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ABSTRACT

Zhu Ziqing was a Chinese academic who developed a reputation first as a poet and later as an essayist in the 1920's and 1930's. His works are still read widely in China and are considered important enough to be included in the curriculum of secondary schools and universities in the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Despite his enduring reputation among his countrymen, he is little known abroad and Western scholarly works on modern Chinese literature scarcely mention him.

This thesis examines Zhu Ziqing's prose, since it is his essays which are the basis of his reputation. His short stories are examined first, as the precursors to his essays, with which they have much in common. The essays are presented in categories according to their subject matter, and representative works from each category are examined in detail.

It becomes clear that the most noticeable characteristic of Zhu Ziqing's writings is their autobiographical nature. He is at his best when writing about things with which he is intimately acquainted, and his attempts to grapple with wider social issues tend to be inconclusive. Zhu Ziqing is known principally as a lyric essayist, a "painter of pictures with words." The scenes which he describes are often marked by his presence, linked by the autobiographical thread which runs through all his work. Concerned as they are with painting delightful scenes rather than making any profound statements, lyric essays are not calculated to offend anyone's ideological sensibilities. This, combined with the inconclusive nature of Zhu Ziqing's attempts at weightier social pronouncements, accounts for the availability of his works on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.
One may concede that Zhu Ziqing is but a minor planet in the Chinese literary firmament. Nevertheless, his short stories and essays are interesting as examples of prose which was highly regarded by the author's contemporaries in the early days of modern Chinese vernacular literature.
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INTRODUCTION

Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (1898-1948) is a name well known to anyone with a Chinese education. Notwithstanding the scant regard paid his writings by Western scholars, his poems and essays are prescribed reading for students on the Chinese mainland as well as in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Few other writers from the May Fourth period can claim that distinction in a nation so divided that prescribed reading in one jurisdiction is likely to be proscribed reading in another.

In this thesis we shall explore the nature of Zhu Ziqing's prose, since his literary reputation is based mainly on his essays. We shall see that, although he showed great promise as a writer, in some ways the promise was left unfulfilled because his vision was clearest of things within his own experience. He had great difficulty understanding people outside his own social background, and his attempts at social commentary were rather limited in scope. However, he was perceived by his contemporaries to possess a talent for lyric description, and it is this which has won him his reputation.

Before proceeding with the detailed examination of his works, it is appropriate to introduce the man responsible for them. Born November 22, 1898 in Haizhou 海州 in the province of Jiangsu 江苏, Zhu Ziqing was the son of a minor official. He grew up in the Jiangsu town of Yangzhou 扬州 and graduated from secondary school there in 1916, whereupon he entered into a marriage arranged by his parents with Wu Zhongqian 吴钟谦, the daughter of a local physician. The same year, he went to study at Peking University, graduating from the Philosophy Department in 1920. In the following five years he taught at secondary schools and normal schools in the provinces of
Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and finally became a lecturer at Peking's Qinghua University in 1925. He was to remain with Qinghua University for the rest of his life and became a highly respected scholar. Widowed in 1929, he married Chen Zhuyin in 1932 and that marriage lasted the rest of his life.

In addition to his own contribution to modern Chinese literature, he produced many textbooks for the study of classical and modern Chinese literature as well as modern Chinese language. Zhou Jin credits Zhu Ziqing with being among the first ever to teach a course on modern Chinese literature at a Chinese university. From 1932 to 1937 and from 1946 to 1948 he was head of the Chinese Department of Qinghua University. From 1937 to 1939 he was head of the Chinese Department of the temporary university formed in Kunming during the war with Japan.

Zhu Ziqing started his literary career as a poet while still a student at Peking University, and his literary energies were directed mainly towards poetry until 1925. His 246-line poem Huimie (Destruction), published in 1923, is credited by Li Guangtian with having "... had a great influence on the poetry of that period" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.l, p.11). Thus it was as an accomplished poet that Zhu Ziqing turned his attention to writing prose in 1925. According to Zhou Jin, Zhu Ziqing's success as a poet came only after years of practice, but with essays "... he had great success as soon as his pen touched the paper" (Zhu Ziqing yanjiu, p.127). His first essay, "Jiangsheng-dengying li de Qinhuaihe" (The Sound of Oars on the Lamplit Qinhuai River) was published in 1923 and met
with critical acclaim. Zhou Zuoren 周作人 described it as "...a model for artistic writing in the vernacular"...《白话文学的模范》(Zhu Ziqing yanjiu, p.128).

Encouraged by this rapid success as an essayist, Zhu Ziqing channelled his creative energies away from poetry and into this genre. By 1925 he had all but ceased writing poetry. His only major poem after that date was Wan Yiduo xiansheng 沈一多先生 (An Elegy to Master Yiduo), written in 1946 in memory of his close friend, the writer Wen Yiduo 闻一多, who was assassinated in July of that year. Otherwise, until the 1940's Zhu Ziqing's creativity found expression through prose, mainly in the form of the essay. During the 1940's he did little creative writing, concentrating instead on writing texts for the study of modern Chinese literature and modern Chinese language. He died in Peking on August 12, 1948 at the age of forty-nine.

The period in which Zhu Ziqing was most active as a writer, the 1920's and 1930's, was a time of great literary activity in China. The overthrow of the Qing 清 Dynasty in 1911 had brought in its wake not only a search for a new political and social structure, but a search for a new literature as well. Many Chinese intellectuals who had been educated abroad and returned home in the 1910's were convinced that China's economic and political weakness could be cured by some degree of westernisation. In addition to promoting Western science, philosophies and forms of government, they advocated a new style of literature to be written in the vernacular. The "classical" literary language which had prevailed until then was so different from the spoken language as to be unintelligible to the ear. Its mastery required years of study, and literacy was thus limited to a small segment of society. The reformists expected a literature based on the vernacular, as was the case in
Western countries, to facilitate the spread of literacy and to forge a dynamic society better able to hold its place in the modern world.

Two of the most noteworthy proponents of vernacular literature were Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 and Hu Shi 胡适. Chen Duxiu founded the periodical Xin Qingnian 新青年 (New Youth) in 1915 upon his return from studying in Japan. It called upon the youth of China to question traditional cultural values and to devise a new culture to replace them. It offered translations of European literature as examples of the sort of writing to which Chinese authors should aspire. The January 1, 1917 issue of New Youth carried an article by Hu Shi, then studying in the United States, in which he outlined principles for a new Chinese literature to be based on the vernacular language, which he regarded as the only suitable medium for a living literature. Chen Duxiu agreed, and the next issue of New Youth carried an article in which he called for nothing short of a literary revolution, the three guiding principles of which would be:

(1) To overthrow the painted, powdered, and obsequious literature of the aristocratic few, and to create the plain, simple, and expressive literature of the people;

(2) To overthrow the stereotyped and overornamental literature of classicism, and to create the fresh and sincere literature of realism; and

(3) To overthrow the pedantic, unintelligible, and obscurantist literature of the hermit and recluse, and to create the plain-speaking and popular literature of society in general.3

These two articles are regarded as marking the beginning of modern Chinese vernacular literature. From 1917 on, the movement for a new literature gathered momentum, and it received a new impetus after the May Fourth Incident of 1919. This was a student demonstration in Peking, protesting the Treaty of
Versailles which allowed Japan to retain control of the German territories in Shandong 山东 which it had seized when it entered the First World War on the side of the Allies. The intellectual ferment which resulted from the May Fourth Incident developed into a movement which encompassed demands for a wide range of social, political and cultural reforms, just one of which was the establishment of the vernacular language as the sole medium of written expression. In 1920 the Chinese Ministry of Education finally ordered that the classical literary language be replaced with the vernacular in primary schools, and by 1921 this had spread to the higher levels of education as well. This period of Chinese history is referred to as the May Fourth period, and the writers of the 1920's and 1930's who were striving to establish a new literature in the vernacular are generally known as May Fourth writers, even though the movement for a new literature is deemed to have been started in 1917.

This movement and the wider-ranging May Fourth Movement were based in Peking, where Zhu Ziqing was a student at the time. He took a keen interest in the movement to establish a new vernacular literature, and was one of the founders of the Xinchao 新潮 magazine (New Tide) which was first published on January 1, 1919 by a group of students at Peking University. As already stated, initially he concentrated on writing vernacular poetry, but by the mid-1920's he had switched to writing prose. At this time modern Chinese vernacular literature was still in the earliest throes of its development, and while one cannot claim that Zhu Ziqing was a guiding light in the literary revolution of the May Fourth era, it is true that his lucid and readable prose caught the attention of his contemporaries. Chen Duxiu had called for the overthrow of "pedantic, unintelligible and obscurantist" literature. Zhu
Ziqing was seen by many of his fellows to provide a model for the achievement of that aim.
ZHU ZIQING'S FICTION

Zhu Ziqing's earliest prose took the form of the short story, and was produced while he was still active as a poet. After his first essay was published and met with great critical acclaim, Zhu Ziqing all but abandoned the poem and short story to seize the essay as his medium of literary expression. Before this watershed in his literary career he produced only two short stories, "Bie" ("Parting") and "Xiao de lishi" ("A History of Laughter"). Zhu Ziqing himself claimed that these were the only short stories he wrote, although he conceded that two pieces included in Belying, a collection of essays published in 1929, may be mistaken for short stories. It is clear that one of the texts Zhu Ziqing had in mind was "A He", but the other is so well camouflaged as an essay that I have been unable to discern which one it is. Even if Zhu Ziqing's fiction comprises a mere two short stories and one text of uncertain genre which he liked to think was an essay, it is worth examining as the precursor to the essays on which his reputation is based.

"Parting," written in 1921, dealt with the relationship between a married couple, forced by circumstances to live apart. "A History of Laughter" was written in 1923 and gave a vivid portrayal of the life of a daughter-in-law in a traditional Chinese household of the scholar-official class. His final short story, "A-He", dealt with a scholar's concern for the welfare of a young servant woman, trapped in an unhappy marriage. It was written in 1926. The most striking feature of Zhu Ziqing's fiction is its strong autobiographical nature. The first two stories are obviously inspired by the relationship between Zhu Ziqing and his first wife Wu Zhongqian, or Zhongqian. In "A-He" the
narrator is a scholar who we can assume is a thinly-disguised Zhu Ziqing, an assumption which is reinforced by the author's claim that this short story is really an essay.

The fact that Zhu Ziqing's fiction deals with themes arising from his own experience implies that he had difficulty empathising with people of a different social background from his own and was unable to bring their experiences to life in prose. His short stories show that he was better able to give insight into the Chinese society of his day by drawing on his own experience and that of those closest to him. This can be gauged by the contrast between the main female characters in "A History of Laughter" and "A-He." In "A History of Laughter" the narrator is a woman who describes her life as a daughter-in-law in a scholar-official household. We learn about her experiences and how she reacts to them, and we come to know different facets of her character. In "A-He" the character of the servant after whom the story is named is not nearly so well defined. We are told that she is eighteen years old, intelligent and attractive. We learn nothing about her feelings or the way she thinks, since she is always seen from a distance. The only time she addresses the narrator directly nothing of consequence is said and we gain no insight into her character. In this story it is the first person narrator whose character is explored, and the narrator is Zhu Ziqing. In "A History of Laughter" it is also the first person narrator's character which is explored in depth and this time the narrator is Zhu Ziqing's wife, Wu Zhongqian.

Even if Zhu Ziqing's fiction is limited somewhat by being so closely linked to his personal experience, his short stories are not without merit. They give a view of the social forces working against individuals in the
society of the day, and they show Zhu Ziqing's technical versatility, each story being quite different in style and structure. The best of the three stories is "A History of Laughter," whose inclusion in the Yale University textbook *Readings in Contemporary Chinese Literature* makes it the work through which many students of modern Chinese Literature are introduced to Zhu Ziqing. Since it is the best of his short stories I propose to examine it in some detail and conclude with a brief comparison of the three works.

"A History of Laughter" takes the form of a monologue. It is narrated by a woman as if talking to her husband, in whose position the reader is placed. The woman tells how, as a child, she loved to laugh and was free to do so. Later, she is chided for being unladylike in her laughter, and as a young bride her laughter causes friction with her in-laws, who regard it as improper and sometimes misconstrue it as insulting. Finally, her role as daughter-in-law in a well-to-do family fallen on hard times wears her down to the extent that she is no longer capable of laughing. This, then, is the history of laughter alluded to in the title. Not a catalogue of mirth through the ages, but an account of the stages in a woman's transition from care-free daughter to care-worn daughter-in-law.

The opening paragraph of the story consists of a single sentence: "You ask why I don't like to laugh any more, but how could I bring myself to laugh now?" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.12). Thus is the sombre tone of the story established from the outset. We are left in no doubt that the history of laughter which is about to be recounted will not be a happy one. The rhetorical question catches the reader's attention and is emphasised by standing in a paragraph of its own. The first word in the story is "you" and the reader's involvement in
the story is established immediately. As has already been mentioned, the reader is placed in the position of the narrator's husband. This involvement of the reader in the narrative reinforces the realism of the story.

The succeeding paragraphs deal with the woman's development from childhood to her mid-twenties, where the story ends. The theme of her declining ability to laugh is always present and even overstated, but despite that it remains a useful way of focusing our attention on the steady worsening of the woman's situation. Her childhood is dealt with in the second paragraph. We are told that she laughed a lot from her earliest infancy and that her mother in particular always liked to hear her laugh. Zhu Ziqing avoids any implication that this was a golden age unsullied by hardship. Rather, the narrator's happy disposition is portrayed as cheering her parents and bringing a welcome relief when things are going badly. The first sign of the social forces which will work against the narrator for the rest of the story comes at the end of this paragraph. By this time she is in her teens and her mother has died. This loss has left her less inclined to laugh than she was before, but even so, she is judged to laugh too readily and is admonished by her relatives: "... girls should be more refined, laughing is ill-mannered"...姑娘家要斯文些, 笑是没规矩的。(Zhu Ziqing Wenji, v.1, p.13).

