not the primary elements in love, but rather devotion to each other and to the Four Modernisations.

Love and moral responsibility are frequently linked in Zhiqing Fiction. Once a love relationship is established, breaking it up is considered irresponsible and immoral. But this criterion is applied differently to urban and rural youths. While critics are keen to point out the immorality of discarding an already recognized relationship, they turn a blind eye to rural youths discarded by their city counterparts who return to the city after the restrictions of returning to the city were lifted after 1979. In Wen Bo's Autumn River (Qiushui), the rusticated female leaves her rural husband to return to Beijing despite the fact that they deeply love each other. In Lu Xinger's Purple Fragrance Quietly Blooms (Dazixiang), the female protagonist even leaves her rural husband and her two-year-old baby in order to return to Beijing. In Dahei (Dahei) the rusticated female leaves her rural husband and takes their daughter back to Beijing. In these stories, the authors usually do not criticize the action of the departing partner but instead express their sympathy for both youths. They tend to concentrate on the agony of
the rusticated youth but neglect that of the rural spouse. The reason is mainly that the rustication program during the Cultural Revolution was considered a mistake (particularly after the 1981 Party decisions), and hence it seems morally permissible for rusticated youths to leave their rural spouses to return to the city. But these authors have all failed to or dare not point out the anti-humanistic aspect of the system: the regulation that rural spouses are not allowed to return to the city with the urban partner; or in a broader sense, the extreme practice of mobility control.

But when both partners are either rural or urban, to abandon an established relationship will arouse criticism. In the former case, as shown in Cuckoo Cries Return (Dujuan tigui) and its sequel Fly To The Faraway Land (Qu yuanfang) critics attack the immorality of a university student in discarding his illiterate wife in favor of a class-mate. The same issue is brought up in Lu Yao's novella Life (Rensheng) in which Gao Jialin, a high-school graduate, the only intellectual in the village, goes to work as a journalist in town and soon finds his rural lover Qiaozhen boring and ignorant. His abandonment of her in favor of a schoolmate, Huang Yaping, who can provide him with intellectual stimulation and career advancement in the city is criticized as irresponsible and immoral. Most critics seem to side with Qiaozhen, the gentle, kind-hearted,
passionate but illiterate village girl. But one wonders, given Gao's strong desire for career advancement, will his marriage with Qiaozhen work out?

In stories on love and morality in Zhiqing Fiction, the protagonists are generally caught in a dilemma under social pressure whether to fight for ideal love or to maintain an established but deteriorating relationship. In some cases, the author makes the breakup a justifiable action by linking one partner (usually male) with socially unacceptable traits. In Lu Lei's The Gentle Sea Breeze (Haifeng qingqing chui), the female protagonist is engaged to the son of a high-ranking official. But she finds out that he uses his father's power to take away the opportunity to go abroad for a training course which should have accrued to the young man she now admires. Her breakup with her fiance does not then evoke a strong emotional reaction from the reader.

The female protagonist Xiaoli in Hai Xiang's The Waves Of Life (Shenghuo de langhua) undergoes a more intense emotional agony. She is a literature major and is engaged to a young cadre, Fei Ping, who does political work in a government organization. But she gradually feels that she cannot bear his male chauvinism, his dogmatic behavior and, worse, his unconcern for her feelings. She is enmeshed in a painful situation. Qu Xin, who shares the same interests with her, soon replaces Fei Ping. But she feels guilty
because Qu Xin has been introduced to her older roommate Qi Guizhi, who has had a difficult time finding a spouse. Xiaoli is caught in a dilemma in which 'love, friendship and morality are interwoven. But her belief that "it is immoral for people who love each other not to get married" gives her courage to pursue her love.

[p. 110] It is a pity that the author does not go into a deeper psychological analysis of Xiaoli. Instead, her conflicts are easily solved because Fei Ping admits his weakness and agrees to the breakup, and Qi Guizhi, her roommate, gives up Qu Xin as soon as she hears that he accepts a position in Gansu Province.

The Waves Of Life is made up of thirty-four diary entries. But the lack of frankness and directness which are essential qualities of a diary weakens its emotional impact. This seems to be a general problem of the diary or letter form [eg. Bai Hua's A Bundle Of Letters] in contemporary Chinese fiction because the author dare not directly reveal his private feelings and judgement of society. Ding Ling's The Diary Of Miss Sophie also deals with the perplexity and agony of love of a female youth, but an unrestrained manner of presentation endows the work with much stronger emotional effect.

A youth who goes through more intense emotional agony in search of ideal love is Lu Qinqin in Zhang Kangkang's Northern Lights. The story surpasses many others of the same theme in its skillful revelation of
the love theme by the use of symbolism and the fusion of nature images with inner emotions. The author has successfully created an image of a sensitive, imaginative and idealistic female through her relationship with three young men. Fei Yuan, Zeng Xu and Fu Yunxiang represent three different types of contemporary Chinese youths who have gone through the Cultural Revolution and the rustication program. The story line develops Lu Qinqin's interaction with these three youths and ends with her final choice of the ideal lover -- Zeng Xu.

Zhang Kangkang is skillful throughout the novella in fusing nature images with the emotions of the characters. For instance, in the beginning of the story, the scene of the free and light snowflakes conveys Lu's desire for freedom. But the scene is quickly plagued by a turn to her subjective emotions through the use of internal monologue: "I don't suppose I can attend a regular university for the rest of my life. Just like the snowflakes on the ground, I can't fly anymore...." [p.5] Recalling her failure in the university examination, the scene is immediately colored with a sense of sadness. This is then naturally followed by the introduction of her negative feelings toward her approaching wedding, "As soon as she thinks of the wedding, the sky suddenly turns grey."

Lu's negative feelings toward her approaching wedding are further revealed as a bus is taking her to
her fiance Fu's home. The "double happiness" sign of a wedding at a restaurant, and the immediate negation of the indication of happiness by a simili that "happiness is like a bridal sedan, it turns away after it takes the bride to the new room" [p. 7] effectively brings forth Lu's unwillingness to get marry. Later, at a get-together at Fu's place, she is annoyed by the tasteless conversation between Fu and his friends who are from high cadre families. Her feeling of relief after leaving Fu's place, which is also their future home, is the first signal of her escaping from the philistine marriage.

Her breakup with Fu is triggered by Fei Yuan (whose name, "wasted depth", is a hint at the wasted generation) whose conviction of the need for realization of the self gives her the strength to break with fixed social patterns. Fei is her "spiritual idol". She believes what he says:

The purpose of life is to search for the happiness of the present life. From the angle of love, it is to obtain love from one's beloved.[p. 40]

This conviction makes her decide to find her beloved "regardless of the price" she has to pay. [p.40] However, Fei Yuan's sudden decline of passion toward her when she needs his comfort and support after she breaks up with Fu greatly disappoints her and awakens her to his indifference and selfishness. The shattering of her "spiritual idol" promotes her turn to Zeng, an active
and confident youth.

The image of Fei Yuan stands out in its defiance and cynicism toward socialist reality. As a former Red Guard leader and son of an ambassador to Europe, he has gone through the emotional and ideological twists and turns of the Cultural Revolution. He represents those who have "seen through" the significance of political indoctrination. He says to Lu,

Who will still believe in empty indoctrination? People are disgusted with politics; they don't want to see their education contradict reality. They are better off being concerned about themselves than politics. [p.15]

Fei Yuan's egoism reflects his loss of faith in Communist ideals. In reaction to the excessive politicization of social life during his growing years, he has become skeptical of the dictum "serve the people". Now, what he mostly concerns himself with is "a new life view -- the true discovery of the self and a re-evaluation of the value of man." [p.26] No doubt, what he says reflects a great deal of the mental state of contemporary Chinese youth, but, this image could have been fuller if the author had provided more details of his activities. This would make his refusing to help Lu Qinqin less abrupt.

The different portraits of Fei Yuan and Zeng Xu reflect the author's attitude toward these two types of youths. In contrast to Fei, Zeng is endowed with many positive traits: he participated in the Tiananmen
Incident, opposed bureaucratism; he is eager to acquire knowledge, enthusiastic about state affairs and confidently active in life. Zeng's vigor in organizing a study group to discuss China's economic problems shows his concerns about the fate of the masses and the nation. This contrasts with the egoistic Fei who cares nothing but himself. This socialist concerns hence make Zeng a "new man" who "forgets about his wound and plunges into a new struggle".

However, despite all his positive traits, the image of Zeng, in my opinion, is not as successful as that of Fei. This is partly due to the indirect revelation of Zeng's life through Fei and Lu's girl-friend Su Na. Further, the author does not show Zeng's thinking through action, but lets him express it in dialogue form. Again, there is not enough interaction between Zeng and Lu. Their several encounters are mostly accidental and brief. All this makes Lu's falling in love with him a quick escape from an emotional vacuum rather than a natural development.

The key image, the Northern Lights, which governs the essence of the story, have a multifold significance. When Qinqin was a child, her uncle whom she idealized as a hero, initiated her into the cult of the Northern Lights,

"Whoever sees the Northern Lights will receive good fortune." [p. 13]

The Northern Lights are a symbol of good fortune which
is reserved only for a person who is able to see them. This image is also a symbol of the ideals of life. At the photo studio when Lu is debating whether or not to take a wedding photograph with Fu, she suddenly "sees" a ray of the Northern Lights. The author writes,

Only she can see this light of life, and only she knows where it is. She wants to look for it until she succeeds. [p. 39]

When she escapes from the studio she is symbolically escaping from a predictably unhappy marriage. Throughout the story, the Northern Lights are also a private symbol of love. The fact that both Fu and Fei show disbelief in the existence of the Northern Lights indicate that neither of them can be Lu's choice. Zeng who believes in their existence and is certain that someday they will appear makes himself the one who shares Lu's ideal.

The other recurring image -- a small deer -- also adds a symbolic significance to the story. A running image of the deer appears on Zeng's badge, signifying the active nature of his personality. This image, which is also on Lu's scarf, gives her courage to escape from a philistine marriage. The fact that they both have a deer image on their badges naturally pairs them together, like the jade necklace of Jia Baoyu and Xue Baochai in The Dream Of The Red Chamber. At the end of the novella, the appearance of the little deer in a "plain (sun) light" (which is taken as a form of the
northern lights) is a device to combine the two recurring images into a natural scene.

Lu Qinquin’s search for ideal love gave rise to two differing kinds of opinions. Cao Jianping criticized it thus: "The author has ignored the decadent phenomenon of young people's love morality. When she used Lu Qinquin, a woman who is fond of the new and dislikes the old (lover), to express this serious theme, she not only was unable to produce a positive effect, but also diluted the ideology of the work." Zheng Zhennan said that the author propagates "egoism" by wrongly putting "love above everything". Favorable opinions tended to praise Lu's search. Zhang Zhiguo said that the three young men represent three different types of life and Lu's choice, in a sense, reflects her choice of the ideal way of life. Teng Fuhai said that the search for love is also the search for ideal. Hence, Lu's search is a necessity. Mei Duo also pointed out that the author succeeds in revealing the philistinism in marriage which is a phenomenon in Chinese society. Indeed to negate Lu Qinquin's search is to miss the essence of this story: the great importance of romantic love. Lu Qinquin's search is not merely a search for a mate, but a search for a higher ideal which will allow her to live a fuller life with a self-fulfilling love. Her search is thus a manifestation of romanticism.

In Zhiqing Fiction of the second stage, not only pure love is dealt with; there is also a probing into
"sexual liberation". One such attempt is Zhang Xiaotian's Inside News Made Public (Gongkai de neican) which portrays an "emancipated" university girl Ding Yilan who despises moral restriction on marriage.

The key image of Ding Yilan, however, suffers from the moral preoccupation of the author. Initially Ding Yilan strikes the reader as a fresh and rebellious image of a thought-penetrating and defiant youth through her disclosure of the hypocrisy of Lu. Further she is seen to have an independent view of marriage:

Why should one person cling to and belong to another person? As I see it, many marriages are founded on the basis of social customs and have little to do with love. Once one spouse falls in love with a third person, he or she is considered as immoral, decadent and subject to attack. [p. 63]

But since it is through Ding Yilan that the author tries to impose his didacticism, as the plot unfolds he adds more and more traits of an "emancipated" female to this character and negates them one by one through a series of incidents. For instance, Ding Yilan is depicted as using her beauty to win herself special privileges. She can make one phone call and get an air-conditioned room for Lu in a high-class guest house which Kang Ping, chancellor of a university, will have to wait for a few days to get.[p.64] Later, she can even arrange, through her connection with a high-ranking cadre, a Toyota just for her and Lu to go for a trip. [p.79]
The negation of Ding Yilan is gradually intensified through contrast with her roommates Xu Qing and Kang Wusi. The different decoration of the three corners of the dormitory shared by the three signifies their differences in personality. Xu Qing's corner is plain and commonplace. The appearance of Xu Qing's crippled boyfriend is used to contrast with the promiscuity of Ding Yilan. Kang Wusi's bed is covered with a white pillow, white sheets and white mosquito net, signifying her puritanical, nun-like lifestyle and her disbelief in the existence of romantic love. She thinks that "love is a term created by writers and hence it only exists in fiction and movies." [p.71] Ding Yilan's space, in great contrast to the other two, is colorfully decorated: all kinds of cosmetics, artistic photographs, a radio, and books of various kinds. On her desk are letters from all over the nation. All this hints at Ding Yilan's violations of the norms of common Chinese college students.

The author continues to reveal Ding's view on love and then negates it immediately. When Ding Yilan is called by Lu a believer in "love supremacy", she asks him,

"Are you?" Ding Yilan asked, "You're only being hypocritical. You dare not admit that you also need love; you dare not love boldly."
Lu Qinfang said, "I have love. I have a wife."
"Does a wife mean love?" Ding Yilan said. [p.81]
This penetrating observation makes Lu admit for the first time that he is not high-minded, that in fact a hypocrite. But his attitude toward Ding soon turns negative:

"To destroy another's family? It surely isn't moral. But she really thinks that this is moral."[p. 82]

The image of Ding Yilan is caricatured to an extreme in the last episode in which she, failing to have Lu write a report on her, threatens that she will take off her clothes and accuse him of attempting to rape her. Lu, however, is smart enough to record everything she says before she is able to carry out her shameless attempt. By this point, the "new women" image which the author intends to negate, has been exposed in all its supposed ugliness. The author fails to explain why Ding brings a tape recorder (Lu's gift for her) to his hotel room. The story ends with Ding leaving Lu in tears of shame. One cannot help but ask: If Ding had not brought the recorder to Lu's room, would Lu have succumbed to her request?

In the above stories, the general moral is that as long as one struggles, one will be rewarded. But life does not follow this kind of logic. It is likely that one may not get what one struggles for; one may even get the opposite, or go back to the original point of departure after a long searching journey. Zhang Xinxin's novella The Dreams Of Our Generation is one of the few stories in recent years to reveal the despair,
meaninglessness, absurdity and paradox of life. The entire story is presented from the point of view of an anonymous female protagonist despite the use of the third person "she" instead of the first person "I". With her commonplace marriage and routinized occupation as a proof reader, she has lost all vigor and hope for a fulfilling marriage and future. She seeks happiness in recalling a childhood dream in which she had a brief "love encounter" with a handsome grade school boy. She dreams that she can meet him some day, somewhere. Ironically, at the end of the story, this ideal childhood lover turns out to be her mean and disgusting neighbor, a "two-faced" political cadre from her work unit. Thus the only thing that gives her hope and meaning in life is shattered, and she is left to live the kind of life that seems to her to be made up of "a series of meals" [p.96.]

The abundance of interior monologue and the rendering of her subconscious lends great immediacy and intimacy to the story. What characterizes the novella is the author's penetrating observation of the concreteness of life and its true condition. It is in this novella that we first see the boredom of routinized life, the pettiness of human existence, the lack of communication between people, and the sense of alienation in socialist society.

The lack of mutual trust among ordinary people in
the 1980's contrasts sharply with pre-1976 fiction in which human relationships are determined by class relations. The kind of personal relationships portrayed in this story reveals a new and modernistic dimension of contemporary Chinese society. For instance, the anonymous protagonist's suspects that her neighbor with whom she shares the same kitchen, would spit on her dishes when she turns around because, according to her thinking, "it is hard to say what people are like behind others' backs." [p.99]

A sense of helplessness is also conveyed in her commonplace life. Before she gets married, she feels that "in this world in which people are pushing people, life space does not seem to expand; on the contrary, it is shrinking." [p.101] She pessimistically feels that she "has fallen into an enclosed one-way track" -- struggle to get on a bus, return home, talk a little bit, and then go to bed. She cannot bear the tedium of single life. But when she is introduced to male friends, she "feels quite absurd to make a match with a stranger." [p.102] Finally, she loses hope of waiting for a "prince" and gets married. But she feels trapped again in another "enclosed one-way track". There is no way out. The time-consuming line-ups for food and the energy-wasting household chores make her life tiring.

She feels that all struggle to succeed is futile because an individual is powerless and is at the mercy of the environment.
It is like a piece of green leaf on a branch. By chance, a kid hits a bird on the branch. When the bird flies away, the leaf falls. The leaf by chance falls into a river, and flows with the waves. By chance, it is caught by a branch sticking out from a tree. At this moment, a gust of wind blows the waves and it also pushes you to a small corner, and you stay there for the rest of your life. [p.104]

Fairy tales which rarely appear in Chinese Communist fiction recur at intervals to give symbolic meaning to the story. Out of the seven sections, four of them (one, two, three, five) begin with a fairy tale. They are also mentioned in the middle of other sections. The fairy tales she tells her son echo her childhood and her dream. In fact, her adventure to the cave when she was a grade school girl can also be viewed as a fairy tale. The fact that she is obsessed with that unforgettable adventure and hopes to see "him" -- the handsome boy who wrote the word "love" on her palm -- suggests that she is also searching for happiness in fairy tales like her son. Ironically the word "love" on her palm did not leave her with any love, but a disillusionment in marriage and life.

Her son who believes in her fairy tales is a projection of her self. In this projection, one sees her unobtainable dreams and inevitable failures. Childhood naivety and its dreams and fairy tales are intermingled in a net which traps her in unending search. But the female protagonist's quest is constantly fraught with disappointment. Her blocked sink, her inability to
obtain a bigger room, her failure to buy a fresh fish, and many other details all contribute to her defeat. Concerning more important matters, the protagonist's childhood dream of becoming a writer turns into, ironically, the reality of being a proof reader of someone else's writing; her dream of marrying a university graduate ends in marriage to a common worker; her childhood "lover" turns out to be a disgusting neighbor and a petty political cadre.

Ironically, she actively plays matchmaker for her unmarried friends. She now feels that "all kinds of fussy conditions are blind and energy-consuming. In fact, everyone is about the same. Love can be established after marriage as long as people can get accustomed to and bear with each other." [p.111] This change in outlook contrasts sharply with her high ideals before marriage. The search for ideal love and marriage turns out to be a waste of energy. In her, we see a youth who accepts the absurdity and paradox of modern Chinese life.

Zhu Xiao, a factory worker she meets in the market, seems to be the only positive character in the novella. Despite his disinterested wife's nagging, he continues to write tales for children. He believes that human beings need to have dreams in live. But, in another sense, his role is only to provide children with unobtainable dreams that will end in the same disillusionment when they grow up.
As might be expected, this novella was attacked by some critics as "showing extreme individualism." During the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign, this novella and Zhang's other work On The Same Horizon were brought up again as major targets. But Zhang Xinxin's probing into actual human existence and the true situation of life itself instead of following the socially-approved logic greatly broadened and deepened the subject matter of Chinese fiction. Zhang seems to be the only Chinese writer who relentlessly reveals life to such a profound extent.

