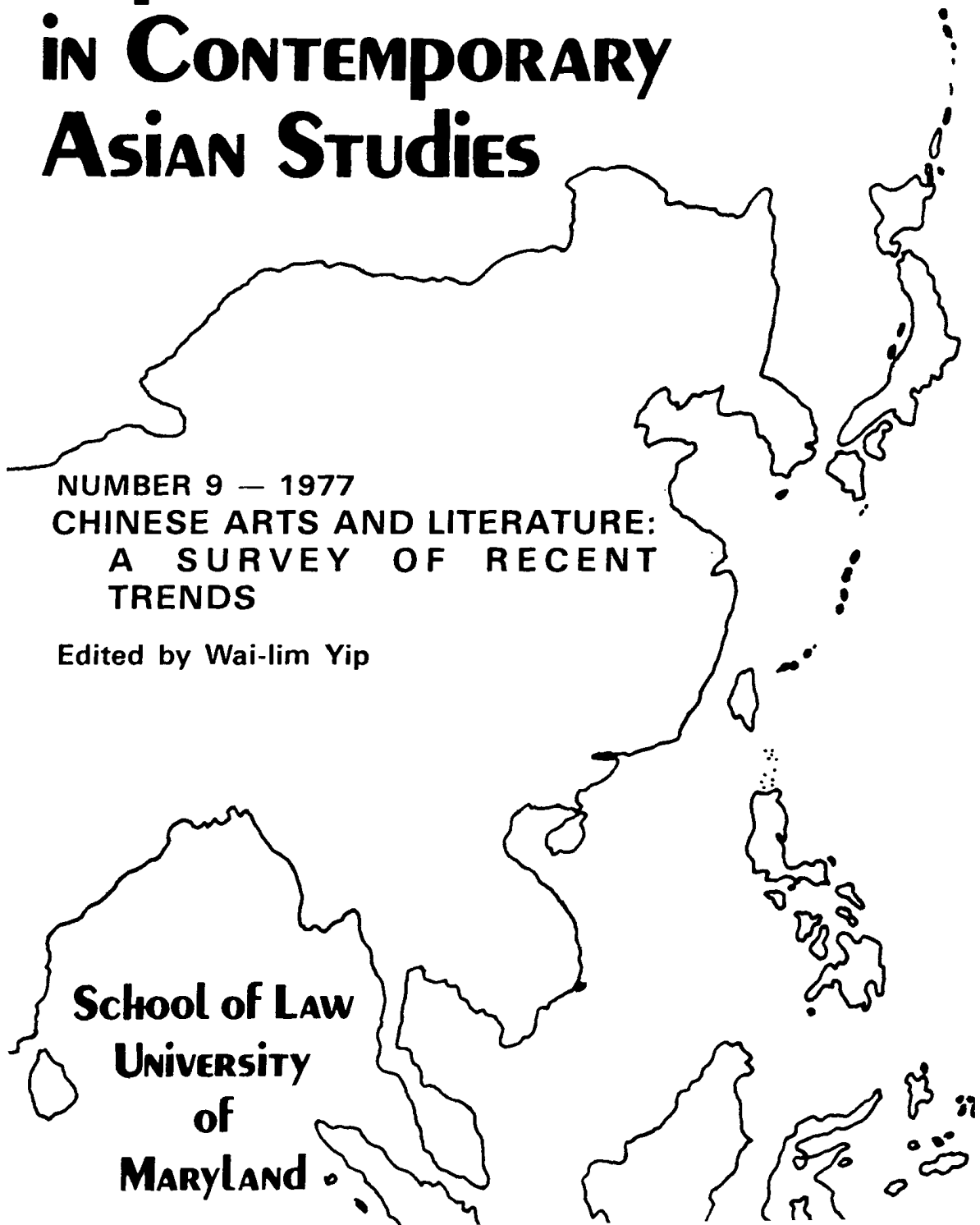


OCCASIONAL PAPERS/ REPRINTS SERIES IN CONTEMPORARY ASIAN STUDIES

**NUMBER 9 — 1977
CHINESE ARTS AND LITERATURE:
A SURVEY OF RECENT
TRENDS**

Edited by Wai-lim Yip

**School of Law
UNIVERSITY
of
MARYLAND**



OCCASIONAL PAPERS/REPRINTS SERIES IN CONTEMPORARY ASIAN STUDIES

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**CHINESE ARTS AND
LITERATURE: A Survey
of Recent Trends**