The rest of the story covers some seven years of the woman's life, starting with a marriage which we can assume was not of her own choosing: "When first I came into your household, everywhere I looked there were strangers! Even you were a stranger!"初到你家的时候, 满眼都是生人! 便是你也是个生人! (ibid.). During these seven years, the social constraints on a young married woman, her position in her husband's extended
family and her relationship with its members all conspire to deprive her of
the happiness she used to enjoy. This is a relentless process which builds up
gradually from small beginnings.

At first, there is no more than a temporary anxiety, to be expected when
adapting to new surroundings: "I was like a solitary spirit ... I sometimes
felt frightened, afraid that I would say or do something wrong" 我孤寂似
我时时觉得害怕, 怕说错了话, 行错了事 (ibid.). As her new
surroundings become more familiar, she relaxes and lapses into her old failing
of uninhibited laughter. "However, your family after all wasn't my family,
after the first month my laughter had made people quite unhappy" 可是你家究竟
不是我家, 满月之后, 我的笑就有人很不高兴 了 (Zhu Ziqing
wenji, v.1, p.14). She soon learns that, quite apart from being considered
unladylike, her laughter can even arouse enmity when members of the household
believe it is directed at them. For example, the father-in-law's concubine
takes offence early on and her animosity builds up over time.

However, the most important person with whom the new bride has to deal is
her mother-in-law. The traditional Chinese family ideally held three genera-
tions under one roof: the husband and wife of the senior generation, their
sons, unmarried daughters and sons' wives, and finally the grandchildren. The
mother ran the household and expected obedience from her daughters-in-law.
This story gives a vivid portrayal of the relationship between mother-in-law
and daughter-in-law.

Initially, the mother-in-law is shown exercising her authority with tact
and fairness within the social constraints which she takes for granted:
laughing is unladylike and her daughter-in-law's conduct reflects poorly on
the entire household. Her admonition is couched in conciliatory language:
"It's also hard to blame you, your mother died early and your father didn't pay attention to these things ... You are in my household and I regard you as my own daughter; that's why I'm giving you special advice" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.15). As time goes by, the mother-in-law's attitude changes. Ultimately, she hates her daughter-in-law, not for anything she has done, but rather because the young woman's position in the household makes her a convenient scapegoat for the mother-in-law's anger. When the household's financial situation declines, the mother-in-law is bad-tempered with everyone, but the narrator tells us: "Naturally, being of a younger generation and from outside the family, I was even less fortunate!" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.19). The mother-in-law's disappointment at her son's failure to send his entire salary home is translated into hatred of his wife: "... it wasn't my fault but since she wasn't happy with you, naturally she was even less happy with me ... Now she seemed gradually to have come to hate me!" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.20). Finally, a quarrel with her son leads the mother-in-law to blame her daughter-in-law for every misfortune that has befallen the household. She complains to her husband: "Ever since she came in the door, you haven't had a decent posting and the family's situation has grown worse day by day!" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.19). By this point everyone in the household follows the mother-in-law's example and constantly finds fault with the narrator.

In this story, Zhu Ziqing captures the isolation of the daughter-in-law.
in the traditional Chinese household, the "natural" scapegoat for the other family members because of her junior status and her position as an outsider. This isolation is compounded by the fact that the members of the family she was born into no longer regard her as one of their own. On her first visit home after her marriage she is surprised to find herself treated like a guest. Later on she discovers that in the eyes of her own relatives her identity is merged with that of her husband's family as a whole. When her father-in-law loses his job and the household falls on hard times, her relatives look down on her. "At that time my relatives' attitude towards me had also changed gradually ... who would have thought my own relatives could also be snobbish? ... they seemed to look down on me ... they all knew our household had become poor, that was the reason" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.18).

Similarly, when her husband lands his first job her own relatives tell her she can finally hold her head up. Her status derives from her husband and his family. She as an individual has nothing to do with it.

This powerlessness is the most noticeable feature of her life after her marriage, and it is manifested at the very beginning in the fact that she has no say in the choice of a husband. Once in the new household she has to suppress her true nature in order to conform to the stereotype of refined womanhood expected by her in-laws and society at large. Finally, her junior position in the household leaves her the most convenient scapegoat for all its misfortunes. Her role as a woman ties her to the home. With her husband working in another city without the means to support his wife and children, she is economically dependent on her in-laws and has no choice but to endure
the mental anguish inflicted on her. When her husband quarrels with his mother, he is able to leave in a huff. His wife enjoys no such privilege. She complains early in the story that men are free to travel and to make friends outside the home, while women are virtual prisoners in the household. This is certainly borne out by the incident just referred to. The man is free to leave when he tires of his mother's bickering. His wife is left with no escape and is even blamed for inciting him to go.

The story ends with the woman in her mid-twenties, the mother of two children who not only have broken her health but whose childish shortcomings provide members of the family with new excuses to put blame on her. Her misery is at its most intense and the story ends, as it began, with a paragraph composed of a single sentence: "Good one, good one, could you let me laugh just a few more times as casually and as joyously as I was able to when Mother was alive?" ? (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.24). The narrator takes her leave on a note of despair. Powerless to take her fate into her own hands, the woman can only plead with her husband to find the means to release her, if only temporarily, from the misery which circumstance has imposed on her. The sombre first and last sentences of the story, standing as paragraphs of their own, form a frame around the story which emphasizes the narrator's feelings of imprisonment and despair.

"A History of Laughter" succeeds in giving a realistic portrayal of the life of a young woman in China in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Certainly, she is atypical in being a member of a scholar-official household, but her story still tells us much about the role of women in the Chinese society of the day. The daughter-in-law/mother-in-law relationship, the lack
of an identity distinct from that of her husband and his extended family, her low position in the family hierarchy, the alienation from the family into which she was born, all are reflections of the society at large rather than of the scholar-official class in particular.

The story offers a scathing indictment of the traditional Chinese extended family by revealing the destructive forces brought to bear against its weakest members. The narrator may be accused of wallowing in self-pity without doing anything to try to improve her lot, but I feel that the story makes plain the strength of the social forces conspiring to keep her in check. Zhu Ziqing is more concerned with exposing an ailment than proposing a cure, but the story does imply that the nuclear family would offer the narrator a greater chance of fulfilment. At one point the narrator laments that her husband is still unable to afford to support her and their children outside of his parents' home, a prospect which she would obviously welcome. Throughout the story there is the implication that the husband's long absences studying or working in other cities contribute to his wife's vulnerability at the hands of other family members. The husband is not idealised, however. He is the first to object to his wife's uninhibited laughter, and later in the story he loses his temper with her when she stops him from hitting one of the children. There is also the implication that his frequent absences lead him to ignore the extent of his wife's unhappiness. Nevertheless, he is portrayed as her only natural ally, and it is to him that her plea for a respite from her suffering is directed in the last sentence of the story.

A husband and wife are also the central figures in "Parting," Zhu Ziqing's first short story. In this story the theme is the separation of a married couple, a theme which is also prominent in "A History of Laughter."
However, the structure of the two stories is quite different. "Parting" is narrated in the third person, and the focus of attention is on the husband. The story is much shorter than "A History of Laughter," as is the time-span it covers. There is much more description in "Parting" than in "A History of Laughter," and this slows down the pace of the story. Indeed, the wordiness of some of the description is a flaw which Zhu Ziqing recognised himself. In the preface to his collection of essays, Belying, he compared the flow of the narrative in "Parting" to the gait of a cripple, and said that the sentences were too wordy and slow in getting to the point. He may have overstated the case slightly, but it is true that the story contains a lot of description and explanation which could just as well have been omitted. On the positive side, the story does succeed in giving a lively portrayal of the couple and how they feel at being forced to part.

This story shares with "A History of Laughter" the implication that the nuclear family provides the most fulfilling lifestyle. The husband is working away from home, and his wife and child are living with his parents. Unexpectedly, he receives word that the situation at home is bad and that as a result his wife and child will have to come and live with him. He feels that this is something of an imposition at first, but after they arrive it becomes apparent that they are all happier together. Zhu Ziqing makes no direct attacks on the traditional extended family in "Parting" but it is interesting to note the reason for the wife and child having to return to the parents' home after a year. This decision is prompted by the imminent birth of their second child, which will entail an insupportable financial burden unless the wife returns to the parents' home. This financial burden will be the result of having to bring the husband's mother to stay with them during the wife's
confinement. Although the husband calculates that they can manage without his mother's presence, he does not have the nerve to tell her so. It is a measure of the tyranny exercised by the doctrine of filial piety that a grown man cannot tell his mother that he cannot afford to bring her to help at the birth of a grandchild, and that rather than face up to her he prefers to send his wife home, even though he would rather they stayed together.

Zhu Ziqing's final short story, "A-He," differs from the other two in that it does not deal with the relationship between members of the same family. Like "A History of Laughter" it is narrated in the first person, but this time the narrator is a man. He tells of spending his winter holidays with some relatives at their villa in the countryside, and describes the interest which he develops in A-He, an eighteen-year-old girl whom his relatives hire as a servant. Although she gives her name to the story, she is not the main character. As in "A History of Laughter" that role is filled by the narrator. The mistake of ponderous description and explanation which Zhu Ziqing made in "Parting" is not repeated in "A-He." Here, the descriptive passages enhance the narrative. However, Zhu Ziqing does make a mistake in failing to develop fully his narrator's interest in A-He. The story remains consistent up to a point, and then it seems to shy away and change direction. The narrator's interest in A-He has been deepening, although he has kept his distance. A-He is married to a brute of a man and wants a divorce. Her employers, not wishing to become involved in her problems, dismiss her a couple of days before the narrator is due to leave. This is where the change in direction comes. The narrator returns to his university and two new characters are introduced gratuitously. He consults these friends for advice on how best to help A-He and, since neither of them has a clue either, he can
be absolved from taking any action. When he returns to visit his relatives at the spring holiday, he learns that A-He's husband has agreed to release her from her marriage if her father pays him eighty yuan. The narrator sends a donation to the good cause, but that is the extent of his involvement. Soon after, he learns that A-He has married a merchant and is doing very well for herself. This is not the story of a relationship, since the narrator admires A-He from a distance and there is no indication that she is interested in him. As an examination of the narrator's feelings it falls down because he never has to come to terms with them. The object of his affection is snatched away by good fortune and all he need do is carry on as before.

What these three stories have in common is the presence of Zhu Ziqing himself. In "Parting" the male character is a scholar working away from home. The husband's long absences studying or working are prominent in "A History of Laughter," and the narrator in "A-He" is also a scholar. There can be no doubt that these characters are based on Zhu Ziqing. The close links between Zhu Ziqing's fiction and his personal experience have already been remarked upon. Nowhere is this more apparent than in "A History of Laughter," which tells the story of Zhu Ziqing's first wife Wu Zhongqian. The fact that the narrator of the story is Wu Zhongqian can be demonstrated by the many parallels between the Zhu household and the family described in the story. The facts that the marriage was arranged by the parents, that the husband left for university soon after, that in the following years he was usually absent from his parents' home where his wife remained, that the father lost his civil service posting in the same year that the grandmother died, are all parallel occurrences in the Zhu family and the family in the story.

This does not reduce the worth of "A History of Laughter" as a piece of
prose. It remains a skilful and vivid portrait of a traditional Chinese family and its effect on its least privileged member. Similarly, the flaws of the other two stories have nothing to do with the extent to which they are based on the author's own experience. What the intrusion of the author's experience does seem to demonstrate is an inability to empathise with people of a completely different background from his own and to make them come to life in prose. I think this gives a clue as to why he wrote so little fiction, and why he espoused the essay so wholeheartedly as his preferred medium of literary expression. It is to his essays, then, that we will turn our attention in the ensuing chapters of this thesis.
Zhu Ziqing's essay-writing spanned more than twenty years, with his first essay appearing in 1923. Most of his essays were written in the 1920's and 1930's, after which time his academic endeavours took precedence over creative writing. The subjects on which he chose to expound were many and varied, but most of his essays can be divided into four categories: 1) lyric description; 2) examination of personal relationships, especially within the family; 3) social criticism; and 4) accounts of his travels. Zhu Ziqing had served a long apprenticeship as a poet before turning his hand to writing essays, so it comes as no surprise that his first few essays fall into the category of lyric description.

"Jiangsheng-dengying li de Qinhuihe" ("The Sound of Oars on the Lamplit Qinhui River") was published in Xiaoshuo yuebao in November, 1923. It met with great critical acclaim, and this rapid success prompted Zhu Ziqing to begin channelling his literary energies away from poetry and into the genre of the essay. In his book Zhu Ziqing yanjiu, Zhou Jin states that Zhu Ziqing's success as a poet was hard-won, coming after years of practice. He then goes on to say:

As far as his essays were concerned, it was quite different, it seemed as if he had great success as soon as his pen touched the paper ... His essays ... in the manner of genius rocked the literary circles of the day as soon as they appeared ...

(Zhu Ziqing yanjiu, p.127)
The success of "The Sound of Oars on the Lamplit Qinhuai River" can be gauged by the opinion of Zhou Zuoren 周作人 that it was "a model for artistic writing in the vernacular" 白话美学文的模范 (Zhu Ziqing yanjiu, p.128).

Zhu Ziqing continued to write essays of lyric description. "Wenzhou de zongji" 温州的踪迹 ("Traces of Wenzhou"), written in 1924, is a set of four brief essays, the first three of which are lyric prose. Thereafter, Zhu Ziqing turned to other subjects, but lyric description continued to figure among them. At least a dozen of his essays fall into this category. Most of them describe outdoor scenes, but he also tried his hand at describing music, a painting and the coming of spring. His two most highly regarded pieces of lyric prose are "The Sound of Oars on the Lamplit Qinhuai River" and "Hetang yuese" 荷塘月色 ("The Lotus Pool by Moonlight") and I propose to examine them in some detail. To avoid implying that all Zhu Ziqing's lyric prose deals with water at night-time, I shall also examine "Gesheng" 歌声 ("Melodies"), a brief essay dealing with Zhu Ziqing's impressions of a concert he attended.