In short, in the first and second stages of Zhiqing Fiction, youths' search and struggle for ideal love in an adverse environment has demonstrated at least two characteristics of post-Mao literature. First is the revival of the facts of human nature. This recognition enables a writer to deal directly with romantic sentiments which are unique to youths. An emphasis on private feelings replaces the superficial depiction of politicized self. Second, the struggle to obtain individual happiness and ideals through love marks the distinctive romantic nature of the young intellectual-protagonists. The rediscovery of love implies the recognition of the self and the assertion of it to fulfill the rights of an individual, all of which were denied in the Cultural Revolution.

Love, however, is not the only means through which
Chinese youths can seek happiness and ideals, the affirmation and assertion of the physical self and psychological self are also important channels as we shall see in the following chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN

ON THE SAME HORIZON: ASSERTION OF THE SELF

Songhua River, your memories are too heavy. If you leave behind the mud and sand you will flow much faster.

Zhang Kangkang: Summer

In previous chapters, we have seen how the Red Guard protagonist first identifies his personal goals with the revolution but is soon disillusioned and finally regrets his naivety. His defiance of political dogma and his shift to searching for a new faith in life signifies a turn from the politicized self to the private self. We have seen how the rusticated protagonist, suffocated by a lack of outlets, strives to search for private goals. We have also seen how the Zhiqing protagonist searches for love which is not preconditioned by politics. In this chapter, we shall turn our focus to young people's assertion of the self through the recognition of the physical self and the psychological self as manifested in three aspects: the affirmation of femininity, the discovery of individuality, and the development of the self through the attainment of education and happiness. The background of these works is usually the city and the protagonist is a returned youth. In some of them, particularly those in the first stage, the antagonist is
not a particular "local emperor" as in the stories of rusticated life, but "ultraleft" dogmatism and "feudalism" in general. In others, particularly those in the second stage, no antagonist is readily identifiable; it may even be the protagonist himself.

Since 1949, a strong emphasis on the collective good and a de-emphasis of individual temperament and private goals had resulted in the suppression of the self in Chinese society. Chinese Communist literature, for decades used as an indoctrinating tool to promote Party ideology, had inevitably suffered greatly from a depersonalization of its characterisation. In pre-1976 fiction, the traits of any individual character tend to be summarized traits of a certain type of person rather than unique traits of an individual. Consequently, cadres who are supposed to be the representatives of the Party are, without exception, impeccable and all-round "guides" and "teachers"; factory workers are always hard-working, more devoted to production than to the family and the self; peasants are selfless commune members; and soldiers are brave fighters. Negative characters are also portrayed according to ideological demands: rich peasants are always scheming to undermine socialism, and "bourgeois intellectuals" are spies or "backward elements". The result is the so-called "one face for one thousand people" type of characterisation abhorred by literary critics and writers in the post-Mao era.
The first manifestation of a revival of the self comes in the form of consciousness of the physical self. This is particularly apparent in female characters. In pre-1976 fiction, the female character receives very limited and stereotyped depiction of her physical appearance. Round healthy face, bright eyes, short braids and sturdy figure are standard attributes. Male youths are characteristically robust, agile and indefatigable. Regardless of sex, they tend to be in white, blue or black outfits. These attributes are generally linked to production and manual labour.

In post-Mao fiction, with the return of human nature and realism, depiction of characters is more colorful. The desire for peculiarly feminine beauty has been given recognition. For female youth, big beautiful eyes, jade-like skin, cherry lips, long hair and well-balanced figure are common descriptions. The round face and sturdy figure seem out of fashion. The outfit is colorful and varied -- long and short dresses, western pantsuits, stylish hats, necklaces, ear rings, high-heeled shoes, tight blouses and so forth. For the male youth, the outfit receives unprecedented attention: they may wear sun glasses, leather jacket and shoes, colorful T-shirts with English words, western suits, wavy hair, sport jackets and so forth. The muscular image seems to be overshadowed by the "scholar" (shusheng) type. What most characterizes this varied
and colorful depiction is its divorce from political implication and the emergence of individuality.

Aside from a relaxation of the literary climate, the reasons behind these changes are closely linked with the change in Chinese society since the 3rd Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in late 1978. The move toward the Four Modernisations and the consequent necessity for economic reform have had a tremendous impact on Chinese life. One consequence is the de-emphasis of puritanism and the promotion of commodity consumption. The demand for more comfort and material possessions has produced a tendency toward a more middlebrow culture, which is in turn enhanced by foreign influence as a result of the open door policy.

The damage done to Chinese youth by "ultraleft dogmatism" was first disclosed in Liu Xinwu's The Class Teacher. The teenage student Xie Huimin is a prototype of contemporary Chinese youth whose genuine human nature has been distorted by the politicization of life. Indoctrinated by puritanism, Xie refuses to wear dresses or colorful blouses because she regards them as "bourgeois". To her, all social phenomena can be explained by class struggle. The image of Xie Huimin, though not fully developed, has outlined the general characteristics of the dogmatic youth in many later stories.

The older Xie Huimin first appeared in Li Chunguang's A Long Night (Ye changchang). The female
protagonist Ye Jingya, an ordinary factory worker, once bought a pair of good-looking leather shoes which she later found did not fit. When people in the factory praised her shoes, she casually replied, "Actually, coarse cloth shoes are much simpler, more appropriate and comfortable for work." This casual remark unexpectedly became the turning point in her life. A propagandist in the factory made up a story entitled "Getting rid of stinking bourgeois thought -- Ye Jingya's leather shoes" which made her a model worker overnight. This incident reveals the absurdity of propaganda in model-making. Ye rose smoothly in the Party hierarchy and soon became Party Vice Secretary of a factory. But the price she had to pay was high, though the author refrains from depicting Ye's inner reactions to such a sacrifice.

From then on, she self-consciously stayed away from leather shoes and, of course, from all colorful clothes. Further, she drew a line between herself and those vulgar people -- those who wear leather shoes and those who wear colorful clothes. She tried her best to act solemnly to hide her age. [p.58]

The ironical implication is that the closer she adheres to politics, the further she is away from her real self. Consequently, young men stay away from her. As she approaches thirty, she begins to worry about marriage. After all, deep inside, she has a desire for love just like any other woman. The story begins with her anxiety the night before she meets a young man, a
prospective husband introduced to her through her mother's friend.

A dream, the central portion of the story, is devised to bring forth Ye's subconscious desire for beautiful clothes. In the dream, ironically, a youth named Zhuang Zhong (Solemn) appears in a dull blue work uniform because he has heard that she doesn't like colorful clothes. Embarrassed, she changes the beautiful dress to her blue work uniform. When she appears again, to her surprise, he is in a handsome outfit. But he immediately disappears at the sight of her. The loss of love is here implied to have been caused by the loss of feminine beauty. Despite its artistic inferiority, this work represents one of the earliest to break into a "forbidden zone" -- the call for the return of femininity.

The overemphasis on revolution and de-emphasis of the physical self can be seen in many images of rusticated females. Almost without exception, they are politically active figures. In Wang Zhechang and Wen Xiaoyu's Sparkling Eyes In Spring Night (Chunye, nishi de yanjing), Liu Zhan [Battle], a fervent supporter of the rustication program and a devotee to the development of the countryside, is a case in point. In order to show her revolutionary spirit, she acts like a man. She regards those girls who pay any attention to their appearance as "bourgeois". At one point, she even joins a team digging wells, a heavy job usually done by
men. She further regards those in love as "bourgeois" and tries to use her political power to stop them. In Zhiqing Fiction of the Cultural Revolution, this type of character is portrayed as a model for emulation. But in post-Mao Zhiqing Fiction, this type faces unhappy consequences. Now back in Beijing with her shattered revolutionary dreams, Liu Zhan has to face the harsh reality of life. Because as a Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution, she naively turned in her father's personal letters to the Special Document Group causing him to be beaten to death, she is not welcome by her family. She has to live in a temporary shack set up during the earthquake of 1976. Though due to her organizational ability she has become a person with responsibility in a collectively-owned department store, she feels insecure and badly needs a husband. But she has lost her feminine attractiveness through the years of rough life, as her girl friend comments:

You don't pay attention to the special characteristics of woman, you don't care about your appearance, you're not gentle and not concerned about others, no wonder ...[you can't get a husband]. [p.43]

Any effort to regain her feminine attractiveness seems belated. At her friend's suggestion, Liu Zhan goes to perm her hair, but that only makes her look even more stiff. The third person narrator then remarks, "Liu Zhan, Liu Zhan, you have to learn from scratch to be a woman." [p.44] Liu Zhan is definitely not a loveable
character because of her "ultraleft" behavior during the Cultural Revolution days. Yet she arouses sympathy in the reader because she is physically and mentally a victim of that chaotic era.

Zhang Xinxin's Where Did I Miss You is one of the first works to criticize the masculinization of woman and to call for the return of femininity. The story is begun and closed by the third-person narrator, but the major part of it is the female protagonist's first-person account of her remorse at the loss of a chance to express love to an ideal man due to her uncontrollable, crude, manly temperament. The confession is presented in the form of an internal monologue, which endows the story with a sense of immediacy and spontaneity. As a conductress, she has to shout and push in order to maintain order. The introductory passage describes her rough working environment:

As usual, she is busy selling and checking tickets, pushing through the passengers. If one does not hear her uniformly-professional yelling, which conceals her originally pleasing female voice, in her figureless blue-collared short jacket, one definitely cannot distinguish her from the grey and blue crowd.[p.91]

However, her crudeness and manly temperament not only come directly from her job, but are shaped by political chaos and the demands of socialist society. Throughout the years of the Cultural Revolution, at the time when a girl loves beauty most, she "lives on a few pieces of blue clothes" [p. 101] Indoctrination in
puritanism has turned her into a person insensitive to physical beauty. Furthermore, the emphasis on equal sharing for both sexes in physical labor tempers her masculine strength. Emotionally, she has been toughened in the course of competition in the world of men. The tragic death of her father and the betrayal of her first boyfriend have forced her to shoulder many problems. All these act together to produce her present self -- a female of uncontrollable masculine temperament.

What enhances her painful recognition of the loss of femininity is the power of love. Hitherto, she has always felt proud of her masculinity, but now, when an amateur theatre director, a man she secretly loves, shows dislike of her masculine temperament, she feels hurt and tries to act feminine.

Everything has changed since you appeared in my life! For you, I will do the best I can to change, to be a real woman! [p.102]

The desire to be a real woman is a sentiment untouched upon in pre-1976 fiction. In the past, propaganda had it that women could "hold up half of the sky" with men by doing what men did. But what is suggested here is that woman automatically has her share even if she is just herself.

But the sadness of the protagonist is that, like Liu Zhan, it is too late for her to change. The crude and ever-triumphant masculine nature which has become part of her turns her discussions of the play (she wrote)
with the director into unhappy gatherings. Though he admires her ability and steadfastness, he feels her to be too masculine and too aggressive. The sudden news of his departure for sea to be a sailor strikes a deep emotional cord in her. She has lost the chance to express her love to him and she mourns: I've met you, but I've lost you! How did it happen?" [p. 105] The final passage links the bus journey at the beginning of the story, rounding off the plot with an aura of pathos.

The suppression of human nature is not only caused by political dogmatism and puritanism, but also by "feudalism" which has influenced Chinese life for 6 millena. Wu Lizhi's Resurrection (Fusu) tackles this problem through the quest for spiritual freedom of a young widow Zhou Qiaoyun, who is also a returned youth from the countryside. The choice of a widow as a protagonist is significant in that in Chinese society, traditional and modern, this role is the most vulnerable to social pressure.

Through flashbacks, the author unfolds the unhappy past of Zhou who married her deceased husband (who died two months previously in an accident at work) solely because he helped take care of her sick mother and transferred her back to the city. Since she married him more out of gratitude than love, she had been emotionally deprived. Having established her personal history, the author reverts to her present situation.
Now, as a sales lady, she is surrounded by gossipy colleagues and neighbors who are more concerned about her future than she is herself. Any change in her appearance could provoke a rumor. For this reason, she has been especially cautious when talking to other men. She dare not even buy a bottle of skin lotion for herself. In pre-1976 fiction, the relationship between co-workers is like that between brothers or friends, but here, the protagonist seems to be locked in a suffocating sea of rumors and hostility.

A change in Zhou's behavior is triggered by a newly-bought skirt, a private symbol of her desires for material objects, beauty and individuality. The fact that she has never had any good clothes makes her succumbing to temptation a natural development. But she dare not buy it for fear of social sanctions against her. Li Liangcai, her male colleague who has a sense of beauty, sees her hesitation and secretly buys it for her as a gift. The next morning, when she looks at herself in the mirror,

She is really thrilled. This feeling has been lost for long time. She remembers she had this feeling when her mother put a new dress on her. [p. 85]

But the thought of being criticized is terrifying as she walks out of the door in the new skirt.

What will my colleagues say when they see me in this? "Look at this immoral woman! Her husband has just passed away, and she is already dressed like this!" Words like these will come out of their mouths. What to do? Have I been restrained so long that it is
In a defiant mood, she hardens her heart and wears the dress to work. She gathers her strength to ignore the gossips and soon feels she is the master of herself. This victory becomes a source of courage which allows her to fall in love with Li.

If the story had ended here, it would have illustrated the common theme of a widow fighting against traditional morality for freedom of love. Here, love is not the end but a means to the search for the emancipation of individuality. The author lets the character of Zhou unfold further. She has begun to feel the joy and vigour of life and on one occasion decides to join a long distance swimming contest since she was a swimming champion when she was fourteen. The recognition of her own ability and the courage to take part in a competition mark the return of her self-confidence. Different from the above female protagonists, as she regains her self-esteem, she loses her lover. Her decision to join the swimming contest seems threatening to Li, who is afraid of water and lacks interest in sports. His preference for her feminine timidity and gentleness rather than for her adventurous spirit disappoints her. Realizing that she cannot return to her previous life style, she decides to break up their relationship, as she says to the chauvinistic Li:

Before our relationship was established, you encouraged me to break through the confines and restrictions, but, once you had that
selfish idea, you didn't want me to go forward. How could I go back to my old self? [p. 90]

Zhou Qiaoyun's quest is not only to beautify her feminine appearance, which might gain her a husband, but to revive her enthusiasm for life. It is in this direction that she surpasses Ye Jinya, Liu Zhan, and the bus conductress.

Aside from the affirmation of femininity, the assertion of the self is also manifested in the affirmation of independent thinking and individuality. Li Hui, the female protagonist in Zheng Wanlong's controversial novella The Young Friends (Nianqing de pengyou men) is an outstanding example. The plot begins in the middle of an on-going controversy — whether Li Hui, who pays a great deal of attention to her appearance but produces first-rate products, should be given the title of model worker. Centering on Li Hui, the author also portrays several types of returned youths represented by Liang Qixiong (Li's suitor, a worker newly accepted by Beijing University), Sun Kaiyuan (a former Red Guard leader and now a worker in Inner Mongolia), Fang Xing(a temporary worker, Li Hui's colleague), Ai Liming (secretary of the Party Branch of the factory), and the deceased Yang Fan (Li's former boyfriend and idol).

The description of Li Hui's physical appearance in the novella is among the most elaborate in Zhiqing Fiction. Here is Liang's impression of her:
Her soft perm spreads on her shoulders like a waterfall.... She is in a tight short dress. A golden necklace is shown inside the square collar. She is in a pair of high-heeled sandals, standing so close to him that he can smell the perfume.... [p.13]

The image of Li Hui is further accentuated through the contrast with Ai Liming, an "older Xie Huimin", Ai always picks on Li partly because of jealousy of Li's beauty but also because she is secretly fond of Liang Qixiong, Li's enthusiastic suitor. Their confrontation at the political study session vividly reflects the two types of youth -- the emancipated type and the dogmatic:

"Do you put on make-up to show off to people?"
"Does it bother you?"
"Why don't you wear the same things every one else does?"
"I never like to follow the majority."

"Look at your hairdo, did you copy it from a Hongkong magazine or a Japanese movie?" Ai Liming's face is as hard as an iron plate just out of a cooling machine.
"It's my own hair, I have my own hair dryer ..." Li Hui really wants to add, "I can perm it in whatever style I like, there's no need for the Youth League Committee to decide." [p.17]

To Li Hui, Ai Liming is merely a pitiful victim of dogmatism, as she remarks when Liang Qixiong, at Ai's request, tries to convince Li to conform to the majority:

I don't believe it's bourgeois for young people to make themselves look better, more active and more individualistic. No matter what, I don't admit I'm Miss Bourgeois, and I don't think that Ai Liming is Princess Proletariat either. [p.21]

The author Zheng Wanlong is obviously too much on the side of Li Hui at the expense of the character
development of Ai Liming. Ai Liming is portrayed as a stereotyped rather than a concrete character who has her loves and hates. In fact, Ai Liming's concern for Liang Qixiong, which carries a strong implication of love, could have been rendered into a source of emotional conflict. The author, however, chooses to stop at a superficial level.

With regard to the portrait of Li Hui, the author explained that he took his model from a woman worker who had been excluded from the advance workers' list because of her "excessive" attention to her appearance. He also claimed: "Li Hui is neither a perfect heroine, nor a model for emulation. I only want to portray a living person, not a Lei Feng. She is confused and is thinking about life. She has frustrations and makes mistakes. She may fail....but even so, she is a strong person. She goes forward with the tide of the era and at the same time, she is a woman with a challenging courage and self-consciousness." But it must be pointed out that due to the author's preoccupation with ideas, the image of Li Hui suffers from exaggeration. For instance, apart from being at the top of more than four hundred workers in producing first-rate products, she is endowed with many other talents. She is an excellent painter whose painting of a half nude girl received high evaluations from professors of an art institute. Within three years she completes, through self study, second university
level English and can read English novels. She can easily cite names of western musical pieces and excels in dance. All in all, she is the embodiment of superior talent and beauty.

Undoubtedly the author, annoyed at the fact that people in the factory are critical of Li's outfit but don't bother to find out how she can perform so well in her work, intends to create a new type of "advanced model worker" through Li Hui. But he falls short of depicting her more concrete actions. She talks more than she acts or actually lives. For instance, at the end of the story, when Liang Qixiong (mandated by Ai Liming) tries to convince her to cut her long hair and wear plain clothes, she gives him a lecture on her philosophy of beauty, patriotism and attitude toward life.

To say it clearly, I love myself, love life and love our motherland -- a motherland founded by the blood of our older generation."

"...
Sometimes I'm depressed, discontented and pessimistic; sometimes I bury myself in music and books; but I've never forgotten I'm Chinese, never forgotten to make our country rich and strong, to make it stand amidst the rank of strong nations. This is the source of my work and my study... Don't forget, I'm daughter of an old Eighth Route Army man, and I understand them more than you do. They founded our motherland. Can we, the second generation, carry on the job? Can we be masters of the era? In my father's words, we should solemnly bring up this question even if we cannot answer it. Therefore, I exhaust my energy to work and learn; I also enjoy myself to the utmost!... I can't let my father's generation say we are good for nothing!" [p.41]

Despite the author's endeavor to identify Li Hui
with the old revolutionary soldier and patriotism, there are adverse opinions about this image. One is similar to that raised by her fellow factory workers: How can she, who pays so much attention to what she wears, become a progressive worker? Furthermore, this image is said to be unacceptable to Chinese readers because her "soul is not beautiful" and her life style "does not fit the Chinese situation". The underlying reasoning of this criticism is the presumption that a "bourgeois" life style is incompatible with the proletarian work ethics.

One critic, however, praises Li as an "emancipated" woman who "has a lofty life goal and a strong sense of socio-historical mission." But this is refuted by another critic who asserts that the author has erroneously regarded the bad traits of youth as "new attributes". Indeed, many authors when writing about the "emancipated type" tend to describe the superficial admiration of nude paintings, the love of western music and dance, bell-bottom pants, and tight clothes. The "emancipated" Li Hui is not limited to these characteristics because the author intends to portray her as a thinking type. However, excessive description of her outer image has overshadowed aspects of her thought. This deficiency is compounded by the fact that throughout the story there is not enough revelation of her psychology.