Editor: WAI-LIM YIP

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Special Guest Poetry Editor: DOMINIC C. N. CHEUNG

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INTRODUCTION

WAI-LIM YIP

The need for an annual survey of Chinese arts and literature has been apparent to many creative writers, artists and scholars for more than ten years. Indeed, to maintain continuous immediate lines of communication with writers, artists and scholars outside Taiwan, it would be necessary to publish such a survey monthly. But such an ideal project would require a huge amount of funds, which we do not have, as well as a cluster of qualified and interested translators, whom we can only hope to attract in the future. For now, we have decided to launch this survey first as an annual, and if the response from both readers and prospective translators is encouraging, we will then consider issuing it semi-annually.

In this initial issue, instead of representing creative works of only the year 1976, we have chosen recent works that speak with a voice and manner quite distinct from those of an earlier phase (roughly from 1950 to 1965). Some of the works of this early phase have been represented in the following volumes: Wai-lim Yip, *Modern Chinese Poetry* (Iowa City, 1970), Angela Jung Palandri, *Modern Verse from Taiwan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972), Chi Pang-yuan et al., *An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Literature*, 2 vols. (Taipei, 1975), and Joseph S.M. Lau, Ed., *Chinese Stories from Taiwan: 1960-1970* (New York, 1976).

During the years between 1950 and 1965, the physical "crossing" of the government from the mainland to the island province of Taiwan had engendered in Chinese writers an urgent sense that their primary cultural stream was in danger of serious disruption and an almost superstitious fear of the breakdown of the entire Chinese culture as a unity. The writers then — referred to as "modernists" or as "forerunners" by the self-proclaimed "new generation" — tried to assert their sense of being alive culturally and creatively by an almost exquisite focus upon the art of language as a means of achieving a tangible world of permanent values. The consequence of this aesthetic use of language, with its implied resistance to the prosaic is ambivalent. While the hammering and sculpting of language, both in poetry and in fiction, have brought the expressive possibility to a new height — multiple suggestiveness, composite and radiating images and a brilliant sense of structure — they have also on occasion gone to extremes, resulting in a type of solipsism where

words are no longer used as signs but as what Roland Barthes calls "vertical objects," where the created world is not always identifiable with the world we see.

The ten years or so after 1965 witnessed a new awareness of this potential danger, and some of the modernists began to relax their rhetorical tension and move slowly outward from their sometimes nightmarish subjectivity. The writers of the "new generation" speak with a conscious attempt to break away from the aesthetic manipulations of language and anchor their expression in daily language and experience — even at the risk of becoming prosaic. In the area of poetry, either building upon the language inventions of their "forerunners" or resorting directly to natural speech, the new poets seek themes and rhythms more easily recognized as part of the crises and changes of their real life. While some people may not share the enthusiasm which our Guest Poetry Editor, Dominic Cheung, accords some of the new poems in his Introduction — I, for one, do not entirely agree with his version of the new tradition — one thing is clear: there is the commitment of these new poets to replace *art* language with natural speech rhythms, *created* images with ordinary objects.

The same commitment can be found in the fiction of Ch'en Juo-hsi, Huang Ch'un-ming, and Ch'en Ying-chen, who have turned the best of daily speech into an art that speaks for and from a sector of the public that intellectuals had neglected. In this survey, we have chosen two stories by Ch'en Juo-hsi, who had literally renounced her early intellectual and aesthetic values and had lived in an environment where life had a larger claim than style and art. Thus, her stories embody a complete break from mere subjectivity, and display a matter-of-fact style beneath which the basic needs of life threaten to explode.

It was no accident that in 1976 Ju Ming and Hung T'ung aroused the most heated discussion for weeks in newspaper literary supplements. While Ju attempts to chisel out the strenuous rhythms of hard life rather than those of twisted configurations, Hung's childlike, spontaneous, folk motifs defy the educated eye. Hung's exhibition had attracted probably the largest crowd of audience in Taipei. Subsequently his unique career and work were reported by *Newsweek* and other Western publications.

What all these artists and trends represent is a desire to return to the natural functioning of the perceiving self. There is no attempt here to make claims for any of the writers or artists

represented. Indeed, their works might not be better than those created in the early phase, but they clearly indicate a new direction, the emerging and changing shape of which it is the purpose of this volume to capture.