"The Sound of Oars on the Lamplit Qinhuai River" describes a visit by Zhu Ziqing and his friend, the writer Yu Pingbo 俞平伯, to the Qinhuai River in August, 1923. Apart from being Zhu Ziqing's first essay, it is also one of his longest, running to some 5,200 characters. The essay opens with a brief introductory paragraph of three sentences and then goes on to give a detailed account of the river's appearance and of the human activities which give it its particular character.

The first of these is boating. The author expresses his opinion that the boats on the Qinhuai River are superior to those found at four other recrea-
tional centres in China, including the famous West Lake at Hangzhou. This high praise is followed by a description of the two types of boat characteristic of the Qinhuai River, which leads to a description of the river as viewed from one of these boats at night, in the process touching on allusions to the beauty of the Qinhuai River in classical Chinese literature. One of the details chosen to help recreate the atmosphere of the river is the sound of song, emanating from boats and from the brothels on the riverbank. This introduces the second activity for which the river is noted, prostitution. However, this intrusion by the less salubrious side of the river's character does not immediately dispel the enchantment with the river's nocturnal beauty which the author has expressed so far:

We were well aware that those songs were no more than a few time-worn words produced mechanically by an unmelodious voice, but when they traversed the rippling breeze of the summer night and the lapping of the waves to linger by our ears, they were no longer merely their (i.e.: the prostitutes') songs but were mingled with the secret of the breeze and the riverwater.

我们明知那些歌声,只是些因袭的言词,从生涩的歌喉里机械的发出来的,但它们经过了夏夜的微风的吹漾和水波的摇拂,袅娜着到我们耳边的时候,已经不单是她们的歌声,而混着微风和河水的蜜语了。

(Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.130)

As the journey down the river continues, landmarks are described and we are made aware of the river's changing aspect; at times bustling with activity amid the lights of the boats, and at others lonely and desolate. About half way through the essay, the author's attention is diverted from the scenery. Prostitutes who make a living from singing ply their trade from boats on the river, and such a boat draws alongside the boat hired by Zhu Ziqing and his
friend. We are given a detailed account of this encounter and its emotional impact on the author. When a man boards their boat with songbook in hand in the hope of drumming up some business, Zhu Ziqing's discomfiture is caused by thoughts of what other people are thinking: "As he stepped across, many a gaze seemed to follow him onto our boat." This discomfiture is made apparent in the way the author handles the intrusion. He tries to glance nonchalantly at the prostitutes but does not quite succeed, and when the songbook is thrust into his hands and he is invited to select a few songs, he is so flustered that he leafs through the book hurriedly and hardly makes out any of the writing. He stutters that they are not interested and his friend concurs in a rather more resolute tone. Finally, the intruder leaves, "seemingly with some disdain ..."

Zhu Ziqing succeeds in giving a vivid account of the incident and the tension it causes, which is heightened by the fact that it is preceded by a tranquil scene of trees along the riverbank and their beauty against the moonlit sky. Unfortunately, in parts of the essay Zhu Ziqing is needlessly explicit. The encounter with the prostitutes is followed by a long passage of self-examination which becomes rather tedious. Although his account of his actions has already shown that the fear of public disapproval was of importance in his decision not to be serenaded by the ladies of the night, he feels the need to tell the reader directly. He says he bowed to moral pressure, although he felt sorry for the women and it probably would have done no harm to listen to them. He decries his own selfishness and praises his friend Yu Pingbo, whose motives for refusing were more noble. He respected the women, and felt that to listen to them singing would be to subject them to
indignity. All this could have been expressed in rather less than the 800 or so characters which Zhu Ziqing devotes to the task.

The paragraph which follows and which concludes the essay is of similar length, but it is much more expressive. The thread of description which was dropped before the previous paragraph is picked up again as Zhu Ziqing recounts the return journey down the river. They have been accosted twice more in the manner previously described and the author's unease has increased. However, their return is not prompted by a flight of agitation. Rather, it is the boatman's desire to pick up another fare which leads him to suggest to his passengers that they might like to return, and they "agree, not caring one way or another" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.136). This loss of interest in their outing is not maintained, however, and they are affected by their changing surroundings on their way back down the river. Zhu Ziqing weaves a complex tapestry of sights, sounds and emotions. The interplay between darkness and light is explored anew, and the darkness takes on a sinister quality which was absent in the early part of the essay. A larger boat carrying prostitutes passes and is described as "pitch-black without any trace of light" (ibid.), and when they pass under a bridge it is "as if the darkness had opened a gigantic mouth and wanted to gulp down our boat" (ibid.). Yet, where earlier it was the author's enchantment with the river which transformed the mechanical and tuneless songs of the prostitutes, here the beautiful singing of a woman on the passing boat causes the author and his friend to "listen attentively and with yearning" (ibid.). The author begins to recapture the dream-like quality which characterised the early stages of their journey; but the journey ends all too
soon, and they are left with the feeling of an enchantment having dissolved.

This essay succeeds in giving a lively and multi-faceted portrayal of the Qinhuai River at night. Zhu Ziqing's apprenticeship as a poet has armed him with an extensive vocabulary which stands him in good stead in describing various types of light and darkness and in creating different moods, bringing his experience of the Qinhuai River to life. Unfortunately, he does spend too long making explicit the reactions of himself and his friend to their encounter with the prostitutes, which adds very little to the essay. Despite that, the essay is a creditable piece of lyric prose, the more so when one bears in mind that it represents the author's first foray into the genre of the essay. According to Zhou Jin, "In the early days of vernacular literature, to be able to write like this was rare indeed" (Zhu Ziqing yanjiu, p.129). In their book on the history of modern Chinese literature, Tian Zhongji and Sun Changxi describe "The Sound of Oars on the Lamplit Qinhuai River" as turning the sights and sounds of the Qinhuai River into "an enchanting painting" (Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shi, p.96).

This essay was mainly concerned with describing scenery, but it also contained an expression of sympathy with song-girls, subjected to humiliation and harm, and demonstrated his feeling of deep affection for the labouring people.

This invests Zhu Ziqing's ambivalent reaction to his encounter with the song-girls with a sense of purpose which I believe it lacks. The element of social criticism in this essay is quite insignificant, and its success lies
exclusively with Zhu Ziqing's ability to create an "enchanted painting" with words.

Another of Zhu Ziqing's highly-regarded pieces of lyric prose is "The Lotus Pool by Moonlight." Written in 1927, it shares with "The Sound of Oars on the Lamplit Qinhuai River" the depiction of a night scene involving water and the expression of a feeling of unease. It is much less wordy, however, a mere 1,200 characters to the earlier essay's 5,200. Rather than try to capture an expansive scene and an array of emotions, it concentrates its efforts on the vivid portrayal of one scene and one emotion. Written while the author was an instructor at Qinghua University in Peking, the essay describes the author's frame of mind during a stroll around the lotus pool on the Qinghua campus one summer night.

The author's frame of mind is introduced in the first line of the essay: "These few days I have been feeling quite unsettled" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.182). This unsettled feeling is highlighted by the fact that everything around is peaceful:

The moon had gradually risen high; outside the wall the laughter of children in the street was already no longer heard; inside the house my wife was patting Run-er and quietly humming a lullaby.

The silence which has descended on the street with the children no longer at play, and the quiet lullaby from within the house contrast with the author's unsettled feeling and bring it more vividly to our attention.

As a way of diverting himself, the author decides to go for a walk by the lotus pool. The first thing he describes is the path skirting the pool, and
he manages to convey an intense feeling of solitude and calm. He points out that it is a secluded pathway, little frequented during the day, so naturally it is even more lonely at night. This seclusion is emphasised by referring to the trees which grow thickly along the pathway and by noting that on moonless nights the path is so dark and gloomy that it is even a little frightening. To avoid introducing a sinister tone, the author adds that on this occasion there is nothing frightening about it, despite the paleness of the moonlight. The seclusion is perceived in a positive way, being seen to afford a certain kind of freedom:

On the path there was only myself, pacing with my hands behind my back. This piece of heaven and earth seemed to be mine ... tonight, a person under this pale moon could think anything at all, or not think anything at all, and feel like a free person. Things which in the daytime would definitely have to be done, and words which would definitely have to be spoken, could all be disregarded now.

After this, the author proceeds to a description of the lotus pool itself. This description is divided into three paragraphs, the first of which depicts the surface of the pool. The most striking feature of the pool is the expanse of lotus leaves which covers it, stretching high above the surface of the water, dotted here and there with white lotus blossoms. The next paragraph deals with the quality of the moonlight and the appearance it lends to the pool, and the third paragraph describes the trees which crowd densely around it. This paragraph also returns our attention to the author's frame of mind, closing with: "At this time the liveliest things have to be the sounds
of cicadas on the trees and of frogs in the water; but the liveliness was theirs, I had none at all. The association of liveliness with the lotus pool leads the author to think of the ancient custom of gathering the lotus blossoms, which used to be important in southern China. He quotes classical references to this activity, and thinking of this makes him homesick for the south. This may have been the source of his unease at the beginning of the essay, and if so the essay has come full circle:

This finally led me to keep thinking about the south. I was thinking like this when suddenly I raised my head, and without having noticed, I was already in front of my own door; I gently pushed the door and entered, there was no sound at all, my wife had already been fast asleep for a long time.

(Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.184)

In "The Lotus Pool by Moonlight" Zhu Ziqing skilfully paints a picture of complete tranquility and natural beauty which stands in stark contrast to his troubled frame of mind. This contrast gives emphasis to his emotional state. The essay is concise and well-structured, the description vivid and expressive. I consider this the best of Zhu Ziqing's lyric essays.

Before moving on to consider Zhu Ziqing's essays concerning personal relationships, I shall examine briefly another of Zhu Ziqing's lyric essays in order to demonstrate that the similarities between "The Sound of Oars on the Lamplit Qinhuai River" and "The Lotus Pool by Moonlight" do not extend to all of Zhu Ziqing's lyric description. "Melodies" is included in an anthology of
Zhu Ziqing's works published in Hong Kong. There is no indication as to when it was written, but it is representative of many of Zhu Ziqing's lyric essays, being very brief and limiting itself to the portrayal of one subject. In this case, it is the effect which a certain concert had on the author. Similar essays include "Baishuiji" which describes a waterfall, and "Yue menglong, niao menglong, lianjuan haitang hong" which describes a painting.

"Melodies" consists of five paragraphs, but the whole essay is no more than 400 characters long. The first paragraph is made up of a single sentence, in which the author states that he was enchanted by three pieces of music at a concert which he attended the previous evening. The next three paragraphs represent the three pieces which he found so moving. The first appeals to his sense of touch, and he describes the sensation of light drizzle and gentle breeze on a spring morning. The second appeals to his sight, and he imagines a garden full of bright flowers; while the third appeals to his sense of smell, evoking the fragrance of the flowers, the smell of damp earth as well as other smells carried on the breeze from outside the garden. These are from newly transplanted rice, young grain and the new foliage of willow trees, all of which the author concedes are not delicate fragrances but which nonetheless were stimulating to his sense of smell. These three paragraphs combine to provide a picture of freshness and vigour, depicting the sensations, sights and smells of a spring morning. Nowhere is there any mention of sound or of the music until the final paragraph of the essay states that these impressions of springtime were contained in the music referred to in the first paragraph.
In this essay, Zhu Ziqing gives a vivid representation of the evocative power of music, without describing the sound of the music itself or any sounds associated with the scene it creates in his imagination. This novel way of depicting music bears witness to Zhu Ziqing's capacity for imaginative and expressive descriptive writing. The examples examined in this chapter demonstrate Zhu Ziqing's versatility in lyric description, from the vast and expansive canvas of "The Sound of Oars on the Qinhuai River by Lamplight" to the cameo portrait of "Melodies." Although his reputation as an essayist is based largely on his lyric essays, his best-known essay falls into the category of those which examine personal relationships. It is to these that we will turn our attention in the next chapter.
TREATMENT OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The theme of personal relationships is one to which Zhu Ziqing turns his attention in many of his essays. His best-known essay, "Beiying" 背影, deals with the relationship between a father and his adult son, and many of Zhu Ziqing's essays deal with the relationships between family members. Since he seems to have been particularly interested in this, we shall examine three of these essays in some detail. Most of Zhu Ziqing's writings on friendship are eulogies to deceased friends. It is his writings on family relationships which reveal most about his own character and his ideas of how people treat each other and how they ought to behave.

Zhu Ziqing's earliest treatment of personal relationships came in his short stories, which have already been dealt with in an earlier chapter. His first essays comprised lyric description and social criticism, but the publication of the prose anthology Beiying in 1929 saw a return to the theme of personal relationships, most notably in the essays "Beiying" and "Ernü" 儿女 ("Sons and Daughters"). The anthology Ni-wó 你我 (You and I), published in 1936, also contains essays in this category.

In the short stories "Parting" and "A History of Laughter" Zhu Ziqing examines a husband and wife relationship and the relationship between a woman and her in-laws. Both these stories are closely linked to the experience of Zhu Ziqing and his first wife, Wu Zhongqian. In his essays Zhu Ziqing continues to examine his own family life. In "Sons and Daughters" he describes his relationship with his young children. In "Gei wangfu" 给亡妇 ("To My Late Wife"), taking the form of a letter to Wu Zhongqian three years after her death at the age of thirty-two, Zhu Ziqing describes his feelings
towards her and paints a vivid portrait of her as a devoted mother and wife, whose early death was due in no small part to her exertions on behalf of her family. Wu Zhongqian also figures in "Ze ou ji" 择偶记 ("The Story of Choosing a Bride"), which like the short story "A History of Laughter" is critical of the traditional Chinese family's treatment of women. Although Wu Zhongqian figures prominently in her husband's short stories and essays dealing with personal relationships, it is Zhu Ziqing's relationship with his father which inspired his most famous essay.