Similarly, the character Yang Fan, Li Hui's idol and
spiritual guide, is not fully developed. His words which Li Hui keeps as a reminder: "Go ahead, search! There is a position for you in life; there is truth, goodness and beauty in life. Where is the source of one's life? It is not in heaven, nor in your parents' hands, it is under your feet" [p. 40] no doubt is meant to be the theme of the novella, but its force is lessened without a concrete portrait of the person.

If the above protagonists are representative of youth from the industrial sector, then Chen Lang in Zhang Kangkang's Summer represents one from the education sector. This short story is the first to directly depict the life of university life. It is also one of the first to introduce the theme of "emancipation of thought" and the search for individuality among college students. From The Right To Love to Northern Lights and then Summer, Zhang Kangkang's writing has closely reflected the major typical concerns of Chinese society. Set in a university in 1979, the plot centers on a rebellious college student Chen Lang's confrontation with dogmatism represented by another female student Lu Hong -- "an older Xie Huimin", who is class assistant-monitor and Secretary of the Youth League. The conflict between Chen and Lu is seen through the eyes of the dramatic narrator Liang Yibo.

The central conflict is triggered by a photography of Chen which accidentally dropped from Liang's shirt.
hung on a tree near a basket-ball court. While Liang is playing the game, to his surprise the photograph is passed around among the audience. The differing reactions to this incident reflect the differing personalities of the three main characters. Lu Hong's reaction -- handing over the photograph to the political organization of the university -- shows her naive but rigid belief in the Party. This "Xie Huimin" type behavior was also reflected in her rustication days when she handed in a love letter to the state farm political organization rather than kept it private. Her harsh criticism of Chen Lang during a meeting to select "three good students" further reveals her dogmatic thinking.

Chen Lang is the opposite of Lu Hong. She stands out among female figures in Zhiqing Fiction with her fresh, courageous and independent temperament. She represents those who "accept the emancipation of thought and stand at the forefront of the movement." In her, there is no trace of the emotional uncertainty of rusticated females, but rather confidence and rebelliousness. She bears a characteristic of the "thinking generation". These tendencies are shown in several selected episodes. For instance, in summer 1978 when the "emancipation of thought" was still in its embryonic stage, Chen Lang offended a political instructor by declaring that the main contradiction of the time was "between knowledge and ignorance", but not "between
socialism and capitalism, between red and expert or proletariat and bourgeoisie". [p.56] Chen's rebelliousness is further shown in her contempt for the "three-good student" selection process which stresses conformity rather than independent thinking. Through her complaint about the selection, the author expresses the theme of the story,

I think that a modern society ought to create the conditions for the complete development of human individuality." [p.60]

The theme is further enhanced by the metaphorical image of the Songhua River -- Zhang Kangkang's frequent literary symbol -- in which the spiritual burden of China is equated with the muddy river.

Songhua River, your memories are too heavy. If you leave behind the mud and sand you will flow much faster. [p.62-63]

The dramatic narrator Liang Yibo stands somewhere between the two extremes of Chen Lang and Lu Hong. On the one hand, Liang agrees with and admires Chen's unconventional ideas and actions, and is secretly in love with her; on the other hand, he is worried that she will get into trouble. Therefore, he tries not to offend Lu Hong and at the same time ease the situation for Chen Lang. Now both of them have become the center of the rumor as if they have done something immoral. Liang's reaction to the rumor is to avoid seeing Chen, but Chen faces it calmly and directly.

The narrative ends with Chen Lang and Liang Yibo taking another photograph on the beach. This action
itself signifies their uncompromising rebellious spirit against rumor and dogmatism. The fact that Chen is still in her swimming outfit recalls her previous photograph and enhances her resolute temperament.

If Chen Lang represents the image of a university student involved in the "emancipation of thought" in the first stage in Zhiqing Fiction, then Shi Ling and Fei Luying in Xu Jun's The Nearby Clouds (Jin de yun) are typical of university students in the second stage in their search for spiritual outlets. The Nearby Clouds opens with a symbolic situation in which Shi Ling is faced with two paths -- one leading to the classroom building which signifies fixed worldly order and the other leading to the riverside which signifies nature and its associated quality: freedom. Her subconscious choice of the latter suggests her inclination toward the latter. After three years as a college student, Shi Ling has lost her original zeal for establishing a career. She now feels that college life is tedious, just like "the political teacher's lecture topic: study for the Four Modernisations." [p.56] If this satirical remark is one that displeases the critics, then the actions of her classmate Fei Luying -- he pokes fun at the political director, makes people laugh at political study sessions [p.63] and does things in ways "outside the normal path" [p.60] -- are even more provocative. He even mocks at ideological education:
It is funny just to think about it. On the one hand there is a recognition that the world is varied, on the other hand, there is an authoritative promotion of social uniformity. Everyone must believe in only one concept, even if he doesn't want to. He must believe in it when he is born. One must believe that it is true and then learn it as a thought weapon. It is too "scientific"! It "fits" the law for social development! If everything is so regulated, what is man for? He may as well just listen to the regulations. [p.61]

Fei Luying's mockery makes him different from many other youth characters. He is different from the serious book-loving protagonist in the rustication stories or the ambitious Red Guard-turned power seeker. He is critical and even cynical of the system as a whole.

The contempt for rigid ideology in Shi Ling and Fei Luying has been criticized since the story appeared. They were criticized for "neglecting the Four Principles" and inlining toward "extreme individualism". What adds to the adverse criticism is the quotation of the poem "Clouds" (Yun) from Gu Cheng, a representative poet of the modernistic "obscure poetry",

You
Look at me
And then the clouds
I feel
You are far away when you look at me
And near when you look at the clouds

This poem which gives the title to the story is ambiguous in meaning. In the context of this story, it seems to imply that nature is closer to human beings than human beings to themselves. This poem thus reinforces Shi Ling's dream of returning to nature. The
inclination to return to nature as one way of emanicipating oneself was briefly hinted at in Summer when Chen Lang left for the beach alone to escape from worldly restraints. But in The Nearby Clouds, the author formally calls for a return to nature as a means of revivifying human nature. The author's inclination to claim nature as the ultimate spiritual refuge of man instead of belief in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought has been attacked as "divorce from Party leadership" and Marxism, and "drifting away from reality".

Not all youth characters are negative toward reality. We have seen above those who assert themselves by fighting against dogmatism, "feudalism" and fixed convention. Now let us turn to an examination of those who strive to achieve an objective that will satisfy their own desires and prove the worth of their existence. Such strivings contrast sharply with the youth images in pre-1976 youth fictions in which the goals of the characters are uniformly determined by the Party. In post-Mao Zhiqing Fiction, especially in the second stage of the cyclical model, these characters are called "strong ones" (Qiangzhe) for their unswerving determination to achieve positive goals.

To make up for the loss of time and education in the Cultural Revolution and rustication, these "strong ones" painstakingly acquire knowledge and education. As
mentioned earlier in Zhang Kangkang's *The Wasted Years*, a returned youth leaves his parents because they want him to sell bean sprouts in the market to bring in a good income. It is not that he dislikes the job, but it deprives him of time to attend to his own interest in history. When his patience with his parents runs out he secretly leaves home. He then switches from one job to another, each time with a lower income but more time for himself. He finally settles with a simple job -- taking care of a boiler at a work site -- because he only works at night and has more time for study. The presentation of this image through a teacher-narrator makes one feel more sympathetic for contemporary youth who have suffered a loss of education.

The struggle for personal goals sometimes ends unhappily. Chen Jiangong's *The Blown Away Flower Band* (Piaoshi de hua toujin) probes into the vicissitudes of student life through the experience of two young people. The story, introduced from an interviewer's point of view, relates young people's search of ideals. The main substance, however, is an embedded story told by the interviewee-protagonist in a retrospective mode. The protagonist Qin Jiang, originally the dissipated son of a high-ranking cadre in Beijing, decides to turn over a new leaf and become a sailor on a steamship along the Yangtze River. But how he comes to such a decision is not explained. His second change occurs after meeting
Shen Ping, who, through "individual struggle", has attained a place in a university. Her diligence and persistence in search of her ideal moves him and actually incites him to study for the university examination. He finally succeeds in attending the same university two years later. The story could have ended here like most love stories, but the author goes further to reveal the changes in these two young people. When Qin meets Shen again, she has gone through a change echoed by the fading of her flower hair-band -- the key image of the story. Again, how such a drastic change happened to an originally strong-willed person is not explained. What we are told is that, eager to be rid of her rural background, she tries to make connections with people from higher social strata and even loses her virginity to a high cadre's son. Shen's deterioration is ironically contrasted with Qin's rise: through dint of hard work, he has become a prize winner in a literary contest.

The structural principle of the story lies in the exchange of roles between these two characters: Qin going from dissipation to success and Shen from success to loss of direction. Despite its comparatively unusual plot, the story's characterisation is conspicuously thin, as shown in the unexplained deterioration of Shen and sudden awareness and success of Qin. Critics praised this story solely on the basis
of their moralistic interpretation: that if an individual's goal is not linked with that of the masses and the fate of the nation, his failure is certain, as shown in Shen Ping's tragic end.

One characteristic feature of young people's pursuit of knowledge is that whereas the male protagonist can achieve success simply through hard work the female protagonist has to suffer from greater pressure from family and society. She has to struggle harder for her goal. Even so, her chance of failure is greater than her male counterpart. In Wang Hailing's Their Paths (Tamen de Lu), the female protagonist, a stubborn believer in success through individual struggle, persists in participating in a third university examination despite two previous failures due to her poor educational background from the Cultural Revolution. She is under great pressure due to two examination regulations: that she must be under twenty-five and must be unmarried. Her age has reached the limit and her fiance expresses his reluctance to wait for four years. She is thus caught in a dilemma between maintaining a love relationship and pursuing higher education. But the dilemma is finally solved with her boyfriend's consent to her wishes -- even though the dramatic effect would have been stronger if he had not. The resolution of the dilemma however, is not followed by a happy ending. Her dream is once again shattered because of her weak academic background. The essence of the story lies in the protagonist's
foreseeable failure and her stubborness in continuing her pursuit.

Sometimes the career-seeking theme is conveniently fused with marriage and feminism, as in Zhang Xinxin's 28 On The Same Horizon where we see the disintegration of the marriage of a career-minded couple. The novella is presented from a multiple first-person point of view. The progression of the plot is achieved by alternating the internal monologues of an anonymous male and female protagonist. The past history of the couple is not immediately given as in traditional fiction or common Communist fiction, but revealed gradually throughout the narrative. The reader has to finish the novella before he can piece the whole picture together. This device, in a sense, is a kind of suspense.

Both protagonists are returned youths from southwestern China. The male protagonist is a talented painter. As he is unemployed after returning to the city, a friend of his teaches him to drive a truck and later sells it to him for one thousand yuan. But the truck turns out to be stolen and is confiscated. He is plunged into serious financial trouble and has to live in extreme poverty to pay off the debt. After that, his personality undergoes a metamorphosis. He distrusts people and tries to gain revenge by getting ahead in society. This personality-changing event, however, is not convincing. A revelation of his family background
and his past history is necessary for the establishment of the nature of his personality.

His aggressive actions are manifested in many incidents. He focuses his painting on the subject matter of tigers to fit the demand of the art market. For the sake of publishing his own collection of tiger paintings, he flatters the chief editor Chu Yunzhi and even dates his daughter Chu Yunyun. As pointed out by his wife, the female protagonist, he is losing the basic temperament of an artist:

You are virtually a merchant. Cold, selfish, getting what you want by hook or by crook! If you continue like this, your artistic talent and temperament will be swallowed up by your merchant nature. You can't succeed...[p.213]

If the story had merely focused on his aggressiveness, it would have been too narrow. Zhang Xinxin's success lies in laying bare a human relationship without imposing optimism. This aspect of Zhang's writing is revealed through the male protagonist's harsh remark on the cruel nature of social competition in Chinese society:

If you don't fight against the other, he will fight against you. Every moment I have to be on the defensive, beware of others and look for other's weaknesses."

[p.216]

His preoccupation with obtaining his goal is similar to Li Qiaolin in Transfer, except that one is in the countryside, while the other is in the city. The kind of obstacles encountered remain essentially similar: bureaucracy and the lack of channels and outlets for
physical and career mobility. As the male protagonist sighs,

I want a place where I can compete openly, a normal competitive environment. I have strength! I'm not afraid of sweating and bleeding, I can continue my work despite my wounds. Just let me struggle! But, the energy I spent in handling people and problems far exceeds what I put in to my art... Walls are everywhere! [p.205]

Zhang Xinxin adds another dimension to the theme by fusing the social background with the problem of love and marriage. This energy-consuming life style exhausts the male protagonist. The more intense the "struggle for survival", the more he demands his wife's tenderness and care. To him, she is only his comfort and his assistant (writing for him because of her literary talent) and she need not have any career. His selfishness, or rather, male chauvinistic character is conveyed through a comment of his wife:

He only wants me to love him, but he never thinks of loving me and caring for me. He only wants family warmth, and for this I have to give up everything.[p.177]

The female protagonist, although gentle and emotionally dependent on her husband, is also an ambitious type. As the husband comments in a powerful metaphor quite unusual in PRC fiction:

Our marriage is like a two-headed snake, we share the same body but have two brains. Each head wants to go in its own desired direction; neither is willing to sacrifice his will for the other."[p.182]

She contrasts greatly with Chu Yunyun, daughter of the editor of a publishing company, who is like "a
beautiful and harmless little snake, well-fed, wandering here and there without a definite direction."[p. 204] In order to "maintain the balance" between her and her husband, she takes great pains to write the entrance examination for a movie institute and gets an abortion without even telling her husband.

The animal image of tiger dominates the entire story. It is the publication of the tiger paintings that dictates the action of the male protagonist. It is because of the immersion in his career that he loses his wife. On the symbolic level, the tiger signifies the aggressive personality of both characters. The tiger painting he leaves behind after he moves out implies that she is also a "tiger" herself. The depiction of different types of tiger carries a symbolic significance. The Mengjiala tiger of southern China is the most fierce because it has to struggle for survival in an adverse environment.[p. 228] The equation of the Mengjiala tiger with the male protagonist is unmistakable. The implication is that because Chinese society does not provide an environment for fair competition in career advancement, it will produce people who have the spirit of the Mengjiala tiger, as shown in the male protagonist.

In this story, the male protagonist has no interest in Marxism and Communism. There is no mention of patriotism or concern for the Four Modernisations so
characteristic of many other youth stories. The assertion of the self is the dominant tone throughout the entire story. The theme of struggle for survival in socialist society brought harsh criticisms to the novella. These adverse opinions can be boiled down to a few points which are also characteristic of Chinese literary criticism. First, the critics said that since the male protagonist strives for his own fame and benefit through improper channels, he is divorced from the masses and will ultimately fail in his pursuit. Second, they argued that competition in socialist society is healthy and moral; but in capitalist society, it means gaining success at the expense of others. Thus, they said, the author has confused the two types of society by depicting and praising the male protagonist's struggle as if he is in a capitalist society. Third, in recent years, the Chinese government has improved and developed more channels to success for young people. But the author, ignoring such facts and achievements, exaggerates the dark aspects of socialist reality. Fourth, the author propagates the philosophy of egotism, extreme individualism, evolutionary Darwinism, and shows an "erroneous creative tendency". Only a small number of critics favored the struggle of the male and female protagonists. Xue Yanwen points out that the fighting spirit of the hero and heroine sets a good model for present Chinese youths. He questioned, "How can one encourage self study and at the
same time disapprove self-struggle?" He refuted the oversimplified assumption that self struggle = striving for the self = reactionary. These critics, he said, had forgotten the close relationship between the country and the individual because they used the name "masses" to negate the concrete "man". He also questioned: "Do you mean an individual without ambition can have courage to devote himself to the nation?" This opinion represents a more "liberal" and reasonable view of the relationship between the individual and the public in Chinese society.

The author has brought up not only the notion of struggle for survival, but also the problem of feminism. The female protagonist, frustrated by her husband's male chauvinism, complains:

Men want love when they need it. But women must get psychological satisfaction only after they have exhausted all their energy under suppression and pain. This is unfair! [p. 197]

In China where almost ninety percent of household chores are done by manual labor, the burden usually falls on the wife. In the families of intellectuals, it is thus very difficult for both members to devote themselves whole heartedly to their careers. The one to make the sacrifice is usually the wife. But what if the wife also wants a career? Zhang Xinxin's novella relentlessly explores this very real problem which had been neglected in Chinese fiction since 1949. In pre-
1976 fiction, the relationship between husband and wife tends to be depicted as harmonious and the conflict is limited to their differences in "political awareness" as exemplified in Li Zhun's *The Story of Li Shuangshuang* (Li Shuangshuang de gushi). Usually, the outcome is that the less politically-conscious spouse will confess and pledge to improve for the benefit of the collective good. But the conflict between He and She in this novella is unresolved. Theirs is a conflict between two individuals each of whom wants to assert their undivided self.

The use of an alternating first-person point of view endows the work with intense inwardness and intimacy. The author consciously identifies the narrator, whether He or She, in the beginning of each of the eleven sections. In the last section, the quick shifting back and forth between the inner monologues of He and She produces a dramatic cinematic effect, an artistic technique that is probably related to the author's special training in film directing. The quick shift back and forth gives the ending a light tone, which signifies a certain sense of relief from marriage bondage.

Inspired perhaps by the heated discussion of "What Is Happiness?" in the *Workers' Daily* (Gongren ribao) in 1981, Lu Xinger wrote the novella *Oh, Blue Bird* (Qingniao). The significance of this story, as suggested by the title borrowed from Maeterlinck's play *The Blue Bird*, lies in its declaration of the right of
an individual to search for personal happiness. This is
different from pre-1976 fiction in which it was the duty
of the individual to conform to the demands of the Party
and make the Party happy; now the individual seeks his
own happiness. Since each person has a different
opinion of what happiness means, how to achieve it is
not definite.

This novella, despite the many similarities with On
The Same Horizon, has its differences. Lu's couple end
with a recognition of a higher form of happiness whereas
Zhang's end with a recognition that both need careers
rather than marriage bondage. Both male protagonists
are originally gentle lovers marred by some form of
alien force. Zhang Xinxin's male protagonist is marred
by his ambition for success whereas Lu Xinger's is
blemished by his one-sided belief in the ideal of
Chernyshervsky's novel What Is To Be Done (1863) which
advocated that the husband and wife do not have to live
together and that they are still independent entities
without compulsory obligations and responsibility. Lu's
male protagonist looks down upon his wife because of her
inability to attend university whereas Zhang's male
protagonist does not want his wife to have any further
education.

Rongrong is similar to "She" in On The Same Horizon
in her stubborness -- "She" aborts her child without
telling the husband; Rongrong keeps the child, but is
unwilling to inform her husband about the birth and entrusts the son to her mother. Both are strong-willed and prefer to sacrifice family life for the sake of education and career. Deep inside, both are sensitive and in need of emotional comfort. There are also differences between them. Rongrong is more positive toward reality whereas She is skeptical and cynical. Rongrong finally returns to Shu Qin but She chooses a divorce. The predictable reunion between Rongrong and Shu Qin concludes her search for happiness; whereas the separation between He and She signifies their embarkation on another searching journey.

Qin Xin, another young female in the novella represents an ambitious type. Using her as a "negative example" for criticizing those young people who admire foreign things, the author contrives several relevant episodes. At her first meeting with Shu Qin, she expresses her admiration for existentialism and Sartre's idea that "the other is hell". In another episode, Qin Xin flirts with him and encourages him to divorce Rongrong. Later, she is introduced to Zhao Guokai, a graduate student in comparative literature. When she hears that he is going abroad to study, she tells him suddenly that she loves him. In China, being a third party intruding in another's marriage and being attracted to foreign things are two "immoral" traits. When these two "immoral" traits are piled on Qin Xin, they easily make her an object of criticism. Qin Xin's
loveable image in the earlier part of the story, when she walks forty miles in the snow in order to participate in a student recruitment test, is totally destroyed with the author's imposition of this didacticism.