Popularly regarded as Zhu Ziqing's best piece of prose, "Beiying" was written in October, 1927. Published one year later in the prose anthology of the same name, it struck a responsive chord in devotees of filial piety which ensured it enduring popularity. To this day, "Beiying" is included in the curriculum of most schools in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In the People's Republic its reputation endures despite the conventional Marxist dismissal of its "petty bourgeois intellectual's sentimentality."

The essay can be examined in three sections. The first of these, consisting of the first five sentences, sets the scene. We are told that the author's most lasting memory is of his father's beiying 背影, his figure as seen from behind. We are taken back to one winter when the author and his father both returned home for the funeral of his father's mother, and learn that the family's sorrows are compounded by the loss of the father's official post and income.

The second section of the essay consists of the next three paragraphs which deal in detail with the episode which gives rise to the author's lasting memory of his father alluded to above. Father and son travel to Nanking, where the father is to seek employment and the son will catch the train to
return to his studies in Peking. The important episode is their parting at the railway station. It is here that the father's love for his son becomes apparent. It becomes apparent without the father stating it, and it is only with hindsight that the son shows himself to be fully aware of it.

We see the father through the son's eyes, and the son begins by finding fault. When the father haggles with the baggage porters over the cost of their services, the son tells us: At that time I was really oversmart, I always felt that he did not speak very eloquently and I had to chip in myself" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.161). Once they get in the train, the father chooses a seat for the son, helps him get settled and gives him such unnecessary advice as: "Be careful on the road, sleep with one eye open, and don't catch cold" (ibid.). He also enjoins the attendant in the train to look after the son, who all this time is thinking: "In my heart I snickered at his pedantry and old-fashioned notions ... And at my age! Surely I was not incapable of looking after myself?" (ibid.). In this episode Zhu Ziqing gives an accurate portrayal of a father and son relationship, showing us the father still seeing the child in the young man, who at twenty years of age feels he is much too old to be treated so protectively. The author interjecting, "Ah! Now that I think about it, at that time I really was oversmart!" (ibid.) shows how hindsight has permitted him to see his father's actions as the expression of affection, rather than as unwarranted interference and a belittling refusal to acknowledge the son's adulthood.

After this the beiying which has made such an impression on the author is
described. The father decides to go and buy some tangerines for the son. As this means getting down from the platform, crossing the railroad tracks and mounting the platform opposite, it entails a certain amount of exertion on the part of the father, who is rather overweight. Refusing his son's offer to go instead, the father's exertions are described in some detail and the author tells us: "At this point I watched his outline from behind and my tears quickly flowed down." 那时我看见他的背影, 我的泪很快地流下来了。 (ibid.). Then reinforcing the realism of the narrative, he adds: "I quickly wiped the tears dry, afraid that he would see, or that anyone else would see" 我赶紧拭干了泪, 怕他看见, 也怕别人看见 (ibid.). The father's painful progress back, hampered as he is by having an armful of tangerines to contend with, is then carefully described. Father and son sit in silence for a while and then the father leaves, reminding the son to write. The author describes his emotions watching his father leave: "I waited until his form disappeared into the milling crowd and could no longer be found, then I came in and sat down and my tears came again" 等他的背影混入来来往往的人丛里再找不着了, 我便进来坐下, 我的眼泪又来了 (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.162).

In this section of the essay, we see the son's attitude change from irritation at what he perceives as his father's shortcomings: his pedantry and clinging to outworn rules and ideas, his lengthy haggling with porters over the cost of their services, and his seeming denial of his son's adulthood. This irritation is replaced with a realisation of his father's affection for him, an affection expressed not in fine phrases but in small deeds. In coming to the station to see him off, in choosing a pleasant seat in the train for him, in exerting himself to go and buy some fruit for him to
eat on his journey, the father demonstrates a genuine affection for his son more eloquently than words could express.

The third section of the essay consists of the final paragraph. The events described in the previous section took place years before, and the author explains how the family's fortunes have waned since then and how the father's financial worries have made him irritable and distanced him from his son. At the time of writing, father and son have not met for two years and their separation has allowed old misunderstandings to fade. The son receives a letter from his father, saying his health is fading and death cannot be far away. Reading this, the author recalls the figure of his father as he saw him at the railway station: "... I saw again the back of that corpulent figure clothed in a green cotton gown and a black mandarin jacket" (ibid.) and the essay ends with a sorrowful: "Ah! I don't know when I will be able to see him again!" 唉!我不知何时再能与他相见!(ibid.).

In this essay, Zhu Ziqing expresses his affection for his father and his father's affection for him without stating either openly. He skilfully draws together small details to present a natural picture of a father and son. Their relationship is not perfect and the essay carries a heavy tone of regret, e.g.: "At that time I really was oversmart ..." and "Ah! I don't know when I will be able to see him again!" Zhu Ziqing does not portray himself as a model of filial piety, but those who subscribe to the doctrine of filial piety can take comfort in the fact that the intervening years have brought him to realise the true nature of his father's feelings for him and of his own feelings for his father. Herein lies the source of the essay's popularity. Whatever Marxist critics may say about "petty bourgeois
intellectual's sentimentality," the bond between parents and children is extremely important in Chinese society, be it in the PRC or in the most remote Chinese community abroad. Zhu Ziqing presents a son with whose failings most can identify and whose realisation of the bond between himself and his father most can applaud.

"Beiying" is characteristic of Zhu Ziqing's essays dealing with personal relationships in its refusal to present an idealised picture of human nature. It is ironic that this essay should have earned him the reputation of a devotee of Confucian family values, especially when his other writings are so critical of the traditional Chinese family. His short story "A History of Laughter" springs immediately to mind as an example of Zhu Ziqing's opposition to certain features of traditional family life. It is complemented by the essay "The Story of Choosing a Bride."

Whereas "A History of Laughter" examines the treatment of a young woman after her marriage, "The Story of Choosing a Bride" deals with the process preceding her selection as a suitable mate for the eldest son of the household. In this essay, Zhu Ziqing unmasks a society in which young girls are traded like brood mares. They and their prospective husbands have no say in the matter, and the boy's parents place less importance on temperament and compatibility than on small feet, a large breeding capacity and good bloodlines. Zhu Ziqing uses calm understatement to allow the injustice of the traditional way of choosing a spouse to speak for itself. Rather than being subjected to a tirade against the feudal family system, the reader is presented with the author's recollections of his parents' search for a suitable daughter-in-law, focusing on incidents which show the insensitivity of the traditional system of match-making to the two people most affected by
The author presents his reminiscences without passing judgement, but there can be no doubt as to his feelings on the matter.

The first sentence of the essay demonstrates how marriage was regarded as the concern of the family rather than of the individual: "I was the eldest son and grandson, so the question of a wife was raised by the time I was eleven years old" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.2, p.301). The author goes on to say that at such an early age he paid no attention to the idea of marriage, and that his betrothal was arranged without his noticing. This is emphasised by the fact that whenever a visitor comes from the fiancee's village, the author pays less attention to any news of his future wife than to the food brought by the visitor as a present. This expresses clearly how trivial the choice of a life-long partner seems to a child of eleven.

In the second paragraph the author recalls how the news of his fiancee's death was received when he was twelve years old: "Nobody in the family sighed [for her], probably when they saw her she was still little, so with the passage of time they had no clear idea of what kind of person she was" (ibid.). A daughter-in-law is regarded less as a person than as a commodity essential to the propagation of the family. No time is lost in searching for a replacement.

The author next relates how three more prospective brides fall by the wayside before the woman he finally does marry is chosen, each incident revealing new criteria by which the suitability of a match is judged. One girl is rejected because she is overweight, which places her ability to give birth in doubt. An attempt to arrange a marriage with her half-sister, daughter of their father's concubine, is rebuffed by the girls' family.
Presumably it was more important to marry off the daughter of a wife than the daughter of a concubine. This episode also presents the other side of the coin: the parents of the girl scrutinising a prospective son-in-law. He meets with their approval because he "does not look short-lived" 不是短寿的样子 (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.2, p.302), although having seen him walking they think there may be something wrong with his feet.

The next attempt at obtaining a daughter-in-law seems to be going well. There is even an appraisal of the girl's character; clever and vivacious. More to the point, her father is an even lower-ranking official than the boy's father, which seems to have been desirable from the point of view of the boy's family. The matter is within a hair's breadth of being settled when the boy's mother discovers that the girl is adopted. That puts an end to it. It is no good having a clever and vivacious daughter-in-law from a family of acceptable rank if her bloodlines cannot be confirmed!

Finally, a suitable daughter-in-law is found and married into the family. "This time the report was not bad, except that her feet were a little large" 这回报告不好, 说就是脚大些 (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.2, p.303). The prospective in-laws request that the girl's feet be bound before the marriage takes place. When it turns out that this has not been done, there is some unpleasantness but the marriage still goes ahead. The essay ends with this squabble over the size of the bride's feet.

This essay reveals those criteria uppermost in the minds of parents looking for a suitable daughter-in-law. The main concern is that she be good breeding-stock; of acceptable parentage herself and capable of bearing many children. That the son should like her and she him is of no importance whatever. In none of the cases described in the essay do the intended partners
meet each other. The object of the exercise is not to select a life-long companion for an individual so much as a vehicle for the propagation of the family. Without resorting to strident denunciation, this essay succeeds in bringing home to the reader the insensitivity of the traditional system of arranging marriages to the very people who must endure its consequences, the bride and groom.

In "Sons and Daughters" Zhu Ziqing directs our attention to the aftermath of the process described above, that is to the raising of the children which marriage is intended to produce. This essay falls into two sections; a description of the author's relationship with his children up to the time the essay was written, and an expression of his thoughts on how children ought to be raised in general and of his hopes of putting these into practice in what remains of his offspring's childhood.

The author is frank in presenting his inadequacies as a father: "I am a selfish person through and through; as a husband I am already inadequate, as a father I am even less accomplished" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.197). He notes wistfully that another author has pointed out that many of the world's greatest personages were unmarried, and Zhu Ziqing regrets that by the time he was aware of the lack of freedom which marriage would bring, his marriage had already been arranged by his parents.

Zhu Ziqing's account of life with the five children which his marriage had produced by the time the essay was written presents features of family life which hold true the world over. His description of the pandemonium which reigns at meal-times is particularly lucid in expressing the contrariness of childhood:
...you want a big bowl, he wants a small bowl, you say red chopsticks are best, he says black chopsticks are best; this one wants rice, that one wants gruel, one wants tea while one wants soup, one wants fish while one wants meat, one wants bean curd, one wants turnip; you say he has more food, he says you have better food.  

(Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.198)

However, this essay is less a tableau of family life than an exploration of the author's discomfiture in his role of father.

Married off by his parents at age nineteen, Zhu Ziqing was the father of two children by the time he was twenty-three. "At that time I was just like a wild stallion, how could I tolerate that cumbersome saddle, bridle and reins?" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.199). Feeling trapped in his role as a father, his resentment spills over into an undue swiftness in resorting to force as a means of discipline. On one particularly heinous occasion, he tricks his wife into leaving the house so that he can beat their two-and-a-half year old son without her interference. This is the reaction to months of the child crying at the slightest provocation, compounded by embarrassment at the disturbance which the crying causes the neighbours. Zhu Ziqing expresses his regret at his extreme reaction, but it seems plain that his remorse has not provided the impetus to reform.

In describing his children, the author reveals an inability to identify closely with them. His depiction of their shortcomings is not softened by parental pride. Although he concedes the cuteness of little babies and gives a delightful portrait of his five-month-old daughter, his three-year-old son
is described as extremely stupid because he has not learned to talk without making mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. For this, the author asserts, "We are always laughing at him" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.l, p.201). The child's physique also gives rise to merriment: "He is a fat little thing with short legs. When he walks he hobbles funny; if he walks quickly or runs, he is an even better sight" (ibid.). Similarly, his seven-year-old daughter's thirst for knowledge is not praised, but is presented as a tedious barrage of questions.

Despite his annoyance at his children's shortcomings, the author is not completely oblivious to their feelings. He expresses his regret at the fact that he and his wife can only manage to keep the three youngest children with them in Peking, and that the two eldest have had to be left in his parents' care. He is concerned that they may feel neglected, not so much at being separated from him, but at being separated from their mother.

This brother and sister being separated from me has always been a common occurrence, but although they have been separated from their mother once before, this time it has been for too long. I know how their little hearts must endure that loneliness!

(Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.l, p.203)

In the final two paragraphs of the essay, Zhu Ziqing turns from describing his own family to expressing what he perceives as general principles of child-rearing which he hopes to apply in raising his children. He says that his first task would be to gather all the children under one roof rather than farming the elder ones out to his parents. Then he would devote
more of his energies to their upbringing than he has so far. He warns of the pitfalls of contenting oneself with affection for one's children without assuming an active role in moulding their character.

The question then arises, how is their character to be moulded? The author states: "I should proceed in a planned way, and allow them to know gradually how to conduct themselves." This general statement of intent prompts him to ask if he ought to try to mould his children in his own image. His friend Yu Pingbo's answer strikes a responsive chord: "At any rate you would not wish them to be any worse than yourself." Zhu Ziqing feels that this is particularly well put. The important thing, he says, is not that one's children should resemble one in character and outlook, but that at least they should be no worse as people. Unfortunately he does not define what constitutes "worse." The implication that somehow all parents achieve a minimum of human worth and that all that is required of them as parents is to ensure that their children also achieve this minimum is naive in the extreme.

The final paragraph of the essay makes it plain that Zhu Ziqing is not seeking to define universally applicable principles of child-rearing. His vision extends no further than his own social stratum, although his point of view can be regarded as rather advanced for the time and for a person of his scholar-gentry background. He grapples with the question of whether it is essential to send one's children to university. Two authorities are quoted. The first declares that responsibility towards one's children is only fulfilled with their graduation from university. The second argues that a university education is not a necessity and that if one cannot afford to put
one's child through university or if the child does not wish to go there is no dishonour involved. Zhu Ziqing inclines to the latter view, but it must be noted that he gives it a rather hesitant endorsement. He has already said:

"As for career and outlook on life, it is best that they decide for themselves; they themselves are most dear to us, we should simply guide them and help them to develop themselves, that is the wisest course."

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"As for career and outlook on life, it is best that they decide for themselves; they themselves are most dear to us, we should simply guide them and help them to develop themselves, that is the wisest course."

Now he responds to a quotation from an authority identified only as "S.K." with "... to say that university graduation is essential is perhaps only our prejudice. On this matter, I cannot have a definite opinion now ..."

This is in stark contrast to S.K.'s resolute declaration: "... if they cannot or do not wish to attend university they can do something else, for example become workers, that is certainly not unacceptable" ...

The essay ends with an expression of hope that the author will succeed in becoming a better father. Referring to Lu Xun's Diary of a Madman, Zhu Ziqing writes "Thinking of that 'madman's cry of 'save the children' how can I dare not to make the effort?" And "... if they cannot or do not wish to attend university they can do something else, for example become workers, that is certainly not unacceptable" ...

The final two paragraphs of the essay do not sit well with what goes before. Zhu Ziqing's description of family life and his inadequacies as a father is excellent, but his incoherent ramblings on how parents ought to behave have nothing to offer. He talks vaguely about helping children to develop their potential, but attempts no explanation of how this is to be
done. His suggestion that parents ought not to impose higher education on their children nor choose careers for them may have been enlightened for a person of his class at the time, but it hardly constitutes a profound insight into the principles of child-rearing. Zhu Ziqing would have done better to limit the scope of this essay to his experiences with his own children. On that level it is very successful. The attempt to expand it to propose general principles of parenthood is ill-conceived and poorly executed. Fortunately, it comprises less than a quarter of the essay, which otherwise is interesting for its vivid depiction of family life and the insight it gives into the author's character.

In Zhu Ziqing's essays on personal relationships one is struck by his honesty in portraying himself. Although he may express regret at his shortcomings, he seeks neither to conceal nor to justify them. The essays in this category are also interesting in exposing the negative aspects of the traditional Chinese family: its treatment of women as chattels, its power over the fate of the individual in arranging marriages and careers, its insistence on producing numerous children to ensure its perpetuation. Zhu Ziqing is adept at exposing problems, although this is not coupled with a talent for proposing solutions. Nevertheless, these essays are valuable in the insight they afford into the character of the author and his dealings with the people closest to him.
ESSAYS OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

Zhu Ziqing's essays directed against the flaws of society at large are those to which Marxist critics attach the most emphasis. Consequently, Zhu Ziqing's position on the curriculum of educational institutions in the People's Republic is due in no small part to this body of writings.

As indicated in the preceding chapter, Liu Shousong dismisses "Beiying" for its "petty bourgeois intellectual's sentimentality." He contrasts this with the "militancy" of other essays, quoting extensively from "The Price of a Life: Seventy Cents" and pointing to two other works which he regards as noteworthy:

'Notes on a Journey' laid bare the backwardness of education in China at that time, and 'Notes on a Sea Voyage' satirised and accused various crimes of imperialism; these two works are worthy of attention.

马著榕 points out that although Zhu Ziqing never committed himself to political action, he

... still could not resist frequently poking through a corner of the heavy curtain over that semi-feudal, semi-colonial dark society, and thus exposing it. Such works as 'An Account of a Government Massacre,' 'Notes on a Journey,' 'Culture on a River Boat,' 'The White Man: God's Proud Son!' and 'The Price of a Life: Seventy Cents,' are a series of bayonets piercing the dark and heavy curtain over feudalism and imperialism.

(Zhongguo xin wenxue shi chugao, p.182)
In this chapter, we shall examine closely four works representative of this category of Zhu Ziqing's essays: "The Price of a Life: Seventy Cents," "Notes on a Journey," "The White Man: God's Proud Son!" and "An Account of a Government Massacre."

"Shengming de jiage — qi mao qian" 生命的价格 — 七毛钱 ("The Price of a Life: Seventy Cents") was written early in 1924. It was included in "Traces of Wenzhou", a set of four essays written while Zhu Ziqing lived in that town, and ultimately appeared in the anthology Traces, published in December 1924. The essay denounces an event which took place in Wenzhou, the sale of a five-year-old orphaned girl by her sister-in-law for the princely sum of seventy cents. Zhu Ziqing's outrage manifests itself in a strident tone imparted through the liberal use of exclamations and rhetorical questions. This contrasts markedly with his technique in "The Story of Choosing a Bride." As noted in the preceding chapter, calm understatement on the part of the author allows injustice to speak for itself in that essay. Here, however, Zhu Ziqing relies on strident denunciation to drive his point home.

The essay opens with a statement contrasting the ideal with the real: "Life ought to have no price; nevertheless it has one!" 生命本来不应该有价格的; 而竟有了价格! (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.142). The author goes on to give examples of prices being attached to lives. He begins by pointing out that procuring and kidnapping attach the highest prices to lives, and ends by remarking that the lives of children are the cheapest of all. He expands on this in the following paragraph, giving examples of prices paid for children, and finally settles on the cheapest case of which he has first-hand knowledge, the five-year-old girl sold for seventy cents. He has already
cited instances of children rumoured to have been sold for less, so he fans the reader's indignation by pointing out:

Selling a five-year-old 'girl' for seventy cents perhaps cannot be counted as cheapest; but please consider carefully: if you take a life's freedom and seven little silver coins, and place them on the trays of a scale, you will observe that, just as if weighing nine cows against one bovine hair, the difference in weight is truly too great!

一个五岁的《女孩子》卖七毛钱,也许不能算最贱;但请您细看:将一条生命的自由和七枚小银元各放在天平的一个盘里,您将发见,正如九头牛与一根牛毛一样,两个盘儿的重量相差实在太远了!

(Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.143)

Next, the author recounts how he first saw the girl after his wife called him from dinner with his children to "see a curiosity, a child bought for seventy cents!" ...看一件奇事,七毛钱买来的孩子!(ibid.). He describes the girl and concludes: "I looked for a while, and felt that she was no different from our children; I could not see what marked out the cheapness of her life, such as the marks which are so readily apparent when we examine cheap goods" 我看了几眼,觉得和我们的孩子也没有什么差异;我看不出她的低贱的生命的符记——如我们看贱货色所容易发现的符记 (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, pp.143-44). The author goes on to reinforce this point by saying that what makes this girl's life so cheap is not a lack of intrinsic worth, but rather the mere fact that it was sold at all. "Our children's high worth stems from our never having sold them, while that girl's cheapness is due to her having been sold ..."我们的孩子所以高贵,正因为我们不曾出卖他们,而那个女孩所以低贱,正因为她是被出卖的... (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.144).

The author devotes a paragraph to the sale and its background. He finds no redeeming point and gives a vivid and scornful depiction of the parties
involved. The purchaser is revealed to be a ruffian and a drunkard. The sister-in-law is shown to be totally selfish and lacking in compassion. Why should she feed and clothe an orphan for years and then have to go to all the trouble of marrying her off and possibly paying a dowry? How much better, in the author's words, "... while she's small and nobody is paying attention, to make a present of her, give her clean away!" ... 趁小的时候,谁也不注意,做(children)情送了干净!(ibid.). In case the reader should wonder if the hard-heartedness is born of desperation, Zhu Ziqing is quick to point out that Wenzhou is neither particularly impoverished nor has it recently known any years of famine. Furthermore, if financial need were at the root of the transaction, the sellers would surely have held out for a higher price. The paragraph ends with the author's imagined reconstruction of the transaction itself, the girl "half given, half sold" 半送半卖 (ibid.), exchanged like a household pet which has outworn its welcome.

The penultimate paragraph deals with the child's future, of which the author takes an extremely pessimistic view: "As my wife said, that fellow cannot have the patience to raise her to adulthood! Just as if he were raising a piglet, he will wait until she is sufficiently fattened and then sell her to the butcher ... ... 照我妻所说,韩少将无这样耐心,抚养她成人长!他将把养猪小猪一样,等到相当肥壮的时候,便卖给屠户... (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.145). The author proceeds to examine the possibilities as to who this "butcher" might be. He begins with what he considers to be the best of all bad options, that she might be sold as a servant to a 'benevolent' master who would reap her labour "... just like raising a sheep to shear its wool. When she reached the appropriate age, she would be married off. If this could be the case ... it would be the most
fortunate of misfortunes."...如養羊而剪它的毛一樣。到了相的年級便將她配人。能夠這樣...却还算不幸中之幸哩 (ibid.). Zhu Ziqing holds out little hope of this happening, remarking that such generous masters are hard to come by. How much more likely that she will be sold to a master who will mistreat her and finally sell her into concubinage. The possibilities envisaged by the author for the girl's future are progressively worse, culminating with the prospect that she will be sold into prostitution. He focuses on various aspects of the ill-treatment she would receive at the hands of a brothel-keeper, and all eight of the sentences devoted to this finish with exclamation marks. This is the most frequently-used punctuation mark in the essay, and in the penultimate and final paragraphs it is used with frenzied abandon to create a crescendo of indignation. This reaches its climax at the end of the prostitution sequence, where we are told that the girl's degradation will last a lifetime. Then the author seems almost to need to pause for breath as he returns us to the present and expresses his despair:

... her degradation will be lifelong! So will her tragedy! -------
Ah! Seventy cents have bought your entire life ------- is your flesh and blood worth less than a mere seven little silver coins? Life is truly too cheap! Life is truly too cheap!
...她的淪落風塵是終生的!她的悲剧也是终生的!——唉!七毛钱竟买了你的全生命——你的血肉之躯竟抵不上区区七个铜元么?生命真太贱了!生命真太贱了!
(Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, pp.145-46)

The essay's final paragraph is the shortest, composed of five sentences. The author turns his thoughts from the girl to his own children, and sounds a warning for the world at large:
Because of this, when I think of my own children's fate, I truly feel a certain terror! If the human market in this world of money should exist for a single day, that is our children's danger! That is our children's humiliation! You who have children, consider, whose fault is this? Whose responsibility is this? 

(Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.146)

Once again Zhu Ziqing shows himself to be more adept at posing a question than proposing a solution. Ma Zhuorong comments:

He did not know and had no way of pointing out to the reader that the arch-criminal which caused this type of bitter tragedy was not the child-selling family head, nor was it the human broker dealing in children; rather it was that inequitable, semi-colonial, semi-feudal society and the reactionary controllers forcibly occupying the top of the social tower.

(Zhu Ziqing yanjiu ziliao, p.109)

Ma Zhuorong's criticism overlooks the implication in this essay that society, referred to as "the world of money," is to blame for allowing the existence of "the human market." Zhu Ziqing rightly berates the parties involved in the transaction for their callous manipulation of another's life, but he also points to a wider malaise which allows such evil actions to go unchecked. Indeed, Ma Zhuorong's criticism merely berates Zhu Ziqing for not being a Marxist, and Ma's assertions about a reactionary elite at the root of all evil reveal more about his own preconceptions than about Zhu Ziqing's lack of perspicacity. All that Ma does is to state what is implicit in the essay, but couching it in Marxist terms. The idea is that society is to blame for creating the conditions in which the sister-in-law can get away with selling
the little girl. Blaming society for letting it happen, however, merely detracts from the responsibility of the individual to make the right moral decision. Thus, Zhu Ziqing evokes a complex moral question, which he sidesteps by blaming society in general.

Zhou Jin remarks that "... this essay is written very loosely, his skill is not seen in it." ...这一篇却写得很松散,见不出功力来。(Zhu Ziqing yanjiu, p.132). This may be justified if it refers to the author's side-stepping of a moral issue raised by the essay, but otherwise this criticism seems unnecessarily harsh. While the number of exclamations may give the essay an unduly frantic air, it is otherwise well organized and certainly not loosely structured. It is an interesting exercise in extrapolation, proceeding from the girl's present predicament to examine its causes and its probable outcome. While the author proves powerless to provide a solution, he does demonstrate a capacity to look beyond the "curiosity" of a child sold for seventy cents, and to search for wider implications.

The essay "Luxing zaji"（Notes on a Journey）was also written in 1924. It was included in the anthology Beiyining, published in 1928. It differs from "The Price of a Life: Seventy Cents" in its greater length and in its adoption of a satirical tone. "Notes on a Journey" was inspired by the third annual conference of the Association for the Improvement of Chinese Education, which Zhu Ziqing attended and found particularly disappointing. The essay offers a satirical look at the educational establishment in China in the 1920's.

The essay is divided into three sections. The first of these is entitled "Yinqin de zhaodai"殷勤的招待（"Solicitous Service"）and is concerned, not with the Conference itself, but with the delegates' departure from
Shanghai railway station. Two attendants have been sent to help the delegates obtain their railway tickets at a reduced fare. They find themselves unable to cope with the large numbers of delegates, and some of these are left scrambling to buy their own tickets at the full price minutes before the train is due to leave. Zhu Ziqing paints a picture of pandemonium uncharacteristic of a gathering of staid intellectuals. This sets the atmosphere for the next section, whose title "Gong feng qi sheng" is a set phrase meaning "to be present in person on the grand occasion."

The "grand occasion" is the main meeting of the conference. There is more than a hint of irony in the title of this section, and this quickly becomes apparent. The disorganisation which accompanied the delegates' departure from Shanghai continues at the conference. The assembly is very late in getting under way. While waiting for the guests of honour to arrive, the author remarks on the number of soldiers and policemen lining the walls, and he notes sardonically: "They probably had not come to hear the speeches since they did not have the ceramic-like badges of members of the Association, nor did they have auditor's passes like mine ..." (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.208). Before the arrival of the guests of honour, the provincial governor and military commander, the delegates are led in singing a patriotic song by a woman who treats them like schoolchildren. Not content with the first rendition, she suggests that they might like to try again later. True to her word, she returns after a short interval and leads them in a further three renditions of the anthem, to the bemusement of some and the irritation of others. This silliness dispels any illusion that there might truly be some grandeur attached to the occasion.
The governor and the commander finally make their entrance, and the meeting gets under way. The three main speeches are made by these two worthies and by the head of Southeastern University. Zhu Ziqing gives a detailed account of their speeches, their appearance and mannerisms which leaves one in no doubt as to his low opinion of their intellectual calibre. The first to speak is the military commander, and Zhu Ziqing provides an incisive analysis of the vacuity of his discourse.