The characterisation of Qin Xin is similar to Ding Yilan of Inside Stories Made Public (Gongkai de neican) in many respects. Both characters captivate the readers with their individuality and unusual self-confidence and rebellious spirit. But both degenerate as the authors' moral preoccupation increases. The reasons that both characters are condemned are quite similar. First, both women are so eager to leave the country that they do not seem to care who they marry. Ding Yilan pleads with An Lulu to take her to the United States despite her knowledge that he has other women; Qin Xin responds with "I love you" to Zhao Guokai as soon as she finds out that he is about to go abroad to pursue a post-graduate degree. Second, both women despise the formalism of marriage and intend to break up the marriages of the male protagonists. Ding Yilan flirts with Lu despite the fact that he has a wife; and Qin Xin asks Shu Qin to divorce his wife Rongrong despite her knowledge that he still loves the latter. By linking these originally-lovable characters with the lack of patriotism and interference with the other's families -- both morally condemned in Chinese society -- the authors conveniently
create the negative images of these characters.

Zhao Guokai, a previous Red Guard leader and now a graduate, is treated as a character of higher awareness of the self and its place in society. He is a mentor of Rongrong. It is through him that the author reveals the key theme of the story. He says that "Life and happiness belong to a strong person." and only if one strives courageously for what one wants one will one get it. His expression that, "We should search for the 'blue bird' for ourselves, and also for our motherland," adds a note of affirmation to the novella. [p.128]

The prevailing image of the "blue bird", a symbol of happiness, is emphasized through various repetition technique. The search for the blue bird symbolically refers to the search for love, happy marriage and education. The most obvious repetition, of course, is Rongrong's translating M. Maeterlinck's play The Blue Bird from which the symbol of the "blue bird" is derived. The completion of this work marks the attainment of happiness: the maintainance of a balance between her and her husband and her regaining of love and respect from him, and above all, the assertion of her self.

In the thematic transformation of Zhiqing Fiction, the assertion of the self represents a further critical negation of the past. It signals the return of the private self which has for decades been overshadowed by
politicization and dehumanisation. Its emphasis on human beings instead of political ideology as the center of the universe represents a strong tendency toward spiritual emancipation. In the above stories, we see how returned youths, recovering from the wounds of the Cultural Revolution, particularly the Red Guard Movement and rusticated life, turn toward a greater recognition of the self and search for personal goals and happiness. But this type of search is not without its limits, it changes along with the political climate, as we shall see in the next chapter.
If someone asks me, "What is the most arduous task in the Great Barren North?"
I would reply, "Cultivation."
If someone asks me, "What are you proud of most in the Great Barren North?"
I would reply, "Cultivation."

Liang Xiaosheng: A Land Of Wonder And Mystery

In the previous four chapters, we have dealt with four major themes of Zhiqing Fiction written between 1978 to late 1981, covering the important aspects of the life of urban youth from the earlier days of the Cultural Revolution through rustication to the days after the return to the city. These works are characterised by critical realism and a concern for revival of human nature as demonstrated in the bitter exposure of the negative consequences of the Cultural Revolution in the first stage and the critical retrospection and re-introduction of individual values in the second. In 1982, Zhiqing Fiction began to show a change of thematic emphasis. With the decline of Wound Literature, the theme of the Red Guard Movement had by that time receded to the remote background. But the theme of rusticated life, which for a while was overshadowed by immediate personal problems and social
concerns of urban life in the second stage, re-appeared with a new tendency. The most conspicuous phenomenon of this new tendency is the rise of the nostalgic theme and the affirmation of current life. The general inclination is a turn from the assertion of the self to conformity with socially and politically approved values. The images of victimized and assertive youths predominant in the first and second stages have gradually been taken over by the so-called "socialist new man", whose sole spirit is devotion to the Four Modernisations. In this chapter, we shall examine this new trend of Zhiqing Fiction which is best seen in works dealing with the recognition of the values of past life and the affirmation of present life in an urban setting.

Although, throughout 1978 to late 1981, Zhiqing Fiction had been dominated by the negation of the past and criticism of the present, there were some stories about young people who are unaffected by the wounds and are able to find their place in life and in society. One such early positive image can be found in Li Bingui's A Soldier In The Tianshan Mountain (Tianshan shenchu de dabling) Zheng Zhitong, tired of rusticated life in northwestern China and inspired by patriotic ideals, joined the army on Tianshan Mountain near the Soviet border. After the demise of the Gang of Four, by chance he is reunited with Li Qian, daughter of an official, who had returned to Beijing through use of her connections. The positive image of Zheng Zhitong is
accentuated by contrast with Li Qian and her friends who are (as is frequently the case), from high-ranking officials' families. While Zheng Zhitong lives a tough life on the borderland protecting the nation, this group of young people are having a good time disco dancing in Beijing. And Little Tian, representative of this group, is even trying all possible means to go abroad. By linking this group with a decadent life and a lack of patriotism, the author not only achieves his purpose of attacking the bureaucratic class, but also easily establishes the positive image of Zheng Zhitong.

In reaction to the loss of direction in the life of this privileged group, Zheng Zhitong pours out to Li Qian his ideas, which carry the theme of the story:

I don't understand what's wrong with us going to the countryside? What's wrong with having revolutionary zeal in settling down there? Is it that we only have deep scars, blood and tears in our hearts? Not even a ray of truth? If so, what hope do we have? How can we build our new spirit on such a ruin of thoughts?[p.423]

This story, predictably, was praised for its patriotism and was quickly made into a stage play. No doubt the author attempts to portray Zheng Zhitong as an awakened patriotic youth, but from a literary point of view, the portrait suffers from long didactic speeches. In the development of Zhiqing Fiction, however, the significance of this story lies in its first recognition of the value of rusticated life.

After 1982, there emerged a new type of protagonist
who shows a strong nostalgia for and positive attitude toward rustication. This phenomenon is a result of many interrelated factors. From the point of view of youths, further away in time and space from rusticated life, they tend to idealize their past. The nostalgic feelings increase, particularly when they encounter frustrations in the urban setting resulting from unemployment, marriage problems and many other urban social maladies. In literature, this tendency is further enhanced by the increase of political restriction and the accumulated effects of the promotion of patriotism, the writing of the so-called "socialist new man" and the series of criticism of individual writers such as Bai Hua and others since 1981. The government's call for university graduates to go to remote areas to build the Four Modernisations in these few years has become an officially approved literary topic.

For young writers, it has been evident that those who "keep the same pace with the Party" have their works published more easily. For instance, Wang Anyi, whose work tends to stay within the permissible confine, has published at least two collections of short stories. Whereas Zhang Xinxin and Yu Luojin, whose works relentlessly expose the gloomy human conditions of socialist society, have not yet had the chance to publish any story collections. It is thus reasonable to conjecture that many young writers have in various
degrees retreated from revelation of authentic emotions and thoughts to conformity to Party ideology. How much of the content is authentic and how much of it is not will rely on the literary skill of an individual.

Returning to the countryside in order to escape urban frustrations and to search for an ideal was first touched upon in Han Aili's short story Pastoral (Tianyuan). The thirty-year old female protagonist Ye Xia, who had returned to Beijing from Inner Mongolia, is frustrated because she cannot find a suitable spouse. After many introductions to prospective mates, she is tired and disgusted. At the same time, she constantly regrets having let her father, a high-ranking official, break up her love relationship with Huzi (Little Beard), a rusticated youth from a poor family. Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony which she and Huzi both enjoyed years ago, is a recurring motif of the story. It not only symbolizes her yearning for love, but also suggests a nostalgic yearning for the countryside. At the end of the story, love and nostalgia are effectively linked with the countryside when Ye decides to set off the following day to look for Huzi.

A feeling of loss of a beautiful and memorable past in the countryside is also conveyed in Wang Anyi's The Destination. This is the first story to question the value of returning to the city. It does so by relating the unhappy life of a returned youth Chen Xin. To enhance this theme, the author elaborately depicts the
unpleasant aspects of living in Shanghai by way of Chen Xin's activities. As soon as he returns to Shanghai after a decade in Xinjiang Province, he is confronted with a series of family conflicts. The shortage of living space makes him feel like an intruder. This feeling is intensified by his sister-in-law's urging him to get married so that she can have more living space. He also feels guilty toward his younger brother, who would have inherited his mother's job in a factory if he had not returned. At work, he feels the pressure of keeping up with the alternating day and night shifts. In contrast to these unpleasant aspects of his life, the author shows, through flashbacks, the spacious living places, the warm personal relationships, and the relaxed teaching environment in Xinjiang. Furthermore, a beautiful girl with whom he never made up his mind to get acquainted in Xinjiang because of his preoccupation with returning to the city is contrasted with an ugly girl he is introduced to in Shanghai. The sense of loss is thus strengthened by the loss of an opportunity for love.

A hundred times, or even a thousand times, she rode by him on the bicycle. He let her go by even if he secretly liked her and felt happy just to catch sight of her. But at that time, his attention was totally on returning to Shanghai. Now, he has returned, but he has lost her forever, forever. [p. 30]

The story ends with Chen Xin's awakening, though his realization is more the voice of the author than the
natural development of his character. Why did he try so hard to return to Shanghai? The author provides the reasoning behind this drive: Chen Xin's desire to return to Shanghai thrives because "when he left Shanghai, he left with a golden memory of his childhood. And for ten years, he had mistaken his childhood memory for Shanghai." [p.32] By relating this desire to a bygone childhood dream, a negative judgement is made on Chen Xin's return. At the end of the story, by use of the metaphoric train image, the author carries Chen Xin's realization further to the search for a destiny of life.

Another train is about to start. Where is its destination? He knows it must be a further and greater one. It might take him ten, twenty, thirty years or his lifetime to get there. He may never feel secure. But, he believes, once he gets there, he will not feel perplexed, restless or loss. There he will find his real destiny. [p. 32]

The theme of nostalgia for past life in the countryside attracted more attention after early 1982. The gloomy landscape of the countryside in the rustication stories of the first stage is now colored with less negative emotions. The relationship between rusticated youths and local peasants is given greater emphasis. The local cadres have "disappeared" amidst the local peasants and have become members of the rural community.

Shi Tiesheng's My Faraway Qingping Bay represents one of the first works of Zhiqing Fiction to portray a sincere friendship between a rusticated youth and a
local peasant. In a relaxed autobiographical prose style, the narrator nostalgically recalls his days in Qingping Bay, where he lived and worked with a simple and honest old peasant, a former Red Army man. What strikes the reader is that the peasant image shares more with the traditional peasantry in May Fourth fiction, such as in Wu Zuxiang's works, than with the politicized peasantry of the fifties and sixties. Equally striking is the fact that rustication life is not treated with contempt and hatred as in earlier Zhiqing Fiction, but as a learning process (as shown in the old peasant's knowledge of the different kinds of oxen) and a stage in the maturation of youth. The long-lasting friendship between the protagonist-narrator and the old peasant is conveyed through their mutual emotional support in the hard days throughout the Cultural Revolution. It is further revealed when ten years later, the peasant sends herbal medicine to the paralyzed protagonist by way of his granddaughter. The fact that Shi Tiesheng himself is paralyzed lends a profound sincerity to this nostalgic piece.

The beauty of this work lies in its natural and simple language blended with a genuine and deep feeling for the peasantry and the land. It differs from the stories of the fifties and sixties in which the peasants are depicted in terms of high-flown slogans. It also differs from many works on the Zhiqing theme which either treat the peasantry with contempt or with
patronizing sympathy.

Not all returned youths share this kind of gratitude and nostalgia. Xiao Fuxing in his The Unerasable Voices (Mobudiao de shengyin) depicts the differing attitudes of a young couple toward the peasantry. The protagonist and his wife have returned to Beijing after many years in the Great Barren North. The husband, who bears a deep feeling of gratitude toward the peasants, pays them a visit when on a business trip in the area. He brings back their concerns for his wife on a tape. But his wife, who represents those who have no feelings for the countryside, erases the tape by mistake while recording some foreign pop songs. The helplessness of the husband in face of such a situation implies the unbridgeable gulf between urban and rural people.

In Zhiqing Fiction of the first stage, rusticated life was viewed as a traumatic experience. Since physical labor was generally described as a waste of youth and talent, nothing positive was said about rusticated youths' participation in cultivation and construction. Liang Xiaosheng's short story A Land Of Wonder And Mystery is one of the first to affirm the contribution of rusticated youths. Set in the Great Barren North in the early seventies, it depicts the tragic death of three rusticated youths during the cultivation of a swamp region called The Ghost Lake -- the activist female protagonist Li Xiaoyan dies of
scarlet fever; her suitor Wang Zhigang dies when fighting the wolves; and the protagonist-narrator's younger sister Liang Shanshan drowns when hunting for food.

Free of the tone of condemnation for rusticated life characteristic of the first stage, the story recaptures the ideals and zeal of young people in the beginning part of the program. It reaffirms with assurance that young people at that time did have the will and determination to build the countryside. They are described as sincere, hard-working and devoted, characteristics reminiscent of those in Cultural Revolution Zhiqing Fiction but without the same kind of high-flown language and "romanticism". The plot emphasis is not on the physical cultivation of the virgin land, but on the psychological conflict of the main characters. There is also no apparent villain in the story. Even the state farm director who wants to punish the protagonist for secretly returning to the city for his mother's funeral withdraws his order after he is reproached by the female protagonist. This is in great contrast to the rustication stories of the first stage in which the local cadre is depicted as the most vicious of creatures. If there is a villain, it would be the Ghost Lake, the antagonistic force of nature. The conquest of this antagonistic force, which is easily obtained in Zhiqing Fiction of the Cultural Revolution, is here achieved through human sacrifice.
Love is the guiding emotion of the story. Against the background of the desolate and cold Ghost Lake, the author portrays a triangular love relationship between Li Xiaoyan, Wang Zhigang and the first-person protagonist. This conflict does not revolve around fighting and competition, but understanding and self-sacrifice. Wang Zhigang is an embodiment of a lofty personality. His loftiness lies in his devotion to Li Xiaoyan even after he finds out that she does not love him. After she has fallen ill, he finds her a horse and orders the protagonist to take her back to the state farm while he remains at the site. His loftiness is further shown in his sacrificing his life in resisting an attack of wolves while searching for a safe short cut for the other youths who are coming to the site. For all this, there is no mention of his revolutionary spirit or political commitment, but instead, a low-keyed manifestation of humanitarianism.

The fusion of love and death in the last moment of Li Xiaoyan, produces a scene of tragic solemnity. Now after a long ride to the state farm for medical care, the protagonist stops for a rest with Li Xiaoyan, who is dying of scarlet fever. He unties her from his back and lets her rest on his chest.

She murmured, "I'm dying, am I?"
These words hurt me like arrows piercing through my heart. I replied loudly, "No, you won't die!"
She forced a smile, "I'm not afraid of death. Really. Have you forgotten our pledge
'Why bury the bones in your native soil? Everywhere in the barren land is home'. It's a pity that I will be able to visit my parents in a few months. Oh, I miss them so much!. They must be crazy thinking of me.....If I die, bury me near the Ghost Lake....I only have one request. Please write 'pioneer' on my grave. 

....

I held her tightly, cried my heart out. "Look, what is that? Isn't it the fruit-of-no-sorrow mentioned in the books? Pick one for me, ok?" Her large beautiful eyes suddenly sparkled, staring at something nearby. I followed her gaze and saw a budding Purple Fragrance. I rested her on the saddle and went to pick the flower. When I returned, she had already closed her eyes. She and the Yulun horse stopped breathing at the same time. The earth revolved around me, the sky turned black.

I dried my tears and put the Purple Fragrance in her button hole. I knelt down and kissed her fading lips for a long time. I believed that, if she had a soul, she would not blame me. I put her on my back again, and continued my journey. [p.14]

The image of Li Xiaoyan, the company political instructor, is a contradictory one. Eager to show her "revolutionary" spirit, as soon as she arrives in the Great Barren North, she pledges not to visit her parents for at least three years. She also suggests that all the girls in the company not look in a mirror, not put on make up, and not wear colorful clothes. In order to look "proletarian", she tans her skin in the sun; she even takes up men's work to strengthen her muscles. All these attributes are later considered as manifestations of "ultraleftism", but in the days of the story, these were "correct" and "revolutionary" attributes.

Li Xiaoyan's contradictory personality is further revealed in an accidental encounter with the protagonist
by a stream. Thinking that she is alone in the forest, Li Xiaoyan sings a love song, dances a few ballet steps, puts flowers in her hair and looks at her image in the water. All this reflects her genuine love of beauty. This description enables the story to surpass many others which tend to superficially describe politically active young females. As soon as she realizes that the narrator has witnessed her secret caprice, she immediately denies it and puts on a "revolutionary" mask in saying that she's just sung "The Song Of Dazhai". Li Xiaoyan is a well rounded character in that she naively abides by indoctrination and the "revolution" and at the same time possesses normal human sentiments. In rustication stories of 1979 and 1980, the protagonists are generally from unfavorable class backgrounds. In this case, the choice of a politically-active and fervent supporter of rustication as a protagonist not only adds a sense of realism but also broadens the range of characterisation in Zhiqing Fiction.

What makes this story different from those in the first stage is that despite the hardship and tragic events, there is a note of affirmation. The affirmation of the contribution of the rusticated generation is shown in the pride of the protagonist when the Ghost Lake is finally conquered:

If someone asks me, "What is the most arduous task in the Great Barren North?"
I would reply, "Cultivation".
If someone asks me, "What are you proud of
most in the Great Barren North?"
I would also reply, "Cultivation."[p.8]

Hence, the dialectic of rustication is that out of the unpleasant and tragic aspects of rustication life -- which constitute the main subject matter of rustication stories of the first stage -- there are positive values created by the rusticated generation.

The affirmation of the deeds of rusticated youths is also shown in Liang Xiaosheng's other novella There Will Be A Snowstorm Tonight (Jinye you bao fengyu) which was made into a movie in 1984. This is the first story which depicts the large-scale return of rusticated youths to the city. The protagonist Cao Tieqiang's final words to his former girlfriend who is about to return to Beijing express the idea of the author:

I hope that later, when you recall and talk about the ten year history of us construction soldiers in the Great Barren North, don't complain, don't curse, don't satirize, don't laugh. For heaven's sake, don't ... slander ... we have given and lost a great deal, but what we have gained is a lot more than what we lost... [p.57]

One characteristic of stories about the departure of rusticated youths in this stage is that there is always a character, usually the protagonist, who remains in the countryside. Cao Tieqiang is one such person.

The first work in Zhiqing Fiction to depict the return to the countryside was Kong Jiesheng's novella The Southern Bank. The novella, which aroused public discussion because of its theme and literary technique, can be considered a landmark in the development of
Zhiqing Fiction. The point of reference of the story is two years after the protagonist Yi Jie returned to Guangzhou from Hainan Island where he was rusticated for over a decade. Even though he makes a good living by working in a congee and noodle restaurant for job-waiting youths, he feels empty. Finally he and his girlfriend Mu Zhen decide to return to Hainan Island to search for their ideals. The structural principle of the whole story is the juxtaposition of the present and the past. The plot does not move linearly forward from the point of reference, but is composed of a forward movement intercepted by a parallel series of past events. There are in all thirteen sections, and except for section ten which is the climax of the story (in which Yi Jie makes his decision) and the last two sections, all the other sections unfold in the present-past pattern. The parallel progression of the present and the past is effectively interwined so that one feels that the present is the past and the past is in the present. The emotional impact gathers momentum as the story moves toward the end. This makes the final choice of the hero to return to the island a natural consequence of a long search.