He talked and talked, and in the final analysis what was he saying? I respectfully reply: half an eight-legged essay! He used a technique of dismantling words to take the subject of 'The Association for the Improvement of Chinese Education' and break it down into four sections: first, he took the word 'education' as part one; then he took 'the improvement of education' as part two; 'the improvement of Chinese education' was part three; add to that the word 'association' and you have part four.

An "eight-legged essay" was a form of composition required for the imperial civil service examinations. It was noted for its rigidity of form and its poverty of ideas, so Zhu Ziqing is less than complimentary in describing the speech as "half an eight-legged essay." The speech's low calibre is further emphasised when the author remarks that the most memorable thing was the speaker's bow at the end of it.

The provincial governor is next to speak, and he fares no better than his colleague. "He also took a lot of time; I do not know if my mind was inadequate or if there was some other reason, but I did not grasp his meaning at all." (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.211). The final speaker,
the head of a university, does little more than reiterate what has already been said, and the author calls this speech unfathomable.

This second section of the essay closes with descriptions of two policemen, one a constable who stood motionless throughout the entire proceedings, the other an officer whose commanding presence caught the author's eye. This combines with the references to the police and soldiers at the beginning of the section to form a frame around this part of the essay, emphasising the importance attached by the authorities to suppressing dissent. This hardly bodes well for the improvement of education.

The third and final section of the essay is entitled "Disan rencheng" ("The Third Person"). The author describes a seminar organised by the group concerned with the teaching of Chinese language. The topic is the third person pronoun in modern standard Chinese. Zhu Ziqing goes to the seminar brimming with optimism, despite the disappointment of the main meeting: "We knew that plenary meetings were that sort of thing and that the noteworthy meetings were those which came afterwards." (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.212). He explains that as a teacher of Chinese he felt that this seminar would be of interest: "Unfortunately, after attending one session I became ill and was unable to go again." (ibid.). It becomes apparent that this is a diplomatic illness prompted by the execrable state of the participants' scholarship.

First of all, Zhu Ziqing attacks the choice of topic, ironically congratulating the person who chose it on its timeliness. The topic is the third person pronoun _ta_, which does not differentiate between 'he,' 'she' and 'it' when spoken, but which is written in three different ways to express
these concepts. This convention was well established by the time at which Zhu Ziqing is writing, and he obviously feels that any scope for discussion on the matter has already been exhausted.

He goes on to give an account of the seminar itself, where discussion centres on the appropriateness of using the female radical to write ta meaning 'she' (她). The opinions put forward range from the trivial to the carelessly erroneous. One speaker argues that using the person radical to write ta meaning 'he' (他) exalts men, while using the female radical to write the feminine pronoun contrasts with this to demean women. Another speaker purports to dispute this, but gives a woolly-minded and inconclusive talk which confuses well-known facts. He says that modern writers using classical Chinese use the character yi (伊) to mean 'she' while writers in the vernacular use ta with the female radical. He even cites Zhou Zuoren as one of the former. Zhu Ziqing is so incensed at this nonsense that he does not rely on the reader's good sense to identify it as such.

The character yi (伊) may be seen in classical Chinese, it is true, but if you say that all those yi are women, you are sure to malign a great many men! That Mr. Zhou Zuoren advocates the use of the character yi is also correct, but it is for use in the vernacular; I can guarantee that he certainly never said anything about 'using classical Chinese!'

(Chu Ziqing wenji, v.1, pp.213-14)

The calibre of the discussion continues to degenerate. A woman complains that the use of the character ta with the female radical is inappropriate because traditionally the female radical was attached to characters to convey a derogatory meaning. This draws the inevitable riposte that the character
hao (号) meaning 'good' is written with the female radical. The hoots of laughter which greet this are intensified when another speaker likens the use of ta with the female radical to second-class travel, while the use of ta with the person radical to mean 'he' is like third-class travel.

This time the whole hall rocked with laughter, some people laughed so hard that their eyes glistened as if tears were about to emerge; it was certainly a case of the proverbial 'tears in the midst of laughter.' What happened next is rather unclear, probably the meeting ended amidst laughter and talking; rather like the closing of an act in a comedy.

In this essay, Zhu Ziqing criticises the authorities in charge of Chinese education by holding them up to ridicule. In the first section, we see the inability of the Association for the Improvement of Chinese Education to organise the simple matter of obtaining railway tickets. The motif of disorganisation runs through the whole essay. In the second section, we see the heavy-handed presence of the warlords in the number of troops and police sent to maintain order at the conference. We are also treated to the spectacle of high-ranking officials who are able to talk for ages without having anything to say. In the third and final section of the essay we find that the educators themselves are no better. They select an insignificant topic for discussion and surround it with pettiness, vacuous statements, blatant misrepresentation and unbridled merriment. Serious scholarship and thoughts on the structuring of education are conspicuously absent. Ma Zhuorong overstates the case when he calls this essay a "bayonet piercing the curtain over feudalism and imperialism," but it certainly is an indictment of
a disorganised education system and the third-rate intellects employed by it.

In "Baizhongren -- shangdi de jiaozi!" ("The White Man: God's Proud Son!") Zhu Ziqing attempts to deal with the problems of racism and imperialism. This essay was written on June 16, 1925, and was prompted by events in Shanghai two weeks earlier. On May 30, there had been mass demonstrations in that city, protesting the shooting of a man leading a strike at a Japanese-owned cotton mill. The crowd was fired upon by British police, and deaths and injuries resulted. These incidents sparked a wave of anti-foreign sentiment known as the May Thirtieth Movement. Zhu Ziqing adopts a remarkably even tone in the essay, at a time when others were writing screaming indictments of foreigners and their wicked machinations. According to Zhou Jin: "... screaming hatred and howling in adversity ... practically became the formula for other writers of the time as far as works on this topic were concerned" (Zhu Ziqing yanjiu, p.137).

Zhu Ziqing sets out to show the evil of racism and of exploitation of one nation by another, and he tries to achieve this by extrapolating on a small incident from his own experience. However, the nature of the incident at the centre of the essay is such that the essay throws more light on Zhu Ziqing than on the problems with which he is attempting to deal.

The author sets the scene in the first paragraph of the essay. Riding a tram in Shanghai the previous summer, he noticed a white man and boy whom he took to be father and son. Having always been inclined to admire handsome children, the author describes the boy in some detail and explains that he never felt that children minded being looked at.
In the second paragraph it becomes apparent that this one does mind being looked at. As the man and boy are about to leave the tram,

... something unexpected happened. That little Westerner had originally been sitting opposite me; as he approached me, he suddenly and forcefully thrust his face towards me, his blue eyes opened wide, those handsome lashes were no longer to be seen; the rosiness of his cheeks had also lessened considerably. The peaceful and elegant face had become a coarse and ferocious one! There were words in his eyes: 'Hmph! Yellow man, yellow Chinaman, you --- you look! You're not fit to look at me!'

...意外的事来3.那小西洋人本坐在我的对面;走近我时，突然将脸尽力地伸了过来;两只蓝眼睛大大地睁着,那好看的睫毛已看不见;两颊的红也已褪了不少;和平秀美的脸一变而为粗俗,凶恶的脸了!他的眼睛里有话:《咄!黄种人,黄种的支那人,你——你看吧!你配看我!》

(Zhu Ziqing xuanji, p.110)

The confrontation, which the author calls a "surprise attack," lasts only a couple of seconds. The supposed father has not noticed and the child does not tell him. "(He) ... achieved his victory in silence and went back triumphant" 他...在沉默中得意着胜利,凯旋而去 (ibid.).

In the third paragraph, the author describes the effect which the perceived aggression had on him. The contrast between his reaction and the boy's is stark indeed: "This sudden surprise attack set me trembling; my heart emptied, the pressure on all sides was so heavy that it left me unable to breathe freely" 这突然的袭击使我张皇失措;我的心空虚了,四面的压力很严重,使我呼吸不能自由 (ibid.). The contrast between this and the child's walking away as if nothing has happened leads the reader to wonder if indeed anything did happen. All that is certain is that the boy objected to a stranger looking at him. The racial dimension may only be in the author's imagination, for the child did not actually say anything to him.
Being scowled at by an ill-mannered brat of whatever complexion would not seem to provide sufficient provocation for an apoplectic fit, and the author's reaction may be described as "extreme."

Zhu Ziqing devotes the remainder of the paragraph to what he regards as the wider implications of the incident. He explains that what he finds so unnerving is the fact that the antagonist is a child:

I have always considered that children should belong to the whole world, and that they ought not to belong merely to one race, one country, one region or one family. Because of this, I cannot abide Chinese children calling Westerners 'Foreign Devils.' However, this white child of about ten years of age has already been pushed into the two patterns of race and nation.

The sentiments which the author expresses here are noble enough, but one scowl is hardly sufficient evidence to prove that the child falls short of these noble aspirations and has "already been pushed into the two patterns of race and nation." Zhu Ziqing is careful to point out that all groups have the capacity to look down on others. However, living as he does in an age in which it is the whites who have the upper hand, he views the incident as a microcosm of the treatment which China has received at the hands of the western powers. "This surprise attack was in fact the small reflection of many attacks, on his face was printed in miniature a page out of China's history of foreign relations." (Zhu Ziqing xuanji, p.111)
Although the author believes himself to have been "attacked" by the boy, he does not blame him, pointing instead to the cloistered existence of a foreign child in China, which is hardly calculated to foster a healthy attitude towards the host nation:

... his father, older relatives, his father's friends, fellow countrymen, and members of the same race are all arrogant and overbearing in their dealings with Chinese people; his reading materials add fuel to the flames, presenting China as being without any redeeming feature and thus increasing his own sense of power. ... 他的父亲, 老友, 同胞, 乃至周围, 同种, 都以骄做践踏对付中国人; 而他的读物也推波助澜, 将中国编排得一无是处, 以长自己的威风。 (Ibid.)

While this may be a fair enough assessment of the general situation, it tells us more about Zhu Ziqing's preoccupations than it does about that particular boy and his real environment.

In the penultimate paragraph, Zhu Ziqing returns to his reaction to the child's antagonism. He explains that, after his initial shock, he felt a surge of anger and national sentiment. However, he curbs his anger and reiterates that it serves no purpose to blame that particular child. He also indicates that he believes this incident to show that there is no hope of the coming generation realising a world free from domination by particular races or nations. Surprisingly, Zhu Ziqing closes this paragraph by remarking that in some ways the child and whites in general are worthy of respect:

... his calm, his silence, his independent action, his leaving without a backward glance are all signs of strength, and of a powerful and fit character. Not in the least soft or dependent, but forthright and to the point, this is precisely what makes the white man stand out.
This demonstrates clearly the feeling of national and racial inferiority which has led the author to read so much into a little boy's facial expression. Referring to the child as "strong and fit," Zhu Ziqing echoes the Social Darwinist notion that somehow the Chinese are an unviable race, weak and unfit to survive against their "fitter" foreign aggressors.

The author does nothing to discredit this simplistic notion. Rather, he concludes the essay by admonishing the Chinese to change themselves and to realise their own worth: "... the most important thing for us to do is to look at ourselves, and look at our children! Everybody is God's proud son, this ... is something which knows no boundaries!" (ibid.)

Written at a time when emotions were running high, this essay attempts to address the issues with calm and detachment. The author's near apoplexy at being scowled at by the child is perhaps calculated to show his sympathy for the feelings of those writers who railed against foreigners and their wickedness. However, his pointed suppression of his emotions and his emphasis on the idea that lashing out at individuals does nothing to solve the problem demonstrate his desire to seek a reasoned solution. Unfortunately, he does not succeed in pointing out the path to such a solution, succumbing instead to simplistic notions of racial and national "fitness." As a result, this essay sheds more light on the author's assumptions about racism and imperialism than it does on these phenomena themselves.
"Zhizhengfu da tusha ji" "An Account of a Government Massacre" which was written the following year, is certainly not characterised by detachment. It is Zhu Ziqing's eyewitness account of the "March Eighteenth Massacre" which took place in Peking in 1926 when demonstrators were attacked by troops guarding the government buildings of the warlord regime led by Duan Qirui 段祺瑞.

This essay is similar in length to "Notes on a Journey" but its tone is quite different. Gone is the satire of the earlier essay, replaced by a straightforward reporting style. Where the author's imagination in "The Price of a Life: Seventy Cents" and "The White Man: God's Arrogant Son" is exercised in reporting minor incidents of which he has first-hand knowledge and recreating their causes and consequences, which are beyond his immediate experience, in this essay his creative powers are exercised in recreating what he saw or heard himself.

The horror of the experience is apparent from the first two sentences of the essay, which provide an epigraphic first paragraph for the piece: "March Eighteenth was such a horrifying day! We must never forget that day! 三月十八是怎樣可怕的日子! 我們永遠不应该忘记这个日子! (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.3, p.765). The second paragraph is equally terse, stating that the reason for which that day must never be forgotten is that the government has killed upwards of forty people and injured some two hundred more. In the third paragraph the author explains why he felt moved to write the essay. He says that he witnessed the massacre and noted some inaccuracies in the newspaper reports which appeared the following day. Because of this, he writes: "I shall just say what I saw with my own eyes at the scene and what I heard afterwards, and I invite everyone to look at this dark and cruel China
of the eighteenth day of March in the twenty-sixth year of the twentieth century ... "我只说我当场眼见和后来耳闻的情形,请大家看看这阴惨惨的二十世纪二十六年三月十八日的中国 ..." (ibid.).