Unlike Zhiqing Fiction of the first stage in which the tragic fate of rusticated youths and the bad deeds of villains are emphasized, in this work these aspects have receded to the background. Lirong, Yi Jie's former
girlfriend, in her desire to be an actress, loses her virginity to a certain leader of an art and literature organization; Musheng, Muzhen's former boyfriend, is killed by a falling rubber tree. The description of these misfortunes is brief and the local cadre of the state farm, the common villain of Zhiqing Fiction, is only depicted as one of the background characters.

In contrast, as in Liang Xiaosheng's *A Land Of Wonder And Mystery*, the overwhelming destructive force of nature receives much greater attention. The most vivid depiction is of a forest fire from which Yi Jie, Muzhen and "Four-eyed" escape. This may have been one of the author's true experiences since this incident is also depicted in another story *An Ordeal* in which the same characters are used. In such a desperate situation, the protagonist, almost completely exhausted, has to carry the wounded "Four-eyed" back to the state farm. Here the author depicts the experience of life and death through the feelings of Yi Jie:

> I dragged myself for over ten meters and was in despair. I buried my head in the soft grass, and was breathless and in tears... Twenty years old. What a short and strange dream! This is what death is like and I'm near it... people from the state farm will climb over the mountains and look for us with flashlights and torches. By then I will be long dead, lying here forever... [p.88]

Yi Jie represents the thinking type who is constantly in search of the significance of life. His search is linked with his childhood dream. His father, a sailor, had left him when he was four and never
returned. The hidden desire to go to sea to search for his father [pp.81, 117] is thus associated with his search for an ideal. In this connection, Yi Jie's search is analogous to the search for parents in myth. The final return of Yi Jie to the countryside, in a sense, signifies his return to his father's bosom, which is also an embodiment of the great earth.

Many images serve to make Yi Jie's choice an inevitable solution. His manuscript about life on Hainan Island, as noted by his teacher Miss Mai, is scattered and lacking a guiding theme [p.114]. Throughout the whole story, the search for a theme for his work parallels his search for an outlet in life. Finally, the time when he makes up his mind to return to Hainan Island is also the time he finds a theme for his manuscript.

Of course, the most powerful motif is his obsession with the past as shown by the constant recurrence in his thoughts of rusticated life. The rubber trees he planted, the subtropical landscape and more importantly, his youthful years, have become parts of his present life. These split Yi Jie's mental landscape into two parts: past and present. The past is painful yet concrete and unforgettable, the present is comfortable but empty and aimless.

The image of the "southern bank" occurs throughout the novella. Pier Number One on the southern bank of the
Pearl River in Guangzhou from which Yi Jie and Muzhen took a ship to Hainan Island thirteen years ago and which they now see everyday from their shop, signifies their daily obsession with the past. It is also a link between the past and the present. It is here that Yi Jie and Muzhen make their decision to return to Hainan Island. Also, the location of the "educated youth booth" is at the southern bank. This southern bank represents the first destination of rusticated youths. But this is not their final destination, The final one is another "southern bank" -- Hainan Island.

The interior monologue in Section Ten embodies the high point of Yi Jie's inner struggle in searching for his destination [p.117]. The scene is expanded to include the twists and turns of his inner debate before he makes the decision. He is alone walking along a pier, the exact place where he set off to Hainan Island after the Red Guard Movement thirteen years ago:

I walk forward...
A ferry is approaching the southern bank with a long beep. No, I don't want to take the ferry. Go, walk along the Pearl River, cross the bridge. Maybe, I can discover something along this way...[p.117]

The activities along the shore and on the ferry evoke his thoughts:

My contemporaries, what are you thinking? The new movies? Sunday picnic? Is it not that everything is already very definite in life? Is it only me who is searching? What am I searching for?[p.117]

As he continues to walk forward, many different voices
appear in his mind. By relating his friends' remarks in disorderly manner, the author effectively depicts Yi Jie's inner struggle: Awei's remark, "Start another chapter", his previous girlfriend Lirong's advice, "Don't you want to evaluate yourself and look for an appropriate position in this world?", and his present girlfriend Muzhen's painful cry, "Why did I come back?" all converge into one powerful voice calling for his decision.

The portrait of Muzhen is a successful one. Among the many female characters in Zhiqing Fiction, she stands out in her ordinariness and determination. Her selfless devotion to the rubber plantation is depicted as a genuine respect for work but not a means to show her "revolutionary spirit" as in pre-1976 Zhiqing Fiction. As soon as she finds out that her cutting technique is not efficient, she stays behind after work to improve her skill [p. 109]. What makes her image concrete and likeable is that the author does not rely on high-flown language to make her personality stand out, but on sincerity and truthfulness to life.

Muzhen's desire to return to Hainan Island is foreshadowed from the very beginning of the story. In section one, Muzhen's quiet and intent reading of the Hainan Daily (Hainan ribao) already indicates her concern for the place where she spent nine years. [p. 73] The reader is not told what news attracts Muzhen's attention. This suspense (though not intense) is
prolonged until section nine when Yi Jie visits Muzhen during her illness. The news of the results of a rubber cutting competition on Hainan Island triggers her yearning for her past glory -- she had been praised in the newspaper because of her excellent work in cutting rubber trees. It is not until this point that the reader is told what has been on her mind since the beginning of the story: if she had remained on Hainan Island, she could have produced the winning results. This shows that her growing concern with Hainan Island actually parallels Yi Jie's from the very beginning.

What also enhances Muzhen's idea of returning to Hainan Island is her money-minded family and its lack of warmth. When she suffered from mental disorder because of the death of her first boyfriend, Musheng, on Hainan Island, her family refused to have her home. This hurt her deeply and was one of the reasons she did not want to return home after other rusticated youths had left. Now her family uses her only to bring in money and complains that she does not go to work when she is sick. By this point in the story, with all the details of Muzhen's life given, it appears natural when she sobs, "Why did I come back? why did I come back!" [p.111]

The gradual domination of their nostalgic yearning reaches a peak when both Yi Jie and Muzhen express simultaneously their desire to return. [pp.118-119] What makes their decision differ from that of other
fictional characters is that there is no high-flown language about serving the people or the Four Modernisations but it is based strictly on a personal preference and choice. This "unorthodox" choice has been criticized by some critics as the "free choice" of existentialism. But this criticism is refuted by the opinion that the protagonist's choice "fits the needs of society" and embodies "the lofty goal of serving the people." The first opinion reflects the negative reaction against the portrayal of character without reference to current policy. To these conservative critics, individuality and individual aspirations are naturally categorized as existentialist. The second opinion is typical of Chinese literary criticism in its adherence to ideology. What is stylistically significant is not whether Yi Jie's choice fits Party demands or not, but whether it comes natural as a logical development of his personality.

The Southern Bank represents the first work in Zhiqing Fiction to depict the actual return to the countryside of former rusticated youths. The final return of Yi Jie and Muzhen to Hainan Island, is a convergence of their long search. Since the entire novella probes deeply into the psychology of the characters, their choice is a natural outcome. But in many later works on the same theme, the protagonist's return to the countryside is unnatural because of the author's preoccupation with ideology as we shall see in
The theme of nostalgia is also found in stories on the marriage relationship between urban and rural youth. In the first two stages we have seen the inevitably sad ending of urban-rural love relationships as shown in Autumn River, Purple Fragrance and Older Sister. But this trend changed in fiction at any rate in 1982-83, the third stage of Zhiqing Fiction. In Fan Xiaoqing's Temptation (Youhuo), we even see the return of the urban spouse to the countryside. Like numerous other youths, Qi Xian leaves her rural husband and returns to her city home with her child. Because of her deep love for her husband she has been hesitant to obtain a divorce permit. Tired of her mother nagging her to get a new husband, she finally picks up a divorce application form and returns to the state farm for his signature. On the way home, she meets the state farm director. This encounter changes her mind. She is told that her husband has been promoted to be a company leader. The heavy tone of the story is suddenly lightened when she is approached by the state farm director asking if she wants to be a teacher at the newly-built high school. As is frequently the case, there are many intimations of the improvement of living standards in the countryside as a result of the agricultural responsibility system. The director's offer pleases Qi Xian because she has an alternative to heavy physical work in the city which her
health will not sustain. The story ends abruptly on a positive note with Qi Xian's sweet memories of her wedding night:

She stepped out of the bus after the director of the state farm and inhaled the fragrance of the night; how clear and soothing! It was like her wedding night with Axun, everything was so beautiful and so tempting....[p.122]

Qi Xian thus is first tempted by the city and then tempted by her new prospect in the countryside. The shift of position between city and countryside serves to imply the prosperity of the latter.

Until the last page, the story is very moving because of the vivid description of the perplexity of Qi Xian after returning to the city. Her feelings of self-pity and the sarcasm of her suitor produces in her a strong emotional agony. It is a pity that the author does not develop the theme along this line but imposes a sudden and unnatural happy ending on the story. One can raise the question: If she had not met the cadre and had not been asked to be a teacher, would she still want to return to her rural husband?

The return theme leads us to the rise of another phenomenon. The image of rural youth, who has been neglected or depicted as a pitiful, humble figure in early Zhiqing Fiction, has taken on new and powerful characteristics after 1982. The kind-hearted rural youth Dahei in Wu Huan's story Dahei appeared in early 1982 is one such character. Dahei, who has earned over one thousand yuan as a result of the agricultural
responsibility system, comes to Beijing from the Great Barren North to visit his former wife Xiao Jieying who has remarried. The dramatic narrator further reveals Dahei's divorce. After all the other rusticated youths had gone back to the city, Xiao was torn by a dilemma whether to leave Dahei or not. Dahei agreed to the divorce so that she could easily return. He also agreed to her taking their daughter in order that she could have a better education.

What adds to Dahei's moral integrity is his pretending to be unconcerned about Jieying so that she will not feel bad for having left him. Even when he is beaten up by Zhou, Jieying's present husband he forgives her. His calling himself "seed of the Great Barren North" and his deep love for it shows his pride in his origin. Hence, when he hears Wang Wanyi, Jieying's friend, say that rusticated youths have suffered a great deal in the countryside, his emotion rises.

You have suffered a great deal in the countryside? How about us? How about we natives? Have we also suffered?" [p.188]

This is the first direct voice from rural youth characters in Zhiqing Fiction. Dahei's pride in his origin and his love of the great earth contrasts sharply with the witness narrator who is devising ways of going abroad.

Lu Xinger's novella Purple Fragrance Quietly Blooms (Dazixiang qiaoqiao de kai le) portrays an
even more powerful figure of a rural youth through a rural-urban marriage. The first person narrator Xiaoxiao, a previously rusticated young woman in the Great Barren North and now a writer of two prize-winning stories, is invited back for a visit. As in Kong Jiesheng's story, Lu Xinger relies on the technique of juxtaposition of present situation and recollected past to enhance plot and emotion. The fusion of the past and present gives the reader a sense of immediacy and directness. The action of the story is divided into two parts. The first part is devoted to introducing the personality of Li Juntang and Xiaoxiao through the latter's recollection. By the end of the first part, Xiaoxiao's emotion has been built up to a point where she needs to channel it into action. The second part of the story is thus mostly devoted to the actions of the characters. Li, who had earlier appeared in Xiaoxiao's recollections, now reappears as a concrete figure.

By 1983, the fictional image of rural youth has begun to emerge with distinctive individual characteristics. He has become a firm believer in agricultural reform and a profound, knowledgeable and stubborn son of the great earth. In Temptation, the fact that the Qi Xian's husband is head of a company in a state farm is already a sign of such change. In Purple Fragrance Quietly Blooms Lu Xinger has made Li Juntang, also vice-leader of the state farm, a Promethean hero. He has risked his own political future in building the dam for the
community in opposition to corrupt local cadres.

Through Xiaoxiao's recollections, the author unfolds step by step the exemplary personality of Li. He boldly criticizes the journalist for paying attention to human life only after four youths died in a flood. He is determined to change the backwardness of the Great Barren North. Hence, when Xiaoxiao refuses to take up the job as teacher for fear that it will affect her chance of returning to the city, he is angry and says,

\[\text{Don't think country kids are born stupid compared to you city people. Don't think they can't attend university....The Great Barren North is not barren, it has rich resources. If there is anything that is barren and futile, it's the intellect. We can't continue this way. [p. 106]}\]

The author's underlying criticism of Xiaoxiao contrasts sharply with the general sympathy toward rusticated youth in the first stage of Zhiqing Fiction. Later, when Xiaoxiao asks him to let her take their son to Beijing for a better education, Li refuses:

\[\text{Yes, the quality of education here is low. It's because of the lack of qualified teachers. Can you take all the sons and daughters of the staff here to attend school in Beijing? [p.132]}\]

Here we see the difference in characterisation between Dahei and Li. Dahei chooses to let his wife take his daughter to Beijing because he wants her to receive better education. His choice is realistic and is what an ordinary Chinese probably will make. In order to build up a "lofty" image of Li, Lu Xinger, regardless of
reality, imposes on her character the ideology of serving the countryside. Therefore, the image of Dahei is more down to earth and hence more touching than Li.

As the image of Li is gaining weight, that of the Xiaoxiao is shrinking. This contrasts sharply with Zhiqing Fiction in 1979-81 in which the action of returning to the city is fully justified. Now, it is criticized through the depiction of Xiaoxiao's feeling of emptiness and loss of aspiration in life. Her feelings are similar to those of Ye Xia, Chen Xin and Yi Jie in the above stories.

She works hard and has gradually built up her career, her fame, her new world. She has got everything and just because of that she has lost sadness and happiness, grief and delight. There is no one that she needs to care about, no one needs her love, and no one needs her care and love. Sometimes, she feels she has nothing. The only things she has are a few literary magazines that have published her work. [pp. 115-116]

The character configuration of Purple Fragrance Quietly Blooms is quite similar to Temptation but the emotional and artistic effect is much superior. The first person point of view in the former gives more immediacy to the emotional state of the Xiaoxiao. The detailed descriptions of how she falls in love with the rural youth, how he works for the good of the public and how he voluntarily agrees to let her leave for the city are moving details that are lacking in Temptation. Furthermore, the depiction of Xiaoxiao's motherly love
toward her five-year-old-son is much more powerful than Qi Xian's toward her daughter of the same age. The endings of these two stories are also different. In Temptation, the problem of the female protagonist is solved with her abrupt decision to stay, but in Purple Fragrance Quietly Blooms, Xiaoxiao's future is still uncertain. In the first two stages of Zhiqing Fiction, it is the urban youth who is in the right, but now it is the rural. In the former, the rusticated protagonist returns to the city regardless of the tears of the rural spouse, now he/she comes back to the countryside with a sense of guilt.

The affirmation of rusticated life is also seen in stories on university life. Stories on returned young people attending universities began to emerge in 1980, sometime after the re-opening of the university system in 1977. In the first and second stages, these stories are characterized by the search for spiritual outlet and individual fulfillment as seen, for instance, in Zhang Kangkang's Summer, which calls for the revival of individuality, Chen Jiangong's The Blown Away Flowered Band, which depicts the vicissitude of student life in the course of self-realization, and Xu Jun's The Nearby Clouds, which calls for a return to nature as the ultimate emancipation from dogmatism and fixed social norms. From early 1982 onward, with increasing demands on college graduates to conform to the job distribution
policy, which is necessary for the Four Modernisations, there has been an increasing tendency for a story to end with the protagonist going back to the countryside.

As mentioned earlier, Zhang Kangkang's works closely reflect the change of political demands on literature. One case in point is her series of five short stories initiated by Summer. The writing of more than one story about the same characters is a newly-emerged fictional form in Chinese literature. [eg. Gao Xiaosheng's series of stories on the peasant Chen Huansheng.] Zhang Kangkang's Summer depicts the university student Chen Lang's defiance of political dogmatism in student life. In Go Faraway, another story of the series, the author continues to develop the character of Chen Lang through the depiction of her courage and rebelliousness against parental and bureaucratic interference in maintaining her friendship with Liang Yibo. But in the fifth story The Snowless Winter (Wuxue de dongtian) published in July 1982, there is a clear change of emphasis. This change is not to another rebellious aspect of Chen Lang, but to her conformity to the Party's job assignment to the education department in the remote Daxingan Mountain Range. Her conformity to Party arrangements contrasts sharply with her previous defiance in Summer. However, the reader does not feel that her action is incongruous, because before the assignment is announced, the author has related Chen Lang's sympathy for the culturally-deprived through her recollection of a trip
to a poor district badly in need of teachers. Her
decision to go to the countryside is intended to be seen
as stemming from her independent personality rather than
involuntary conformity. This is expressed in her
conversation with Liang Yibo who is comfort-loving and
dependent on his parents. When Liang asks her why she
does not return to her father, a governor of a province
in southern China, she replies with anger:

I don't want to walk on a path which has been
arranged by others, do you understand? This
is the only reason, no other. I want to be
an independent person, I don't want to
depend on others. I want to rely on my own
ability to live and work. I'm only twenty-
seven, why should I hastily confine myself in
a shell? I want to fly, run, live and work
to the fullest. I want to find my own
place....[p. 46]

Natural images are also used to accentuate Chen Lang's
courage. The metaphorical expression that "the spirit of
a waterfall lies in its courage to jump down from the
ciff"[p.47] ascribed to Chen Lang, further heightens
her courageous action of going to a remote mountain
area. The snow image, as suggested by the title of the
story, carries a symbolic meaning. The long-waited snow
that falls right after Chen Lang makes her decision to
leave for the countryside suggests a sense of relief and
resolution.

A similar choice is also made by Li Hui in the last
novella of the Trilogy of Youth (Qingnian sanbuqu) by
Zheng Wanlong. In The Young Friends(1981), we see the
female worker Li Hui's assertion of her femininity and
individualism through her physical appearance and unconventional behavior. The excessive description of her physical appearance and artistic talent in this novella, however, is greatly reduced in Red Light, Amber Light, Green Light (1982), the second work of the series. Li Hui appears in plain clothes and involves herself in the technical innovation in the factory. The story is endowed with more concrete action and less description of her external appearance. In the last work of the series See You Tomorrow (1984), Li Hui is more mature in her handling of personal problems. She appears as a trusting friend and consultant for other female characters, Jiejie, Du Yue and her roommate, the "Shatin pomelo". The knowledge of foreign language which she used to read fiction in The Young Friends is here used to translate materials on techniques and innovation by foreign companies! What heightens her positive image is her application to work in the branch company in a rural area away from Beijing. When asked why she volunteers to go to the countryside, Li Hui replies:

I know I won't be able to do great deeds for the people. But I will do the best I can to face the challenge of this task, to shoulder difficulties and bitterness. I will try to find my place among the tears, happiness, expectations and struggle of my contemporaries. I want to be a cell, a living cell of the whole. Wouldn't that be something to be proud of? [p.191]

The essence of her reply is very similar to Chen Lang's in the above. In earlier stories on the assertion of the
self, individual aspirations and goals are the main theme. By contrast, in the third stage, the aim of life is to realize individual goals in conjunction with the needs of society as determined by the Four Modernisations.

The choice of Chen Lang and Li Hui appears natural because of their independent temperaments. But in some other works, the decision to return to the countryside is merely an illustration of a political concept. In Shen Qiaosheng's novella *Harvest* (1983), we see how a character is unnaturally bent to fit the author's ideology. The novella is presented in seven sections and each section is introduced with a brief conversation between the Shadow and the Female College Student, who are the main characters in a play written by Zhong Jiong, the protagonist. The search for a title and an appropriate conclusion for the play, quite similar to Yi Jie's search for a theme for his manuscript, governs the movement of the plot. Hence the theme of the play enhances the theme of the story. The play describes the dilemma of a female university student, who, having spent eight years in the countryside, is advised by her father to marry someone from the city so that she will not be assigned a job outside Beijing. She is psychologically torn between ideals and practice. This conflict is rendered by her internal conversation with her own shadow, which represents her unconforming self. Her inner conflicts are the projection of those of Zhong
Jiong.

The fierce and cruel struggle among graduating students is revealed through their reaction to the forthcoming job assignment announcement. Because of his literary talent, Zhong Jiong is considered as the best candidate to take a teaching job in the university. But this makes him the target of his rivals. Zhao Yaqian, for one, tries all means to slander Zhong behind his back. He secretly incites Zhong's rural girl friend Shuijuan to write to the Job Assignment Committee and reveal her "love relationship" with Zhong. Meanwhile, Zhong's admirer Wang Jieying, eager to keep Zhong in the city, also goes to a small town and digs out the "hidden crime" of Zhao Yaqian from the Cultural Revolution days.

Through Zhang Wenqun's (Zhong's classmate) recollection, the reader is introduced to one of the events which could jeopardize Zhong's future. Before the third plenum in late 1978, he published two "wound" stories and he is suspected of writing an article praising the Democracy Movement [Zhao wrote it, using the name of a student literary organisation, the Cold Earth Literary Association, of which Zhong Jiong is the main editor]. According to my reading experience, this seems to be the first time this movement is mentioned in Zhiqing Fiction. As expected in government-sensured literature of this stage, the movement receives negative evaluation, as shown in the thinking of protagonist:
After reading the Big Character Posters by the proponents of democracy at many meetings, he felt the prescription they intended could not build China into a modern nation."

The mention of Shuijuan, Zhong's rural girlfriend causes a sudden change in the plot and the fate of Zhong. Up to Section Four, half way through the story, the reader has not been given any hint of her existence in Zhong's mental landscape. The late introduction of this character and the brief description of the relationship between them makes the plot development abrupt and unconvincing. Their "love relationship", if it can be called one, occurred four years earlier when Zhong was still a rusticated youth. Shuijuan, "daughter of the river", an orphan, first met Zhong Jiong when he was half-drunk by the river after being rejected as a candidate for the university entrance examination. She was sympathetic to his misfortune and let him use her family name to apply for another university examination at the work unit where her father had just died as a martyr at work. The following passage is the only direct description of their "love relationship":

Zhong Jiong for the first time grabbed a girl by the arms and held her to his bosom. The feeling came so suddenly before he was aware of it. This was an impulsive expression of his gratitude."

His "love relationship", as his father points out, is immature and based on gratitude more than love. But too eager to enhance his ideology, the author puts in a moral passage in Zhong's father's mouth. "If you have
committed yourself to Shuijuan, you have to be prepared to pay the price." [p. 111] Why would he allow his son to take such a heavy responsibility even if he knows that he does not love her? Why is a "love relationship" regarded in the same way as a marriage relationship? In fact, it is doubtful if they are compatible because she has nothing to converse with him but the river. Also one wonders, if Shuijuan had not been incited by Zhao Yaqian to write the letters to the university leadership, would Zhong still have any intention to go back to her? In the past four years, he has been infatuated with the beautiful and aggressive Wang Jieying, particularly after the latter has helped him, through personal connections, to clear the allegations about writing the discredited article during the Democratic Movement and after she has found out Zhao's "secret crime" record.

In order to direct Zhong to the prescribe choice, Wang Jieying is portrayed as an immorally aggressive woman, secretly sending away Shuijuan when the latter comes to see Zhong. Wang is a believer in cruel struggle for personal benefit. Her equating the fighting among the monkeys to be "king" in a zoo with human competition reminds one of the tiger image in On The Same Horizon by Zhang Xinxin. Both the male protagonist and his wife in Zhang's story believe in the "survival of the fittest" theory. But, since this view has been severely criticized by Chinese critics, the present author, I
would conjecture, links the fighting of monkeys with the immoral aggression of Wang.

Zhong's abrupt change of attitude can be seen in the scene at the graduation party. As planned, he will announce his love relationship with Wang in front of the Committee officer. This will allow him to stay in the city because she is the only daughter in the family and cannot be sent out of town. Suddenly, a voice from far back in his mind calls him. Regardless of the flimsy nature of the love relationship between Zhong and Shuijuan, regardless of his present affection toward Wang, and regardless of his career oriented character built up from the beginning of the story, the author manufactures a scene of "ideological enlightenment" in which Zhong says to Wang:

We should go to the countryside after graduation. We love every inch of ancestral land. No matter whether we go to a big city, a small town, a village or a border district, we must use science and culture to change it. [p.128]

There is nothing wrong with such a decision. The point is that in this story it is abrupt and not precipitated by previous incidents. Zhong's resolution is weak because as the author writes, "He is afraid that as soon as he hears her (Wang's) voice, his freshly-made decision will be completely shattered."[p.128] To justify Zhong's choice, the author describes that the love between Zhong and Shuijuan is "not only a love between an educated youth and a village girl, but also
one between the ancient and vigorous soil" [p.104]. Yet, with the way their relationship is depicted, the reader simply cannot see any profound love between the two. In fact, Shuijuan does not appear in Zhong's mental landscape until half way through this story, after detailed descriptions of his excitement and passion with Wang.

A few days later, after the assignment list is made public, Zhong, now psychologically prepared to return to the countryside, turns around to persuade his friend who is unhappy about his assignment to Xinjiang.

The country and the masses have nurtured every university student. How can one seek personal benefits when the country needs him? Isn't such a person too petty? [p.130]

Interestingly, despite the fact that everyone feels oppressed by the assignment of jobs, there is no indication or questioning of the validity of this policy. The Party is always correct and it is up to the individual to bend his personality to adjust. Zhong's return to Shuijuan is in great contrast with the many stories of the first stage, in which the rusticated protagonist regards returning to the city as a higher priority than love. It is also in contrast with those stories which call for pure and ideal love in the second stage.

At the end of the story, Zhong leaves for the countryside to join Shuijuan. The affirmative title "harvest" which he suddenly thinks of for his play
suggests that after many emotional twists and turns caused by the job assignment, he finally finds his "destination". He has come to terms with Party demands and is going back to "harvest" what he sowed four years previously. Though his return to the countryside makes him a "socialist new man" as one critic suggested, the reader, however, feels sorry for him not because he has to go to the countryside, but because he is going back to someone to whom he only feels socially obligated. In here, we see how plot and characterisation can be destroyed by the forced application of ideology.

If the theme of returning to the countryside is sometimes onesided in the stories discussed above, then Zhang Kangkang's *Pagoda* provides a more balanced answer. Five friends, all of them returnees from the Great Barren North, reunite at the Six Harmony Pagoda in Hangzhou. Written from multiple first person point of view, the mind and personality of the five youths are dissected. In doing so, the author looks into each mind and affirms each person's existence in his/her present position. Whether being a tractor-driver in the Great Barren North (as exemplified by Song Weiliang), a tourist guide (Xue Ning), a tailor (Gu Yifei), an official (Ling Jianzhong) or a researcher (Li Li), they each find significance in their new positions in society.

The affirmation of life is not only shown in
returning to the countryside, it is also shown in the depiction of confidence in and conformity with Party ideology while living in the city. Kong Jiesheng's novella *An Ordinary Female Worker* represents his next affirmation of life after *The Southern Bank*. Through the abundant use of internal monologue, Kong Jiesheng demonstrates a more skillful mastery of writing technique. From *On The Other Side Of The Stream* to *An Ordinary Female Worker*, Kong's literary style has made a great deal of progress. He has abandoned mere emphasis on coincidence and dramatic effect in his fiction. Instead, he dwells on the daily life of common people, their immediate concerns and feelings. What is noteworthy, however, is that as his technique is improving, his content is more in conformity with Party ideology.

The plot of this novella is not incident-ridden like his previous works, but unfolds slowly and smoothly with detailed descriptions of the psychological state of the female protagonist He Chan. She had an illegitimate son when she was rusticated in a poor county in Guangdong province. Zhong Changming, her boyfriend, left her to attend a university in Guangzhou when she was pregnant. For fear that having a child would interfere with his education, he gave her up despite the fact that she was in a deplorable situation. Now, He Chan is a worker in a lock factory and does well in her job. One day, by chance, Zhong sees her with the child on a bus. He
writes her and shows his desire to see them. He Chan is confused but soon calms down. She does not know why after a few years without contact he suddenly wants to see her. Her friend's remark that many graduates hastily find a spouse in the city to avoid being sent to the countryside awakens He Chan to his possible intentions. The story ends with the lingering question of his possible re-appearance.

In He Chan, one does not see a female haunted by past bitterness and present dissatisfaction, like many other female characters; but one who has an air of certainty and firmness. When asked how she views her past by her younger female colleague who had never been sent to the countryside, she says:

> People are used to putting responsibilities on others. Everybody says who is cheated by whom, and who has made a mistake. I've never thought of it this way. We are human beings, we should be responsible for what we do, or not do it. It's the same for every thing. I was full of regrets before, but what good does it do? ....[p.114]

These words are strikingly different from those of Mu Lan in Kong Jiesheng's earlier work *On The Other Side Of The Stream*. In the latter, Mu Lan almost points out by name that Mao was responsible for the rise of the Gang of Four and the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution. But here, He Chan not only does not complain about reality but also accepts it with calmness. He Chan's compromising attitude toward life, is in essence no different from that of those (Chen Lang, Li Hui) whose
actions are in accord with Party expectations.

From early 1982 on, the dominant theme is the return (physically or mentally) to the countryside and the affirmation of present life. This theme reflects the second retrospection of past rustication life and a new recognition of its values. From the defiant Red Guard protagonist to the oppressed rusticated protagonist who asserts himself in love and career advancement, and to the protagonist who searches for a new destiny among the masses, we can see the gradual tendency toward conformity to Party ideology and social norms. Young writers who began their career with critical realism now avoid exposing unpleasant issues. No doubt there has been an improvement of literary technique in recent years, but, it is paralleled with the decline of social criticism.
CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have been devoted to the study of Zhiqing Fiction written from the early seventies to 1984. We have examined a large number of works of Zhiqing Fiction, focusing on their thematic progression as well as on the corresponding change in the portraits of contemporary Chinese youth. Through the progression of the Zhiqing theme we have arrived at the conclusion that Zhiqing Fiction has developed along a cyclical pattern, and the portraits of youth have also progressed in the same way. We have also seen that such changes have been caused by changes in historical, socio-political and literary conditions in China.

In chapter one, we looked at the development of modern Chinese literature from the May Fourth era as well as its decline with the shift towards Communist literature literature from the early 1930's. Mao's Yan'an Talks in 1942 intensified the decline. From 1949 on, the CCP's utilitarian view of literature and its increasingly radical and mechanical application of the Yan'an Talks caused serious damage to Chinese literature. During the Cultural Revolution, the already subservient role of literature was further reduced to mere political slogan-mongering by the Gang of Four.

The death of Mao and the arrest of the Gang of Four brought great changes in Chinese society. The new leadership which required the writers to produce works
favorable to its consolidation of power issued the "double hundreds" relaxation policy. The Chinese literary scene was rejuvenated: previously attacked writers and denounced theories were rehabilitated, a large number of new writers emerged. Hundreds of literary magazines were founded, providing unprecedented opportunities for publication. Writers were encouraged to expose the crimes of the Gang of Four and the darkness of life during the Cultural Revolution, resulting in the so-called Wound Literature. However as the writers changed their target to the Party bureaucrats and the system itself, restrictions were introduced. This was shown in the controversies and campaigns since 1979, though they were milder compared with those in the pre-1976 period. This indicates that the basic policy of the Chinese Communist Party in using literature as a tool for educating and molding people in order to achieve national goals was not changed, as seen in the fluctuation between the "cold winds and warm breezes" in Chapter one.

One of the most prominent features on the contemporary Chinese literary scene is the emergence of young writers as shown in chapter two. These young writers, most of them of the same age as the People's Republic, have shared the political vicissitudes with the regime. Among the political events they have gone through, the Red Guard Movement and the rustication movement during the Cultural Revolution were the most
traumatic. As witnesses to the unprecedented disastrous period of the Cultural Revolution, their writings bear a great deal of historical credibility.

Chapter three gives an overview of Zhiqing Fiction from the Cultural Revolution to 1984. The examination of Zhiqing Fiction of the Cultural Revolution period provides a basis against which current Zhiqing Fiction is compared and contrasted. The three stages that followed -- the negation of the rustication program from late 1978 to mid-1980, the rethinking of the past and searching for new spiritual faith from mid-1980 to early 1982, and finally the reaffirmation of rusticated life and conformity with Party ideology -- constitute a cyclical pattern in the development of Zhiqing Fiction.

This pattern sheds some light on the dynamics of the Party-writer relationship in the PRC. In 1979, the new Party leadership needed the writers to help discredit the previous radical leadership and to help win the essential support of the intellectuals for the ambitious modernisation program. The result was that for a short period in 1979 and 1980 political controls were relaxed in the PRC to an extent greater than at any time since 1949. Chinese writers were able to express themselves with unprecedented frankness, producing a literature of powerful realism. However, the relaxation of political control did not mean that Party influence on writing ceased to exist; the CCP would without
hesitation ruthlessly suppress any writing it perceived as threatening to its leadership. And when the new Party leadership had won complete control, it predictably began to assert strong pressures on the writers to produce only works praising its policies, although this pressure has not yet become as harsh or violent as that in the pre-1976 period. On the other hand, historical experience has taught the writers that to survive in times of restriction, they would have to compromise with the demands of the Party at the time. The study of the thematic changes in Zhiqing Fiction serves to reveal this type of relationship.

Because of the political circumstances in which Zhiqing Fiction was produced, I believe it is a valuable source for the understanding of Chinese society and contemporary Chinese youth. The fact that many young writers from varied backgrounds are writing about their personal experience gives this literature a convincing credibility. Zhiqing Fiction at its most interesting represent a situation in which concerns of the Party and the writers, and the truth, were temporarily in accord; it provides a vivid and horrifying picture of the Cultural Revolution, including the Red Guard Movement and the rustication campaign.

In chapter four, the Red Guard stories present a gripping picture a chaotic and inhuman society dominated by frenzy, fanaticism, senseless violence and pitiless destruction of human life. Contemporary Chinese youths,
who began as ardent participants in the Red Guard Movement and who ended as political victims, convey a strong sense of being betrayed and deceived by Mao and the radicals. The indictment of Mao and the Cultural Revolution is expressed through the traumatic experience of the Red Guard protagonist as seen in the death of Lu Danfeng and Li Honggang in Maple, the killing of one's own brother in The Bloody Morning, the suicide of Sisi in The Eclipse, the suicide of Lan Xi in Love Of A Mad Woman, the guilt and confession of Bai Hui in The Flower-strewn Path and Li Huaiping in When The Evening Clouds Disappear. The fact that all of these young people who began as revolutionary heroes or heroines all ended as political victims is itself a powerful irony.

In comparison with the Red Guard protagonist in the Cultural Revolution, the Post-Mao counterpart has a well rounded and fuller personality. He is no longer a stock character who is narrowly concerned with class struggle; he feels love and hate, hesitation and remorse. He tends to bear a sense of guilt because of his violent behavior during the Red Guard Movement or his betrayal of friendship for political reasons. He is sympathetic because he is a victim of politics. His "crimes" are questionable because the reader is aroused to ask "what and who caused the protagonist to commit his 'crime'?' The obvious answer generated in the
story serves to denounce Mao and the Cultural Revolution. The sense of guilt and confession of the Red Guard protagonist is thus linked with an awakening from the enslavement by "modern superstition" and with the re-recognition of the value of an individual. His search for a new faith in life in place of "Communist revolutionary ideals" reveals the "faith crisis" among Chinese youth and marks the beginning of a search for a new spiritual faith to replace Communist dogma, as in Zhang Kangkang's The Fire Spirit and Li Ping's When The Evening Clouds Disappear.

Zhiqing Fiction sheds some light on the rustication program which was one of the most ambitious and large scale examples of social engineering in human history, as demonstrated in chapter five. These stories make clear the total failure of the program either to remold the thinking of young intellectuals or to aid in rural construction. The general attitude of the writers is bitter and resentful, and the atmosphere is one of gloom and desperation. The historical irony is that just a few years earlier in 1975 Zhang Kangkang's judgement of the rustication program was still overwhelmingly favorable in her The Demarcation.

In contrast to the rosy picture painted in the Cultural Revolution, the scene now is sombre and severe. The local Party cadres are portrayed as despots who have the negative characteristics usually reserved for landlords, spies and capitalists. Their role has been
reversed from mentor and friend to that of the treacherous foe. They represent the biggest hindrance to individual freedom. The protagonists are no longer the sons and daughters of revolutionary workers, but those of the downtrodden officials and "reactionary academic authorities". The desire to return to the city which was the main target of attack in the Cultural Revolution, becomes a legitimate personal goal. Characters such as Wan Lili (The Journey) and Xue Chuan (The Demarcation) who were criticized for showing dissatisfaction with rural life, are elevated to be central characters. The revolutionary heroes who vowed to stay forever in the countryside in the Cultural Revolution simply do not have a place in Post-Mao fiction. Episodes devised to enforce the Party line are replaced with those describing disillusionment, restlessness, and yearning for individual freedom and career advancement. It is through the struggle of the victimized protagonist that young writers reveal their indignation against the rustication program, and the system as a whole.

If the struggle for individual freedom and ideals characterizes the May Fourth protagonist, he certainly finds his counterpart in Post-Mao Zhiqing Fiction. It is around these personal desires that many touching episodes are constructed. This can be seen in the meticulous plan of Li Qiaolin to escape from a tight network of official corruption and suppression
(Transfer), in the suicide of Juanjuan after all her efforts and sacrifices to attend university are in vain (The Path Of Life), and in the loss of love and hope of Ke Bizhou (The Wasted Youth) and Cheng Yu (Youths of Our Generation). Even though the efforts are in vain, the will of an individual to resist oppression endows the protagonist with a strong romantic quality.

Zhiqing Fiction also provides a valuable insight into the state of mind of contemporary Chinese youth. Chapter six to chapter eight turn to the depiction of youths after they return to the city, taking us away from the central domain of the Wound Literature. In the works discussed in these two chapters, the tragic aspects are lessened and the subject matter is broadened from the depiction of painful and nightmarish memories to the direct confrontation with immediate problems in an urban setting such as shortage of living space, unemployment, lack of education, and difficulty in finding a spouse. Stories are filled with the search for individual fulfillment rather than with national or political themes. The search for ideal love, for individuality and for a better life become central concerns. Such changes in thematic emphasis were to be expected since young writers could not forever dwell on their past.

Chapter six is devoted to a major human concern: romantic love. The search for individual romantic love is a dominant theme in Zhiqing Fiction. Romantic love
had been a popular theme in May Fourth literature. But it declined drastically after 1949 because of the increasing demand for relating all aspects of life to socialist construction. In the fifties and early sixties love was mandatorily linked with devotion to the building of socialism. Enthusiasm in production and manual labor was the main trait that triggered mutual attraction. During the Cultural Revolution, even this limited zone was crudely eliminated as love was condemned as "pornography", "bourgeois" and "promoting the universality of human nature"; it was avoided and concealed by the term "revolutionary friendship" as exemplified in the relationship between Zhong Weihua and Mei Yingzi in The Journey. What linked these two young people together was their devotion to the countryside.

In Zhiqing Fiction in the Post-Mao era, correct political awareness is no longer essential in a lover; it has been replaced by appearance and intelligence. What brings lovers together is their shared feelings of disillusionment and alienation (Youths of Our Generation), or their mutual indignation against social injustice and "ultraleftism" (Goodbye, Caltrops).

The struggle for freedom in marriage, a popular theme in May Fourth fiction, has made a vigorous comeback. What differs is that for the Zhiqing protagonist, the opposition is not only from "feudal" practices, but also from an oppressive political system...
such as class origin determinism). Because of this, the Zhiqing protagonist has to fight harder and endure more agony in search of individual happiness. This difference makes the struggle and failure of the Zhiqing protagonist more tragic and perhaps more sympathetic.

Another once forbidden topic which became prominent in Post-Mao fiction was conflict between lovers: the breaking-up of an engagement (The Northern Lights), disillusionment in marriage (The Dreams Of Our Generation) and sexual liberation (An Inside Story Made Public) may now be treated. These are favorite themes particularly of women writers. Through the uncompromising struggles of female protagonists for ideal love, and for maintaining a balance between marriage and career, these works have broadened the theme of love to the area of emancipation of women in Chinese society.