The next nine paragraphs recount the events of the fateful day. Zhu Ziqing begins by describing the composition of the crowd, saying what groups were represented and how many people were involved. He describes their arrival in the walled government compound, unhampered by the guards at the gate, and mentions that the guards at the government building itself seem unconcerned as well. This calm is broken after the demonstrators have spread out peacefully in the courtyard, watched by members of the government upstairs. Suddenly, some people break away from the crowd. People are confused as to what is wrong until the shooting starts. Zhu Ziqing recounts his own reactions and gives a detailed account of what transpires as the crowd of which he is a part attempts to flee the compound. Although the author emerges unscathed, he sees many people killed or injured, and learns afterwards of deaths and injuries of people with whom he is acquainted.

Crouching in a huddle with other demonstrators, Zhu Ziqing's realisation of the horror that was unfolding comes a few minutes after the shooting starts:

... one or two minutes later, bright red, warm blood dripped onto the back of my hand and onto my jacket, and I realised at once that a massacre was under way! ... Only later, when we were running away, did I find out that a lot of blood had also dripped onto my head and onto my hat which had fallen on the ground; it was all his! He had been bleeding for over two minutes and it had all been bled onto me ...

... 两分钟后来, 鲜红的热血从上面滴到我的手背上, 马褂上, 我立刻明白屠杀已在进行! ... 后来逃跑的时候, 才又知道, 掉在地下的我的帽子和我的头上, 也滴了许多血, 全是他的! 他流了两分钟以上的血, 都流在我身上 ... (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.3, p.767)
Zhu Ziqing gives a full account of his flight from the compound, and of the killings and injuries which he witnessed. He intersperses his account of what he saw himself with details learned afterwards from other witnesses, putting particular emphasis on those points which are at odds with newspaper reports which sought to blame the massacre on provocation from violent demonstrators. Even when he concedes that a small minority may have had violent intentions, he points out that this did not provoke the soldiers, but merely provided an excuse for an attack that was going to happen anyway:

... later on one of the injured told me that he had seen a group of people, some of them carrying sticks, who wanted to charge into the building. I suppose that may well have been the case; however, it certainly was not the reason for the guards opening fire, at most it was just their excuse. Their carrying their rifles unloaded on their backs and without bayonets fixed (pretending to be calm) and their allowing the crowd to enter the government compound unhindered (to make easier targets) demonstrate their intention to 'encircle and annihilate' ...

Throughout his account of the events, the author permits no doubt as to where responsibility lies. In the last of the nine paragraphs devoted to recounting events, he points straight at Duan Qirui, leader of the warlord government, and berates him for compounding barbarism with stupidity: "Even if we make no mention of 'humanity' can it be that not even national decorum and the reputation of the 'interim government' were taken into consideration? Duan Qirui, you think it over for yourself!"
In the last two paragraphs of the essay, Zhu Ziqing reiterates the enormity of the crime which has been committed, and once again puts the blame on the government. He points out that this massacre is worse than the May Thirtieth Incident of the previous year, not only in the number of deaths and injuries, but also because this time they were inflicted on Chinese by Chinese: "... our nation has such a shameless government, how can it exist in the world! ----- This is indeed the world's disgrace!" ...我们国贼有如此无脸的政府,又何以自容于世界!——这才是世界的耻辱呀! (ibid.)

Zhu Ziqing states that all this leads to one question which the Chinese must ask themselves. He emphasises it by having it stand alone as the essay's final paragraph: "Now that so many people have died, what should we do about it?" "死了这么多人,我们该怎么办?" (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.3, p.774).

Yet again we see Zhu Ziqing set himself up as a poser of questions rather than a provider of answers. However, the answer is implicit in the essay. The author provides the reader with all the evidence, and calls on him to draw his own conclusions. Zhou Jin writes of this essay:

It clearly told the intellectual circles of the time that there was no way to reason with the warlords, much less come to terms with them, there was only the option of taking real action to participate in the national revolution, to overthrow them, to drive them out. 它明白的告诉了当时的知识界与军阀们根本没有道理可讲，更无从妥协，只有以实际行动参加国民革命，打倒他们，驱除他们。 (Zhu Ziqing yanjiu, p.142)
The essays which we have examined in this chapter, with the exception of "Notes on a Journey," demonstrate Zhu Ziqing's sense of helplessness in the face of the events which he describes. "Notes on a Journey," dealing as it does with something with which the author was intimately acquainted, is the most self-assured of the essays. His confidence displays itself in the adoption of a satirical tone, dealing with the problems of Chinese education in a mildly humorous way. The other essays try to grapple with wider issues, and two of them end with questions. The author has tried to hint at the answers in the essays themselves, but he implies simplistic solutions which he lacks the confidence to expand fully. Despite his obvious sincerity, Zhu Ziqing is seen to be an asker of questions, lacking the self-assurance to become a proponent of solutions.
This is the final category of essays to which we will turn our attention in this thesis. Apart from scattered essays on travels in China, Zhu Ziqing produced two anthologies of travelogues inspired by his travels in Europe. These are *Ouyou zaji* (Notes on Travels in Europe) and *Lundun zaji* (Notes on London), published in 1934 and 1943 respectively. Both were the result of eleven months spent in Europe in 1931 and 1932, publication of *Notes on London* having been delayed by the upheavals associated with the Japanese invasion of China in 1937.

During his stay in Europe, Zhu Ziqing spent most of his time in London, but before returning to China he spent two months travelling on the Continent, visiting five countries and twelve cities. This provided the material for *Notes on Travels in Europe*, written during his return to China by boat. This anthology contains ten essays, "Venice", "Florence", "Rome", "The Ruins of Pompeii", "Switzerland", "The Netherlands", "Berlin", "Dresden", "The Rhine", and "Paris". There is also an appendix which contains two letters to the author's friend Ye Shengtao, describing the author's journey to Europe by rail and more particularly his impressions of Harbin and Siberia.

The most striking feature of these essays is the author's absence from them. Virtually all of his other essays are first-person narratives, but here Zhu Ziqing prefers to distance himself in order to focus the reader's attention on the places being described. This constitutes such a departure from his usual technique that he comments on it in the foreword to the anthology:
Each essay in this book concentrates on describing the sights, and very seldom do I refer to myself. This I have avoided deliberately: for one thing, when travelling abroad how can one hold forth with sagacious pronouncements; for another, at such a time discussion of 'personal trivia' really is pointless.

Zhu Ziqing intended this book to be read by secondary school students. He sets out to introduce them to European culture, so his descriptions focus on the historical landmarks of the places he visited and on the famous works of art in their museums. There is relatively little said about the people he met. He provides the historical background to the places he visited and he also gives details about the artists whose works he so admires.

Perhaps he would have had more to say about the modern inhabitants had he had more time to meet them. In the foreword he points out that of this two months on the Continent, three weeks were spent in Paris and two in Berlin, leaving no more than three days in each of his other stops. In his words: "... needless to say, this was no more than admiring the flowers from the back of a galloping horse." ...不用说这都只是走马看花罢了 (Ouyou zaji, p.iii). Another factor which contributed to this lack of intercourse with the locals was the author's inability to speak any European language other than English: "When I was in Paris I received a letter from a friend who remarked jokingly that I was 'touring Paris with my eyes'; in fact, the five countries about which I have written here can only be considered to have been 'toured with my eyes.'" 在巴黎的时候,朋友来信开玩笑,说我《漫游巴黎》,其实这儿所记的五国都只是《目游》罢了 (Ouyou zaji, p.iv).

Despite the brevity of his acquaintance with the places described, Zhu Ziqing succeeds in giving lively and detailed accounts of their interesting features.
The essay on Paris is by far the longest in the book. The others average no more than a third of this essay's length. It resembles the others in comprising mainly descriptions of landmarks and the contents of museums, supported by historical anecdotes. However, it also affords the reader a glimpse of the daily lives of Parisians, particularly in Zhu Ziqing's description of the city's cafes. He describes cafes in general and the sort of activity that goes on in them, pointing out that quite apart from being places to drink coffee and other beverages, they are places in which to socialise and are also much frequented by artists and writers. He goes on to describe the three largest cafes in Paris and their artistic clientele. His detailed account of cafe life ends with a description of how Parisians start their day.

Most Parisians eat breakfast in the cafes. Generally a cup of coffee and two or three croissants are sufficient, unlike the British who eat so much. Croissants are a kind of bread, crescent-shaped, crisp and soft, and at their most delicious eaten hot; the French certainly know how to bake bread, and this type not only tastes good but looks good too. (Ouyou zaji, p.101)

The brevity of Zhu Ziqing's stay in other cities precluded the formation of such impressions of the inhabitants' daily lives. His essay on Venice is fairly typical of his European travelogues. He generally starts by remarking on the most striking feature of the place that is being described. In the case of Venice, it is the canals and gondolas. From there he proceeds to give the city's location and general appearance. The travelogues give full expression to Zhu Ziqing's powers of description. One example is his
description of the view over the Venetian archipelago from the bell tower in St. Mark's Square. The islands are

... like bouquets of flowers and masses of brocade, scattered upon all sides, undulating on the azure waves. In the distance sea and sky meet in a boundless unity. There is no smoke here, the sky is clean; under the warm rays of the sun, everything seems transparent. 

Any traveller constantly finds himself comparing the new sights to those at home, and Zhu Ziqing is no exception. "When a Chinese comes here, it is as if he were in the lake and river country of south China ..." (Ouyou zaji, p.2). Later in the essay, he concludes a description of gondola singers with a comparison to the Qinhuai River in Nanjing: "This bore a slight resemblance to the scenes on the Qinhuai River in those days, but the Qinhuai River was much livelier." (Ouyou zaji, p.6).

All these essays concentrate on describing the important landmarks of the places which the author visited. In the case of Venice, Zhu Ziqing begins with St. Mark's Square, followed by St. Mark's Basilica and the Doges' Palace, which provide the opportunity to comment on paintings by Canaletto and Tintoretto. Next comes his description of singers on the canals at night, which incidentally gives rise to one of the few ill-informed comments in the travelogues. The author supposes that the Italian songs which he heard on the canals of Venice were Jazz songs, which seems to this reader to be most unlikely. How much more likely that this is one of the "sagacious pronouncements" which the author in his preface to the book said that ill-informed foreigners ought to avoid. The author continues his tour of Venice with
descriptions of two churches which he considers particularly important from an artistic point of view. One attracts his attention because it is decorated with frescoes by Tintoretto, and the other is notable as the last resting place of the sculptor Canova and of Titian, some of whose paintings are on display in the church. The essay closes with the author's comments on an international art exhibition which was a biennial event and happened to be in progress during his stay in Venice.

This essay is representative of the others in Notes on Travels in Europe. Concentrating as they do on historic landmarks, scenery and works of art, they draw on the author's skill at lyric description which has been commented on elsewhere in this thesis. The essays in Notes on London include some which share these characteristics, but due to Zhu Ziqing's lengthy stay in that city he was much better acquainted with the people there and they figure prominently in many of the essays in this anthology.

Zhu Ziqing spent seven months in London, studying linguistics and English literature at University College. The essays in Notes on London were written two or three years after his return to China, and most of them appeared initially in Zhongxuesheng zazhi 中学生杂志 (The Secondary Student's Magazine). The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 and Zhu Ziqing's move to Yunnan province as a faculty member of the temporary university established there during the war years interfered with his plans to write more essays on his stay in London. Those which he had already written were not published as Notes on London until 1943.

The nine essays which make up this anthology are "San jia shudian" 三家书店 ("Three Bookstores"), "Wenren zhai" 文人宅 ("Scholars' Homes"), "Bowuyuan" 博物院 ("Museums"), "Gongyuan" 公园 ("Parks"), "Jiaerdongni"
shichang 加尔东尼市场 ("Caledonian Market"), "Chide" 吃的 ("Food"), "Qigai" 乞丐 ("Beggars"), "Shengdanjie" 圣诞节 ("Christmas") and "Fangdong taitai" 房东太太 ("The Landlady"). In the foreword to this book, Zhu Ziqing points out that, just as was the case in Notes on Travels in Europe, he has largely avoided mentioning himself in these essays. He also remarks: "... among these nine essays there are quite a few which describe living people, for example 'Beggars,' 'Christmas' and 'The Landlady,' and perhaps there is more human feeling than in Notes on Travels in Europe" ...这九篇里写活着的人的比较多些, 如《乞丐》、《圣诞节》、《房东太太》, 也许人情要比欧游杂记里多些罢 (Lundun zaji, p.iv).13 This is the most noticeable difference between Notes on London and the earlier anthology. The essays in Notes on London resemble the earlier ones in length, averaging three thousand characters, and some display Zhu Ziqing's preoccupation with cultural monuments and other historic landmarks. To those essays cited by the author himself as concentrating more on people than places could be added "Caledonian Market" and "Food." These two essays, as much as the three cited by the author, offer the Chinese reader an insight into how people live in a distant country quite unlike their own.

The essay which gives the closest view of any of the people whom Zhu Ziqing encountered in his travels is "The Landlady." Mrs. Hibbs, the landlady with whom Zhu Ziqing stayed for part of his time in London, obviously made quite an impression on him. He refers to her in the foreword to this anthology, and apart from devoting an essay to portraying her, he also includes her in his essay "Christmas" where he rounds off a description of the general atmosphere of Christmas in London with an account of the festivities in her home.
In "The Landlady" the author does not provide a physical description of Mrs. Hibbs, but he does give a vivid depiction of her character. This is achieved largely by letting her speak for herself, and the essay relies heavily on indirect quotation. The author opens the essay by remarking that, to her Chinese guests, Mrs. Hibbs seemed to have a Chinese flavour although she had never been to China. This is not expanded upon straight away. Rather, Zhu Ziqing uses her own words to describe her: "She used to say people joked that she and her daughter were Victorian, meaning that they were old-fashioned and inflexible; however, she admitted that they were and that it did not bother her," (Lundun zaji, p.72).