Another major concern is the emancipation of the self. This is best seen in the women characters, in their assertion of the physical and spiritual self (Chapter seven). This group of stories represents a sharp refutation of the extreme politicization of human nature since 1949. For females particularly, the Party's heavy emphasis on puritanism and the equality with men in all aspects of life have resulted in the loss of femininity (Where Did I Miss You?). Be it in the admiration of colorful clothes and hair styles (The Young Friends), the maintainance of individual character
(Summer), or the choice between education and marriage (On The Same Horizon), female characters embody the desire for emancipation of the self from the shackles of traditional values and political dogmatism.

Chapter eight marks the turn of thematic emphasis in Post-Mao Zhiqing Fiction. While some protagonists are searching for love and for individuality, some are reexamining their past rusticated life with a sense of nostalgia, and some are even considering returning to the countryside in search of an outlet in life. Such a shift strikes one as unnatural after reading in 1979-1980 about the terrible experiences of rusticated youth.

This shift shows the interrelations between the writers and the Party leadership. Politically, there has been an increasing demand on writers to encourage young people to serve the Four Modernisations program. This demand was strengthened by a series of campaigns and controversies, from the debate of "Forward-looking and backward-looking literature and art" (spring 1979), to the issues of "Praising virtue and lacking virtue" (summer 1979) and "Social effects" (spring 1980), to the criticism of Bai Hua's movie script Bitter Love (spring 1981), and finally to the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign (winter 1983). In terms of literary progression, young writers who began with the writing of Wound Literature have been branching out vigorously to seek newer themes. This development was shaped by the
writers' compromise with Party expectations. Wang Anyi first contrasted the peacefulness of the countryside with noisy and crowded Shanghai, thereby questioning the worthiness of returning to the city (The Destination). Shi Tiesheng depicted a deep friendship between a paralyzed rusticated youth and an old peasant (My Faraway Qingping Bay). Kong Jiesheng went even further to portray two former rusticated youths who decide to abandon city life and return to the countryside in search of an unfulfilled ideal (The Southern Bank).

The nostalgia emerging in the works from mid-1982 to late 1984 reflects the turn of Chinese writers from the assertion of personal ideals against ideological demands to conformity to the latter under more political pressure. The result is that instead of following the logical development of plot and character, the author bends them to conform to Party demands, in this case the return to the countryside. The characterization is abrupt and unconvincing as exemplified in the return of the protagonists to their rural lovers in Temptation and Harvest.

Some writers view their past life from a more historical perspective. As shown in Liang Xiaosheng's A Land Of Wonder and Mystery, and There Will Be A Snow Storm Tonight, the description of rusticated life is not confined to the revelation of corrupt local cadres and the individual's struggle to get away from the unpleasant rural setting as in 1979-80, but includes a
revival of idealistic and naive dreams about the countryside. The underlying idea is that although the rustication program may have been a failure, rusticated youths have contributed something to the cultivation of their motherland. The new affirmation of rusticated life is accordingly not an affirmation of the rustication program of the Cultural Revolution, but a recognition of the efforts of a generation of youth.

The more practical choice of remaining in the city is reflected in the works of some writers. Kong Jiesheng's *An Ordinary Female Worker* and Wang Xiaoying's *Starway* represent an affirmation of life through acceptance of one's duty and position in society. Both female protagonists are disappointed in their marriage, but both accept and make the best of what they now have -- a humble and yet secure job in a nationally owned factory; the affirmation of life takes the form of adjusting to present reality rather than seeking a faraway ideal.

Looking at the course of Zhiqing Fiction in terms of thematic emphasis, character portrayal and plot structure, we can clearly see the cyclical pattern of its development: from the eulogy of the rustication program in the early seventies, to the condemnation of the same program and the Cultural Revolution, and finally to the affirmation of life itself. The second affirmation does not mean another affirmation of the
rustication program of the Cultural Revolution, but is rather a combined result of the writers' response to increasing political demands as well as of their own idealized and hasty solution to the uncertainty of current life.

Although this dissertation focuses on the study of Zhiqing Fiction, from my reading of stories written on other themes, I think it might be worthwhile to mention that the thematic development of Zhiqing Fiction may shed some light on the development of other fictional categories.

In rural fiction, from the fifties on, all the agricultural policies -- the land reform, collectivisation and the people's communes -- were treated with a strong sense of optimism according to the dictum of Socialist Realism and Mao's "Double Combination". It was only after 1979 that works negating such policies began to appear (as seen in Ru Zhizuan's A Story Out of Sequence [Jianji Cuole De Gushi], and Zhang Yigong's The Criminal Li Tongzhong [Fanren Li Tongzhone De Gushi]). But, at the same time, the visible success of the responsibility agricultural system also attracted the attention of many writers. Soon rural stories were dominated by the praise of the agricultural responsibility system. The change from eulogy to negation and then to affirmation is similar to that of Zhiqing Fiction.

The rural stories, however, seem to be inferior to
Zhiqing Fiction because of their narrower range of subject matter, plot and characterisation. The elevation of a downtrodden poor peasant to a confident well-to-do person is a dominant theme as exemplified in the image of Feng Yaoba in He Shiquang's At the Market Town (Zai Xiangchang Shang). With a few exceptions such as Gao Xiaosheng's portrait of the old peasant Chen Huansheng (Chen Huansheng Goes to Town [Chen Huansheng Shangcheng] and his other stories using the same character), most rural stories eulogize one-sidedly the success of the agricultural responsibility system without pointing out its possible weakness.

In factory stories, there have also been changes since 1949 from eulogy to negation and then to affirmation. In the fifties and sixties, the emphasis was on the process of production and the portrayal of hard working selfless heroes. During the Cultural Revolution, these traits were colored by fierce class struggle. After 1979, Jiang Zilong's Manager Qiao Assumes Office (Qiao Changzhang Shanren Ji) as well as his other similar stories, marked the first works to expose the inefficiency and bureaucratic corruption in the economic system. Many stories on the same theme were modeled after Jiang Ziling's characters and hence were stereotyped. The very recently emerged "reform fiction" mark the return to positive depiction of factory life by balancing the incompetent cadres with
the reformists.

Stories about middle-aged intellectuals share the most similarity with Zhiqing Fiction in their depiction of the fate of an intellectual in a chaotic age, as exemplified by the tragic fate of the protagonist in Lu Yanzhou's The Tale of Tianyun Shan (Tianyun Shan Quanqi), and the devoted and difficult life of the professional heroine in Shen Rong's Reaching Middle Age (Ren Dao Zhongnian). One difference between these two categories of fiction is that the middle aged intellectuals did not arise until 1979 whereas the young intellectuals had already appeared in Zhiqing Fiction in the Cultural Revolution. This explains why fiction about middle-aged intellectuals does not follow the affirmation-negation-affirmation process of Zhiqing Fiction.

In characterisation, while the middle-aged protagonists tend to conform to Marxist ideology and adhere to acceptable long held social norms, young protagonists tend to be skeptical, cynical and even rebellious about the existing system. This contrast can be seen in the young protagonist's questioning of the Marxist orthodoxy in When the Evening Clouds Disappear and the devotion of the middle-aged protagonist to the same in Zhang Xianliang's The Herdsman (Ling yu ruo). Furthermore, as reflected in the works about middle-aged intellectuals, the struggle for individual advancement is less acute in middle-aged intellectuals. In the Wound
Literature, works depicting the persecution of intellectuals and the resulting psychological damages caused a commotion. But since 1983, the pitifully frightened middle-aged intellectuals have been depicted as steadfastly loyal to the nation, to Marxist ideology and to the Party (Cong Weixi The Snow Falls Silently Onto The Yellow River [Xue Luo Huang He Jing Wusheng]). This change too is shared by Zhiqing Fiction.

Mainly due to the large number of young writers and their varied social backgrounds, Zhiqing Fiction encompasses a wide range of subject matter in comparison with other categories of fiction in Post-Mao literature. It can branch out into many areas such as rural, factory, soldier and the newly risen reform fiction. The changing settings of Zhiqing Fiction from urban to rural and back to urban endow it with a wide geographical perspective. The records of the events from the Cultural Revolution to the Post-Mao era give Zhiqing Fiction a great historical and social significance. Zhiqing Fiction can provide an understanding not only of contemporary Chinese youth, but also of Chinese society as a whole.

In the broad historical context the rise of Zhiqing Fiction is symptomatic of the fundamental shift in the development of the PRC since 1976; that is, the return of intellectuals into the main stream of the Chinese revolution. During the May Fourth period intellectuals
had been at the forefront of the Chinese revolution, attacking old traditions, introducing new ideologies and ideas, and organizing mass movements. This was reflected in May Fourth literature. However, because the Communist revolutionary movement was built around the peasantry and the military, there was increasing hostility toward the urban intellectuals who were seen as too westernized and "bourgeois". As a result, the intellectuals as a group became one of the principal targets of many harsh political campaigns. This was reflected in Communist Chinese literature in the fact that intellectual protagonists were excluded from playing the main role, and even if they were portrayed, they were negative characters. This situation completely changed in the Post-Mao era because the new leadership needed the intellectuals for the Four Modernisations. Suddenly intellectuals became once again valued and esteemed members of the working class, and some were welcomed into leading positions in the Party. This trend is reflected in the most recent works of Zhiqing Fiction.

To assess the achievements of Zhiqing Fiction, it is necessary to place it in the continuum of modern Chinese literature from the May Fourth period. As many critics have pointed out, May Fourth literature was characterized by both critical realism and romanticism. After Mao's Yan'an Talks in 1942, critical realism was replaced by socialist realism, and later in 1958 by Mao's "double combination", resulting in the writing of
only what the Party wanted to see. The subject matter of literature was narrowed to the depiction of the so-called "important themes", which meant serving current political policies. In characterisation, subjective and individual feelings gave way to characteristics prescribed by political standards, resulting in stereotyped characters and formulaic plots. The struggle for individual freedom and ideals that was prevalent in May Fourth protagonists (as exemplified in Ba Jin's trilogy Family, Spring and Autumn) became irrelevant when everything was already set by the Party. The problematic hero of May Fourth literature who had to face complex dilemmas in life was replaced by the positive hero who has a clear cut direction. During the Cultural Revolution, literature entirely lost its literary qualities and became simply another form of propaganda.

Zhiqing Fiction exemplified all these changes in the Post-Mao era. In Zhiqing Fiction, the depiction of deeper individual emotions, feelings and thoughts with little or no relation to politics has become common. The themes are varied, ranging from trivial matters to important social issues and even tragedy. The episodes in the stories are broader and more varied, reflecting a wide range of life conditions. In Zhiqing Fiction, problems of everyday life -- the shortage of living space, the scarcity of jobs and the lack of
mobility of residence, the long lineups to buy food and necessities, and many kinds of personal conflict -- received unprecedented attention. Also sensitive issues such as divorce and sex, which were previously ignored in Communist fiction, are now openly dealt with in Zhiqing Fiction.

Furthermore, young writers have been more ready to adopt new literary techniques. Their literary techniques have not yet surpassed the best of the May Fourth writers, but they have experimented with more varied creative methods. The use of the first person point of view, flashbacks, internal monologue, and the "stream of consciousness" have become important features. The use of nature images is also different from pre-1976 fiction. Nature no long is simply an obstacle to be overcome, but has become an indicator of mood and a source of beauty in itself.

Rusticated life probably will continue to be used as a creative source by contemporary young writers. However, the way they depict their rusticated life will change according to their personal, social and political circumstances. A conspicuous change has already happened in some of the works of more artistic writers. In their works, rusticated life is no longer merely used as a background for exposing the darkness of the rustication program, but also used as a background for exploring new themes.

Despite the increase in political pressure, young
writers have shown they are willing to push beyond what has been achieved in Zhiqing Fiction into more individualized and complex works. As early as 1979, Zhang Kangkang in her The Right to Love called for the recognition of individual dignity through the assertion of romantic love, and love for one's career and mankind. Another talented writer Zhang Xinxin in her On The Same Horizon revealed her personal view of socialist reality through the life and struggle of a young couple. Her other novella The Dreams of Our Generation was the first among Zhiqing Fiction to analyze life with a bitter sense of disillusionment and alienation. Zhang Chengzhi's The Northern River (Beifang De He) has elevated the theme of rustication with the depiction of the grandeur of the Yellow River -- a symbolic reference to the Chinese motherland. Kong Jiesheng's symbolically rendered novella The Big Forest (Da Lin Mang) goes further by treating the cultivation of virgin land as a destruction of the natural order. A highly distinctive piece is A Cheng's The Chess Master (Qiwang) which demonstrates the author's broader vision of reality. Though employing the same gloomy background, it surpasses many early works of Zhiqing Fiction which are limited to the revelation of individual tragedy at the hands of evil cadres. In this story, the author conveys his understanding of the higher state of the human spirit and its relation to the Chinese cultural heritage.
through the unique character of the "chess master". This story has triggered a movement of seeking the roots of Chinese culture through literature.

The achievements of Zhiqing Fiction indicate that despite decades of Party persecution and relentless remolding of thought, the Chinese writers' traditional desire for creative freedom and their sense of national and social mission have not been permanently extinguished. What the future holds for the writers of China cannot be predicted because the writers, like the rest of Chinese society, are still at the mercy of internal changes within the still all powerful CCP.

After examining the large number of works of Zhiqing Fiction, we can say without hesitation that Post-Mao literature represents a continuation of the May Fourth tradition and a break with Maoist literature. During the May Fourth Era, Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Yu Dafu and Lao She brought Chinese literature into the main stream of world literature, whereas their "revolutionary" successors retreated to the so-called "national forms". The works of some young writers have demonstrated the potential for Chinese literature to enter once again the main stream of world literature. Given an extended period of relaxation, I have no doubt that works of great significance will come out of this generation of young writers in China.

In conclusion, one surely feels admiration for the aspirations and ideals, the enterprise and courage of
those who have written the more striking works of Zhiqing Fiction. In China, while no longer is it "probably the fate of everybody at some time to have his head cut off", only a great optimist could feel certain that it will never again "probably be the fate of everybody at some time to be made a public example of."
**NOTES**

**ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJCA</td>
<td>Australia Journal of Chinese Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHWX</td>
<td>Anhui Wenxue (Anhui Lit.) 安徽文学</td>
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<tr>
<td>BJWX</td>
<td>Beijing Wenxue (Beijing Lit.) 北京文学</td>
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<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>Chunfeng (Spring Breeze) 春风</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHL</td>
<td>Chinese Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>CJWY</td>
<td>Changjiang Wenyi (Yangtze Lit. &amp; Art)长江文艺</td>
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<tr>
<td>CQ</td>
<td>China Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Caishi (Stone) 采石</td>
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<tr>
<td>CXY</td>
<td>Chou Xiaoya (Ugly Duckling) 丑小鸭</td>
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<td>DD</td>
<td>Dangdai (This Generation) 当代</td>
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<td>DS</td>
<td>Dushu (Study) 读书</td>
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<td>DX</td>
<td>Dongxiang (Trend) 勤向</td>
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<td>FR</td>
<td>Furong (Lotus) 美蓉</td>
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<td>FS</td>
<td>Fenshui (Fenshui) 涌水</td>
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<td>GDWX</td>
<td>Guangdong Wenxue (Guangdong Lit.) 广东文学</td>
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<td>HBWX</td>
<td>Hebei Wenxue (Hebei Lit.) 河北文学</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>Huacheng (Flower City) 花城</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>Hongqi (Red Flag) 红旗</td>
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<tr>
<td>HX</td>
<td>Huaxi (Flower Stream) 花溪</td>
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<tr>
<td>HY</td>
<td>Hongyan (Red Rock) 红岩</td>
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<tr>
<td>JFJWY</td>
<td>Jiefangjun Wenyi (Liberation Army Lit. &amp; Art) 解放军文艺</td>
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<tr>
<td>JN</td>
<td>Jiangnan (South Yangtze) 江南</td>
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<td>JSND</td>
<td>Jiushi Niandai (The Nineties) 九十年代</td>
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<td>MB</td>
<td>Ming Bao Yuekan (Mingbao Monthly) 明报月刊</td>
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<td>MY</td>
<td>Mengya (Shoots) 萌芽</td>
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<td>Mangzhong (Grain Seeds) 芒种</td>
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<td>Pacific Affairs</td>
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<td>SCWX</td>
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<td>Shouhuo (Harvest) 收获</td>
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<td>Shanghai Wenxue (Shanghai Lit.) 山东文学</td>
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<td>SDDBG</td>
<td>Shidai De Baogao (Report of the Times) 时代的报告</td>
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<td>SY</td>
<td>Shiyue (October) 十月</td>
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<td>WHYK</td>
<td>Wenhui Yuekan (Literary Monthly) 文汇月刊</td>
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<td>WXB</td>
<td>Wenxue Bao (Literary Press) 文学报</td>
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<td>Wenxue Pinglun (Literary Criticism) 文学评论</td>
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<td>WXPLCk</td>
<td>Wenxue Pinglun Congkan (Literary Criticism, Publication Series) 文学评论丛刊</td>
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<td>XG</td>
<td>Xingang (New Harbour) 新港</td>
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<td>Xihu (West Lake) 西湖</td>
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<td>Xinhua Wenzhai (New China Literary Digest) 新华文摘</td>
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<td>XWXLC</td>
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<td>XY</td>
<td>Xinyuan (New Garden)</td>
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<tr>
<td>YLJ</td>
<td>Yalu Jiang (Yalu River)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZGQN</td>
<td>Zhongguo Qingnian (Chinese Youth)</td>
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<td>ZJWY</td>
<td>Zhanjiang Wenyi (Zhanjiang Literature and Art)</td>
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<td>ZM</td>
<td>Zhengming (Contention)</td>
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<td>ZP</td>
<td>Zuopin (Works)</td>
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<td>Zhongpian Xiaoshuo Xuankan (Selected Novellas)</td>
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<td>ZPYZM</td>
<td>Zuopin Yu Zhengming (Works &amp; Contention)</td>
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<td>ZS</td>
<td>Zhongshan (Bell Mountain)</td>
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<td>GMRB</td>
<td>Guangming Ribao (Guangming Daily)</td>
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<td>HBRB</td>
<td>Hebei Ribao (Hebei Daily)</td>
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<tr>
<td>JFJB</td>
<td>Jiefangjun Bao (Liberation Army Daily)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFRB</td>
<td>Nanfang Ribao (South Daily)</td>
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<td>RMRB</td>
<td>Renmin Ribao (People's Daily)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZGQNB</td>
<td>Zhongguo Qingnian Bao (Chinese Youth Press)</td>
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**DPXSX**

短篇小说选


**ZGXDDP**

中国现代短篇小说选


**ZMZPXB**

鸦鸣作品选编

Zhengming Zuopin Xuanbian (Selected Controversial Stories). Beijing: Beiing Wenlian yanjiusuo (Beijing Writers' Union Research Institute), 1981. 2 vols.
Note: Unless noted, citations of publishing companies in China appear in the following format: Name of place: Name of place - People's publishing company - year.
NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION


3. I borrowed this term from Vera Dunham, see the introduction to her *In Stalin's Time: Middle-class Values in Soviet Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.)

4. For a study of Ding Ling's early fiction, see Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker, *Ding Ling's Fiction: Ideology and Narrative in Modern Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982).


6. Collected in *Chongfang de Xianhua* (Fresh Flowers Bloom Again) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1979).

7. Ibid.


University Press, 1983).
NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE


2. For a study on the pendulum mechanism, see Merle Goldman, Literary Dissent in Communist China (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), and China's Intellectuals: Advise and Dissent (same press, 1981.)

3. For the content of these literary concepts, see "Sirenbang" fandong wenyi sixiang pipan (Criticism of the Reactionary Thoughts of the Gang of Four on Literature and Art)(Hangzhou: Zhejiang, 1978.)

4. For example, see Lou Xi, "'Santuchu chuangzuo yuanze' shi 'Sirenbang' chuandang duouquan de wenyi gangling", ("The Three Prominences" Method Was a Devise to Seize Power from the Party), Zhongshan daxue xuebao (Journal of Zhongshan University), 2(1977): 51-55.


9. For example, see Zhang Guangnian, "Bo 'Wenyi heixian zhuanzheng' lun -- cong suowei 'Wenyi heixian' de 'Heiba lun' tan qi"(Refute the "Literary Black Line" Theory -- On the So-called "Eight Black Theories"), in "Yinmou Wenyi" pipang (Criticisms of "Conspiratory Literature and Art") (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1978), pp.42-50.

10. For a general discussion of these theories, see Lin Manshu, Hai Feng & Cheng Hai, Zhongguo dangdai wenyue shigao (Literary History of Contemporary China:1949-

11. See note. no. 9, Zhang Guangnian.


13. Shi Quan, "Zhengque duidai shenghuo, zhengque fanying shenghuo" (Correctly Face Life, Correctly Reflect Life), WYB, 3(1979): 62-64.


17. Chongfang de xianhua (Fresh Flowers Bloom Again) (Shanghai: Shanghai, 1979.)

18. RMRB, 23 May 1962.


20. Zhou Yang, "Jiwang kailai, fanrong shehui zhuyi xinshiqi wenyi -- zai Zhongguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe disici daibiao dahui shang de baogao" (Inherit and Develop, Prosper the Literature and Art of the Socialist


22. "Jianchi, yunyong he fazhen Mao Zedong wenyi sixiang" (Insist and Develop Mao Zedong's Thought on Literature and Art), GMRB, 8 July 1981.

23. Feng Mu, "Chongxin xuexi he renzhen yanjiu Mao Zedong tongzhi de wenyi sixiang" (Study Again Seriously Comrade Mao Zedong's Thought on Literature and Art), RMRB, 21 May 1982.


27. Ibid.


31. Ai Wu, "Guanyu sanshi nian wenyi yixie
ganxiang" (Some Thoughts on the Thirty Years of Literature and Art"), XWXLC, 1(1980): 5-12.


34. Ibid. p. 5.


36. Xia Yan, "Wenyi yeyao gaodian falu" (There Should Also Be a Law for Literature and Art), WYB, 8(1979): 2-3.


38. Zhao Dan, "Guande taiyan, meiyo xiwang" (Too Much Restriction, No Hope for Literature), RMRB, 8 October 1980.

39. Wang Ruowang, "Lun wenyi de wuwei erzhi" (Do-nothing in the Handling of Literature and Art), HQ, 9(1979): 47-49. Also see Huang Zongying, "Wenyi lingyu buneng rongren guanliao zhuyi" (Literature and Art Cannot Tolerate Bureaucratism), RMRB, 9 October 1980.


41. Hu Yu, "Dangdai wenyishi shang de licheng pai -- disici quanguo wendaihui zeji" (A Landmark in Contemporary Chinese Literature and Art -- a Glimpse at the Fourth National Congress of Chinese Writers and
Artists), WYB, 60-64, 46. For the speeches given at this meeting, see Zhongguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe disici daibiao dahui wenji (Collected Essays Given at the Fourth National Congress of Writers and Artists) (Chengdu: Sichuan, 1979.)

42. Deng Xiaoping, "Zai Zhongguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe disici daibiao dahui shang de zhuci" (Congratulatory Speech Given at the Fourth National Congress of Writers and Artists), WYB, 11-12(1979): 2-5.


46. "Renzhen tiaozheng dang de wenyi zhengce" (Seriously Readjust the Party's Policies on Literature and Art), RMRB, 13 June 1978. The "Six Criteria" which Mao brought up in the mid-1950's were used for distinguishing fragrant flowers from poisonous weeds and for distinguishing right from wrong in one's words and actions. During the Cultural Revolution, they became the criteria for judging whether one's words and actions were "revolutionary".

47. "Jixu jiefang sixiang, fanrong wenyi shiye" (Continue to Emanicipate Thought, Prosper Literature and Art), RMRB, 25 June 1979.


50. Li Bozhao, "Jiaqiang dang dui wenyi de lingdao" (Strengthen Party Leadership in Literature and Art),
RBRB, 28 July 1981.


52. Ai Shu, "Buyao youlai yige huadi weilao" (Don't Set Up New Confines), NFRB, 11 May 1979. Ge Qiong, "Dapo tiaotiao kuangkuang, fangkai shoujiao chuangzuo" (Break the Confines and Feel Free to Write), RMRB, 17 September 1979.

53. See note no. 51, Yu Feng.


56. Li Jian, "Gede yu quede" (Praising Virtue and Lacking Virtue), RMRB, 3 July 1979.

57. It was said that Tian Jian was the "backer" of Li Jian. Luo Feng, "Zhaodao le 'gede pai' de muhouren" (The Back-stage Manager of 'Praise Virtue' Faction is Found), ZM, 9(1979): 11-13.

58. See note. no. 56.

59. Zhou Yue, "Zhudang buzhu chuntian de jiaobu" (Can't Stop the Steps of Spring), RMRB, 31 July 1979.


63. Liang Yihao, "Wendaihui muhou zhongzhong" (Behind the Stage of the Fourth National Congress of Writers and Artists), ZM, 11(1979): 8.

65. Deng Xiaoping, see note no. 42, p. 4.


67. Qu Liuyi, "Yishu shi zhenshanmei de jiejing dui 'Jiaru wo shi zhende', 'Zai shehui de dangan li' deng zuopin de ganxiang" (Art Is the Crystalization of Truth, Goodness and Beauty -- Some Thoughts on "If I Were Real", "In The Archives Of Society" and Other Works), ZMZPXB, vol. 1, pp. 316-317.

68. Yi Jun, "'Zai shehui de dangan li' siti" (Four Opinions on "In the Archives of Society"), ZMZPXB, vol. 1, pp. 152-161. A summary of the criticisms of this work, see Li Ming, "Zhongguo wentan fengqi de yixiang gaijin" (An Improvement On the Chinese Literary Scene), DX, 4(1980):21.

69. Da Lin, "'Canmou zhang gongzi' danao Shanghai ji" (Son of the Commander in Chief in Shanghai), ZM, 8(1979): 22-24.

70. See note no. 66, Sha Yexin, p. 281.

71. See note no. 67, Qu Liuyi, p. 313.

72. "Juben chuangzuo zuotanhui qingkuang jianshu" (Symposium on the Forum of Script Writing), ZMZPXB, vol. 1, p.323. Bai Hui, "Zhenshi, dianxiang, qingxiangxing" (Truth, Type and Tendentiousness), WHB, 1 April 1980.


76. Meng Qi, "Cong xiaoguo suo xiangdao de" (Thoughts on Social Effects), CJWY, 6(1980):70.


80. Bai Hua, Peng Ning, "Kulian" (Bitter Love), SY, 3(1979): 140-248.


83. See note no. 80, Bai Hua, Peng Ning, p. 167.

84. See note. no. 82.


86. Deng Yingzhao, "Chuangzuo gengduo hao zuopin xiangge renmin -- zai quanguo youxiu zhongpian xiaoshuo, baogao wenxue, xinshi huojian zuozhe chahua hui shange de jianghua" (A Talk to Prize Winners of Novellas, Reportages, and New Poetry at the Tea Meeting), WYB, 13(1981), p. 3.


88. RMRB Special Commentator, "Wenyi gongzuo zhe yao renzheng xuexi Makesi zhuyi de jiben lilun" (Literary and Artistic Workers Must Seriously Study the Basic Theories of Marxism", RMRB, October 20, 1982.

89. For example, see He Jingzhi, "Zongjie jingyan, suzao xinren -- zai 'Zuopin yu zhengming' bianji zhaojiai 'zuzao shehui zhuyi xinren wenti' taolunhui shang de jianghua" (Summarize Experience, Portray New Man -- A Talk at the "Problem of 'Portraying Socialist New Man"

375


91. Lin Mohan, "Tan wenyi zhanxian qingchu jingshen wuran wenti -- zai quanguo wenhua ting (ju)zhang huiyi shang de jianghua" (Problems of Wiping Out Spiritual Pollution in the Literary and Art Front -- a Talk at the Cultural Bureau), WXB, 15 December 1983.

92. RMRB Special Commentator, "Gaoju shehui zhuyi wenyi qizhi, jianjue fangzhi he qingchu jingshen wuran" (Uphold the Banner of Socialist Literature and Art, Firmly Prevent and Wipe Out Spiritual Pollution), RMRB, 31 October 1983.


96. For a summary of the criticisms on Xu Jingya, see Ji Liyan, "Yizhong beili shehui zhuyi de yishu zhuzhang -- Jilin sheng wenxuejie piping 'Juqi de shiqun'" (A Literary Theory that Opposes Socialism -- A Criticism on "The Emergence of a New Category of Poetry"), WXB, 3 November 1983.


100. Special Commentator of ZGQNB, "Wuran xu qingchu, shenghuo yao meihua" (Pollution Needs to Be Wiped Out,
NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Bei, Dao, "Huida" (Reply), Shikan, 3(1979): 46. Translation in Mao's Harvest, p.19

2. Ibid.

3. The "four olds" refer to old ideas, old customs, old culture and old habits.


7. For a study on underground literature, see Chen Rouxi, Democracy Wall and the Unofficial Journals (Berkeley: University of California, Center for Chinese Studies, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1982.)


10. Ibid.

11. RMRB, 10 February 1979.


17. RMRB, 8 January 1981.


19. ZGQNB, 5 March 1983.

20. ZGQNB, 12 May 1983.


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GLOSSARY

WORKS CITED IN THE TEXT

A Bundle Of Letters (Yishu xinzha)
一束信札

A Chance Heard Story (Tinglai de gushi)
听来的故事

A Female Captive (Nufu)
女俘

A Female Thief (Nuzei)
女贼

A Land Of Wonder And Mystery (Zhe shi yipian shenqi de tudi)
这是一片神奇的土地

A Long Night (Ye changchang)
夜 长

A New Youth Came To The Organization (Zuzhi bu xinlai de qingnian ren)
组织部新来的青年人

A Soldier In The Tianshan Mountain (Tianshan shenchu de dabing)
天山深处的大兵

A Spring Fairy Tale (Yige chuntian de tonghua)
一个春天的童话

A Story Of Looking Forward (Xiangqian kan de gushi)
向前看的故事

A Strange Youth Came To Our Team (Women zu laile ge guai qingnian)
我们组来了个怪青年

A Winter Fairy Tale (Yige dongtian de tonghua)
一个冬天的童话

An Ordeal (Shengsi jie)
生死劫

An Ordinary Female Worker (Putong nugong)
普通女工

An Unsteady Person (Tiaolai tiaoku de ren)
跳来跳去的人

Autumn (Qiu)
秋
Autumn Harvest (Qiushou)
秋收

Autumn River (Qiushui)
秋水

Between Husband and Wife (Women fufu zhijian)
我们夫妇之间

Bitter Love (Kulian)
苦恋

Bloody Morning, The (Xieran de zaochen)
血染的早晨

Blown-away Flower Band, The (Piaoshi de hua toujin)
飘逝的花头巾

Blue Magnolia Stream, The (Lanlan de mulan xi)
蓝蓝的木兰溪

Bright Clouds (Canxia)
彩霞

Bright Sunny Sky (Yanyang Tian)
艳阳天

Bus Stop (Chezhan)
车站

Class Teacher, The (Ban zhuren)
班主任

Contraction (Zhentong)
阵痛

Cuckoo Cries Return (Dujian tigui)
杜鹃啼归

Dahei (Dahei)
大黑

Daughter's Bridge, The (Nuer qiao)
女儿桥

Demarcation, The (Fenjie xian)
分界线

Destination, The (Benci lieche zongdian)
本次列车终点

Diary of Miss Sophie (Shafei nushi de riji)
莎菲女士的日记
Distant Bell Tolls, The (Youyuan de zhongsheng)

Dragon Eye Lake, The (Longyan Hu)

Dream of The Red Chamber (Honglou Meng)

Dreams Of Our Generation, The (Women zhege nianji de meng)

Drunk Amidst the Flowers (Zuiru huacong)

Eclipse (Shi)

Essays Of Three Family Village (Sanjiacun zhaji)

Family (Jia)

Fire Spirit, The (Huo de jingling)

Fly To The Faraway Land (Feixiang yuanfang)

Forever And Ever (Dijiu tianchang)

Forget Me Not (Wuwang wo)

Fresh Flowers Bloom Again (Chongfang de xianhua)

Gentle Breeze, The (Haifeng qingqing chui)

Get Together, The (Juhui)

Golden Path (Jinguang dadao)

Goodbye, Caltrops (Biele, zhili)

Hai Rui Dismissed From Office (Hai Rui ba guan)
Harvest (Shouhuo)
If I Were Real (Jiaru woshi zhende)
In The Archives Of Society (Zai shehui de dangan li)
Inside Story Made Public, An (Gongkai de neican)
Inside Story Of The Press (Benbao neibu xiaoxi)
Journey. The (Zhengtu)
Juanjuan a, Juanjuan (Juanjuan, a Juanjuan)
Light Morning Fog, The (Dandan de chenwu)
Life (Rensheng)
Love Of A Mad Woman (Fenren zhilian)
Lure Of The Sea, The (Miren de hai)
Maple (Feng)
Marriage (Yinyuan)
Master Of Chess (Qiwang)
Master Of The Borderland (Bianjiang de zhuren)
Meandering Stream, The (Liushui wanwan)
Midnight (Ziye)
Modern Tea House, The (Xiandai pai chaguan)
Moonlit Stream, The (Shuangzhe yuiliang de xiaohe)
My Faraway Qingping Bay (Wode yaoyuan de Qingping Wan)

Nearly Clouds (Jinde yun)

Night Talks At Yanshan (Yanshan yehua)

Noon (Zhongwu)

Northern Lights (Beiji guang)

Northern River (Beifang de he)

Not That Path (Buneng zou na tiaolu)

Oh, Blue Bird (A, Qingniao)

Older Sister (Jiejie)

On The Bridge Construction Site (Zai qiaoliang gongdi shang)

On The Cliff (Zai xuanai shang)

On The Other Side Of The Stream (Zai xiaohe de na bian)

On The Same Horizon (Zai tongyi dipingxian shang)

Pagoda (Ta)

Past, The (Na guoqu le de)

Pastoral (Tianyuan)

Path Of Life (Shenghuo de lu)

People, Oh, People (Ren a, ren)
Phoenix Eyes (Danfeng yan)

Place Of Love, The (Aiqing de weizhi)

Please Walk With Me (Qing yu wo tongxing)

Purple Fragrance (Dazixiang)

Purple Fragrance Quietly Blooms (Dazixiang qiaoqiao de kaile)

Reaching Middle Age (Rendao zhongnian)

Red Bean (Hongdou)

Red Lantern (Hongdeng ji)

Red Light, Amber Light, Green Light (Hongdeng, huangdeng, ludeng)

Red Plum (Hongmei)

Red Opium Poppy (Hong yingsu)

Registration (Dengji)

Resurrection (Fusu)

Right To Love, The (Ai de quanli)

Scale Of Love, The (Ai de tianping)

Search (Qiuso)

Second Handshake, The (Dierci woshou)
See You Tomorrow (Mingtian, zaijian)
明天再见
Sinking (Chenlun)
沉沦
Snowless Winter, The (Wuxue de dongtian)
无雪的冬天
Sparkling Eyes in Summer Night (Chunye, ningshi de yanjing)
春夜，凝视的眼睛
Spring (Chun)
春
Spring Chill (Chunhan)
春寒
Spring Silkworms (Chuncan)
春蚕
Spring Planting, Autumn Harvest (Chunzhong, qiushou)
春种秋收
Starway, The (Xinghe)
星河
Story of Ah Q, The (Ah Q zhengzhuan)
阿Q正传
Story of Li Shuangshuang, The (Li Shuangshuang de gushi)
李双双的故事
Story of Wu Xun, The (Wu Xun zhuang)
武训传
Summer (Xia)
夏
Sun And Man (Taiyang yu ren)
太阳与人
Sweet (Tianmi)
甜蜜
Tale Of Tianyun Shan (Tianyun Shan quanqi)
天云山传奇
Temptation (Rouhuo)
诱惑
Their Paths (Tamen de lu)
她们的路
Total Solar Eclipse (Ri quanshi)
日全蚀

Transfer (Diaodong)
调动

Unending Grassland, The (Lili yuanshang cao)
离离原上草

Unerasable Voices, The (Mo budiao de shengyin)
抹不掉的声音

Unsatisfactory Brother-in-law, The (Bu chengxin de jiefu)
不称心的姐夫

Visitor, The (Laifang zhe)
来访者

Wasted Years, The (Chatuo suiyue)
蹉跎岁月

Wasted Years, The (Kongbai)
空白

Water (Shui)
水

Waves Of Life (Shenghuo de langhua)
生活的浪花

Wayward Path Strewn With Flowers, The (Puhua de qilu)
铺花的歧路

Wedding Night, The (Xinhun zhiye)
新婚之夜

West Garden Grass (Xiyuan cao)
西苑草

What Are You Thinking (Ni zai xiang shenme)
你在想什么

When The Sunset Clouds Disappear (Wanxia xiaoshi de shihou)
晚霞消失的时候

Where Did I Miss You (Wo zai nar cuoguo le ni)
我在哪儿错过了你?

White-haired Girl (Baimao nu)
白毛女

Winter Ruin (Candong)
残冬
Wound, The (Shanghen)

Young Friends, The (Nianqing de pengyou men)

Youth Interlude, The (Qingchun chaqu)

Youths Of Our Generation (Women zhe yidai nianqing ren)
NAMES AND TERMS CITED IN THE TEXT

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Ba Ren  巴人
Bai Hua  白桦
Bei Dao  北岛
Cao Ming  草明
Chen Dengke  陈登科
Chen Jiangong  陈建功
Chen Jinhong  陈继红
Chen Kexiong  陈可雄
Chen Qixia  陈企霞
Chen Yi  陈毅
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Liu Fangsen
Liu Qing
Liu Shaotang
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Lu Xinger
Lu Xun
Lu Yao
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Meng Qi
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Zhou Yang 周扬
Zhu Lin 竹林
Zong Pu 宗璞

Terms and phrases:

Budui wenyi gongzuo zuotanhui jiyao 部队文艺工作座谈会纪要
Cong anquan gan shuoqi 从安全感说起
dianxing 典型
Fan huoyao wei lun 反火药味论
Fan ticai jueding lun 反题材决定论
Fan zhenren zhenshi lun 反真人真事论
Fang 放
ganyu shenghuo 干预生活
Gao Da Quan 高大全
gede yu quede 歌德与缺德
gexong yu baolu 歌颂与暴露
Hei ba lun 黑八论
Jinben renwu lun 基本任务论
Lijing pandao lun 高经叛道论
qingxiang xing 倾向性
renxing lun 人性论
Santuchu 三突出
Shenru shenghuo 深入生活
Shidai jingshen lun 时代精神论
Shijian shi jianyan zhenli de weiyi biaozhun 实践是检验真理的唯一标准
shou 收
Wenyi heixian zhuanzheng lun 文艺黑线专政论
Xianshi zhuyi, guangkuo de daolu 现实主义, 广阔的道路
Xianshi zhuyi shenhua lun 现实主义深化论
Xianshi zhuyi zai shehui zhuyi de fazhan 现实主义在社会主义的发展
Xie zhenshi 写真实
Xie zouzi pai 写走派
Xie zhongjian renwu lun 写中间人物论
Yiben shu zhuyi 一本主义
Yige jieji yige dianxing 一个阶级一个典型
Yinmou wenyi 阴谋文艺
zhenshi 真实
zhiqing 知青