Mrs. Hibbs' most noticeable characteristic is that she is extremely talkative. "Talking was a delight to her and listening was a delight to us (when she talked, her dead husband and son came to life, as did some of her boarders); so although we were to listen to her for over four months, we never did grow tired of it," (Lundun zaji, p.73).

The essay almost becomes a biography, the author quoting things Mrs. Hibbs told him about the past, as well as recounting his own observations from the time he spent in her home. We learn a little about her childhood, her late husband and son, and about the boarders who have come and gone over the years. We also learn about her anxieties over some of her daughter's unworthy suitors, and about her superstitions. The essay is populated not only by the landlady and the people whom Zhu Ziqing meets in her house, but also by people who have passed through before as the author imagines them from the landlady's
account.

Mrs. Hibbs comes to life in the essay, a motherly old woman whose life revolves around her daughter and her boarders, a lively and talkative woman who can laugh at her own shortcomings and bears her burdens lightly. The author's sympathetic portrayal is tinged with sadness as he relates how her financial difficulties and a lack of boarders lead to her giving up her boarding-house. The final sentence of the essay harks back to the first description of Mrs. Hibbs and underlines what the author perceives as a tragic decline in her fortunes: "Last year I received a letter from Mrs. Hibbs. She and her daughter have taken a job as housekeepers; for the 'Victorian' gentlewoman, this world is already no longer hers" (Lundun zaji, p.81). It has already been remarked upon in the chapter on Zhu Ziqing's short stories that he had great difficulty in portraying Chinese people from a different social background than his own. In the light of that it is all the more remarkable that he was able to draw such a well-rounded portrait of Mrs. Hibbs, a woman from an entirely different culture.

These travelogues are distinguished from mere guide books by what Ma Zhuorong calls "... language as beautiful as poetry ..." (Zhu Ziqing yanjiu ziliao, p.103) as well as by the glimpses they afford the reader of alien people and their way of life. They are also interesting as further examples of Zhu Ziqing's skill at lyric description, and in demonstrating that he could write essays in which his own presence need not hold centre stage.
CONCLUSION

We have examined Zhu Ziqing's prose in five categories. Four of these categories, despite the variations in subject matter, share one characteristic which stands out above all others in Zhu Ziqing's writing. This is the autobiographical element. His short stories and essays are marked by the presence of the author in almost every line, and a remarkably honest self-portrait emerges. His writings reveal a man of a complex and often contradictory character. We see a caring husband who nevertheless lacked the courage to defend his wife from his parents' oppression; a man who liked children in the abstract, but felt uneasy as a father and often resorted to violence in dealing with his own offspring; a timorous man, flustered when approached by prostitutes peddling only songs, yet a man brave enough upon escaping a massacre to write an essay accusing by name the warlord whose troops were responsible. Zhu Ziqing does not set himself up as a hero, deigning to offer enlightenment to lesser mortals. While pointing to the faults of the society around him, he does not shy away from presenting his own faults as well.

The first category of Zhu Ziqing's prose which we examined was his fiction, which comprises a mere three short stories. Despite the promise shown by "A History of Laughter," it is apparent that Zhu Ziqing lacked a talent for characterisation, which precluded his making full use of this genre. "A History of Laughter" succeeds only because the main character is Zhu Ziqing's wife, and the events which it recounts are events from their own family life. It is no wonder that he is able to present a vivid and well-rounded portrayal of this woman. He had, after all, been married to her for seven years and had a wealth of observation to draw on. In contrast, the
character who gives her name to the story "A-He" is not nearly so well
developed. She is a two-dimensional character, observed from a distance, and
demonstrates Zhu Ziqing's inability to empathise with people from a different
social background. We are offered no insight into her thinking and are given
only a sketchy view of the life she leads. This inability to bring a wide
array of characters to life explains why Zhu Ziqing wrote so few short stories
and turned instead to the essay, wherein he need only depict himself and his
reaction to things around him. This tendency was well established in his
fiction, since two of his short stories are centred on male characters who are
obviously modelled on the author.

In his short stories, Zhu Ziqing displayed a preoccupation with personal
relationships which was carried over into his essays. While his essay
"Beijing" is taken by proponents of the doctrine of filial piety as support
for this aspect of the traditional Chinese family, it is obvious from Zhu
Ziqing's other essays on personal relationships that he was an iconoclast as
far as the traditional family structure was concerned. "Beijing" is an essay
about the transition from boyhood to manhood, and the struggle for
independence which so often distances offspring from their parents in late
adolescence and early adulthood. It is certainly not a call for formulistic
reverence of one's parents. Zhu Ziqing's short stories and his other essays
on personal relationships make abundantly clear his distaste for many of the
features of the traditional extended family: its suppression of the
individual in arranging careers and marriages; its treatment of women as
chattels; its insistence on early marriage and the production of many children
to ensure its own perpetuation. He implies strongly that the nuclear family
would offer a more fulfilling lifestyle.
Zhu Ziqing attempted to grapple with wider social issues in many of his essays, but unfortunately the results tend to be inconclusive. He fails to take a strong ideological stand and thus finds himself unable to suggest solutions to the problems which he exposes. Unable to reproduce the society of the day on a broad canvas and to indicate a direction in which he wished it to move, Zhu Ziqing contented himself with cameo portraits of individual ills which different readers would agree needed attention. They would disagree about the cure, but since he never made one explicit, each reader can go his own way thanking Zhu Ziqing for supplying evidence to support his opinion. Thus, one finds his social criticism praised by both Marxist and Nationalist critics. When Zhu Ziqing ends "An Account of a Government Massacre" with the question, "Now that so many have died, what are we to do?" Zhou Jin, writing in Taiwan in the 1970's, answers "Overthrow the warlords." Marxist critics echo that opinion, but obviously have different ideas on what the warlords should be replaced with. Zhu Ziqing's social criticism is such that critics with differing philosophical standpoints are able to praise his essays for lending credence to their own views of society's ills by imposing their own preconceptions on the social phenomena described by Zhu Ziqing and drawing their own conclusions.

Even when Zhu Ziqing is not attempting to make a weighty social pronouncement, critics with an ideological axe to grind often construe that he is. It has already been remarked that, although Zhu Ziqing's description of the prostitutes in "The Sound of Oars on the Lamplit Qinhuai River" is devoid of social comment, it has been construed as a demonstration of his sympathy for the women's plight and his "deep affection for the labouring people." In a similar vein, Ma Zhuorong takes the essay "Beggars" from the travelogue
Notes on London as a Dickensian expose which "... to a definite degree laid bare the sickness of capitalist society" ... (Zhu Ziqing yanjiu ziliao, p.104). In fact, nothing could have been further from the author's mind. Struck by the differences between the techniques employed by beggars in London and those at home in China, he merely sets out to describe the differences for the readers at home. Some of the beggars are presented as pathetic individuals, but others are seen as colourful characters. At no point does Zhu Ziqing attempt to draw a parallel between the state of these individuals and any "sickness of capitalist society." It is this noncommittal approach which leaves many of his essays open for those with ideological preconceptions to interpret as they will.

A large body of Zhu Ziqing's prose was never intended as a vehicle for opinions. Accordingly, there was never any danger of it offending anyone's ideological sensibilities. This refers, of course, to his lyric essays and to a lesser extent to his travelogues. The latter are generally regarded as fine examples of descriptive writing, though their expressions of admiration for what the author considers to be the wonders of European art and architecture would not have sat well with the xenophobic extremists who held sway during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960's and early 1970's. The most startling characteristic of the travelogues is the author's suppression of his own persona in an attempt to concentrate the reader's attention on the places being described. These are the only essays by Zhu Ziqing in which his own presence does not loom large. The best of his travelogues are those in Notes on London, since they go beyond descriptions of cultural monuments to examine the people and afford the Chinese reader a lively and colourful view of an
The response to Zhu Ziqing's lyric prose from Chinese critics of all political persuasions is overwhelmingly favourable. According to Zhou Jin:

As far as describing scenery is concerned, Zhu Ziqing's technique is certainly meticulous and inspired, and because of this his essays are brimming with lyrical sentiments and painterly qualities...

Meanwhile, on the mainland, Qu Yuxiu is also impressed by Zhu Ziqing's skill with words and gets rather carried away:

As we leaf through Zhu Ziqing's essays... it is as if we go deep into a dense forest at the height of summer and suddenly come across a gurgling mountain spring; this murmuring stream trickles from the reader's heart and leads you to partake of an artistic beauty. In Zhu Ziqing's essays, these simple and unadorned, yet infinitely though-provoking works, you can almost scoop it up in your hands.

Gushing praise indeed. Zhu Ziqing's lyric essays, inspiring such favourable reactions, are a key to his enduring reputation.

One has to search to find a critic with a bad word to say about Zhu Ziqing's lyric prose. One such is the well-known poet, Yu Guangzhong, whose essay on Zhu Ziqing appears as an appendix to an anthology of Zhu Ziqing's works published recently in Taiwan. Yu Guangzhong considers these essays to be too sentimental, and he takes particular exception to the
proliferation of cliched feminine imagery:

Little girls, virgins, dancers, song-girls, young women, beauties, fairies ... no sooner does Zhu Ziqing mention scenery than these shallow feminine images are obliged to make their appearance under his pen to adorn the world of his imagination ... if they are not emerging from the bath, then they are starting to dance, always the same formulistic movements, one tires of it.

Ya Guangzhong tempers his criticism by acknowledging that Zhu Ziqing is an important writer, but he goes on to say that there are two kinds of literary importance: artistic and historical. To Zhu Ziqing he accords the latter, and I believe that he is correct in this assessment. Zhu Ziqing was not alone in displaying a penchant for sentiment and for depicting placid and soothing scenery. His lyric essays were not produced in a vacuum, but reflected the tastes of his time. The enthusiastic critical response to this body of Zhu Ziqing's prose demonstrates that sentiment and soothing scenery were precisely what many Chinese readers wanted, and indeed still do.

One searches in vain for some universal artistry in Zhu Ziqing's writing which would give it a timeless and world-wide appeal. Most of his works are firmly rooted in their own time. Their scope is limited to the world of the Chinese urban intellectual in the first half of the twentieth century, and if they achieve rather more than blandness, they still fail to scale the heights of genius. The hallmarks of Zhu Ziqing's prose are competence and lucidity, but these qualities alone do not account for his works enduring on the Chinese mainland as well as in Taiwan and Hong Kong. His social criticism is all things to all readers, and ideological sensibilities are left unbruised. His
lyric essays, inherently inoffensive, are praised as examples of prose-writing which schoolchildren can learn to emulate mechanically, in the tradition of Chinese painting. The only interest which the prose of Zhu Ziqing holds for the Western sinologist is historical; as examples of a lucid and readable prose which was highly regarded by the author's contemporaries in the early days of modern Chinese vernacular literature. The key to its enduring reputation among his countrymen lies not so much in its content as in its form; in an ability to paint enchanting pictures with words, to soothe the reader rather than to provoke thought.
FOOTNOTES

1. "In the spring term (of 1929) he taught 'Researching China's New Literature.' This was a new course which had never been taught before." (九一九) 春期开始, 拓展“中国新文学研究。”这是从来不曾有人讲过的一门新课程。Zhou Jin 周锦: Zhu Ziqing yanjiu 朱自清研究, Taipei: Zhiyan Chubanshe 智磐出版社, 1978, p.15.


4. "This small volume contains essays written over the last four years. Among them are two pieces which perhaps seem to resemble short stories, but you had best regard them as essays." 这本小书里, 便是四年所写 的散文。其中两篇, 也许有些像小说; 但你最好只当作散文看 ... (Zhu Ziqing wenji 朱自清文集, v.1, p.158).


6. "... in 'Parting' the use of words to build sentences is so affectedly bashful, it is like a hemiplegic invalid, the reader certainly reproaches it with being hard to bear." ...《别》的用字造句, 那样扭扭捏捏的, 瘫痪在床的病人, 读者真怪不好受的。 (Zhu Ziqing wenji, v.1, p.157).


9. "'Beiying' ... has been called [his] best essay, but in it there obviously exists some rather pronounced petty bourgeois intellectual's sentimentality, "背影" ...是被看作最好的散文, 但其中显然存在着比较浓厚的资产阶级知识分子的感伤情调。Liu Shousong 刘绍松: Zhongguo xin wenxue shi chugao 中国新文学史 初稿, Peking: Renmin wenxue chubanshe 人民文学出版社, 1979, p.182.


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C. Books and Articles Concerning Zhu Ziqing


3. A Ying 阿英: "Zhu Ziqing xiaopin xu" 朱自清小品序. In Xian dai shiliu jia xiaopin 现代十大家小品. (No further details. See item D.1.)


8. Chen Zhuyin 陈竹隐: "Yi Peixian" 忆佩弦. In Dagong bao 大公报, November 23, 1975. (Chen Zhuyin is Zhu Ziqing's widow.)


10. Fang Qing 方青: Xiandai wentan bai xiang 现代文坛白象, p.13. (No further details. See item D.2.)


13. He Qiying 何其湮: "Cong Zhu Ziqing de 'Beiying' shuoqi" 从朱自清的《背影》说起. In Xingdao wanbao 星岛晚报, date unknown. (See item D.2.)


18. Li Guangtian 李广田："Zhu Ziqing xiansheng zhuanlue" 朱自清先生传略. In Zhu Ziqing wenji 朱自清文集 (vol.1, pp.11-14) (see item A.15).


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52. Zhu Jinshun 朱金顺, ed.: 《朱自清研究资料》. Peking: Shijian Daxue Chubanshe 《北京师范大学出版社》, 1981. (A collection of thirty-six essays by various authors on Zhu Ziqing and his works; it also includes five of his essays and eleven of his short poems. An excellent resource which, unfortunately, only became available when this thesis was nearing completion.)

D. Major Sources Used in Compiling this Bibliography