University of California, San Diego
May 1977

THE STORIES OF CH'EN JUO-HSI*

JOSEPH S. M. LAU

What I have most wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing into an art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. . . . And looking back through my work, I see that it is invariably where I lacked a *political* purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally. (George Orwell, 1947)

According to letters from friends in Taiwan, Ch'en Juo-hsi's recent stories have already become "Taipei legends." Her short stories have not only become popular in Taiwan, they have spread around to all parts of the world outside Mainland China as well. That a writer who had stopped writing for more than ten years after college could, in less than two years time, attract such widespread attention from readers of every level of society with five short stories and one novella is indeed a marvel in the history of modern Chinese literature.

Ch'en Juo-hsi's writing career can be divided by years into three stages. The first stage covers the period when she was a student at National Taiwan University. Her freshman Chinese teacher was Professor Yeh Ch'ing-ping. Professor Yeh required that one composition be handed in each semester. Ch'en Juo-hsi's two "assignments" for the first and second semesters were "Ch'in's Uncle" and "The Grey-eyed Black Cat," both of which were published in *Wen-hsueh tsa-chih* (The Literary Review), edited by the late Professor Hsia Chi-an.

The Ch'en Juo-hsi of this period was "filled with illusions and in pursuit of the mystic." During her sophomore year in college, she was one of the editors of *Hsien-tai wen-hsueh* (Modern Literature). She considered her thinking to be extremely Westernized and was fascinated by Kafka and Joyce. "Pali's Journey" was a work of this period; in style it went from mystical to symbolic. Ch'en Juo-hsi's junior year in college was an extremely important stage for her. It was during this period that she began to embrace the idea that "literature has a mission and therefore,

* This essay was originally published in the *China Times* (Taipei) in two installments, August 5-6, 1976.

to have vitality and relevance, must belong to the great mass of people."

If Ch'en Juo-hsi had come from a "petty bourgeois" family, and if she had wanted to change her style and content to reflect the life of laborers or the lower strata of society, she would have had to experience such a life herself first. (On the Mainland, this is called *hsia-fang*, or "to be transferred to the lower levels," according to the *Chinese-English Glossary of Current Affairs and Phrases*, Peking, 1964.) But Miss Ch'en came from the laboring class (a carpenter's daughter) in the first place. That her literary and imaginative powers were influenced by Western writers is very apparent in the writing of "Chin's Uncle" and "Pali's Journey." The world of "Ch'in's Uncle" was not the world familiar to Ch'en Juo-hsi; the language of Pali was not her language. Many writers search about for a lifetime and never find their own voice, never recognize their own strengths and weaknesses. They are not even cognizant of their own motives and aims in writing. That Ch'en Juo-hsi was finally able to recognize and identify with her own background and affirm her own feeling of mission is in this respect an extraordinary achievement.

The representative work of this period is "The Last Performance," a story about a female member of an operatic troupe who takes narcotics. It deserves attention not just for its choice of theme, which represents a significant change from the works of the previous year, but more importantly for its change in style. Though in terms of the language "The Last Performance" is still mixed with quite a few clauses and sentences imitative of stream of consciousness writing, judged as a whole, it is Ch'en Juo-hsi's first realistic work. If one were to look at it from the viewpoint of Communist Party doctrine, the tragedy of its heroine, Chin Hsi-tzu is entirely a product of capitalist society, because only in a capitalist society is there a "star system," and only female actors living under such a system could feel the dreadful pressure of "youth suddenly gone and beauty faded." In order to cope with this kind of pressure Chin Hsi-tzu resorts to drugs for extra energy.

The "lopsided" literary criticism of the Communist Party is as narrow a view of human life as that of the writers of naturalist novels, in that both assert that man is a product of this social environment. The dignity of man — his freedom to choose his own fate — is thus denied. Capitalism does have the star system, but people living under capitalism have the freedom *not* to be stars. (A good example of this can be found in a British film directed by

Tony Richardson, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, in which the leading actor, Tom Courtenay, while running a race, suddenly stops just short of the finish line. As we see it, his choice of defeat is precisely his point of success in underlining the fact that he is the arbiter of his own destiny.) Since "The Last Evening Performance" has no evidence to show that if Chin Hsi-tzu did not take morphine or sing, she would have starved to death, we can say that the author Ch'en Juo-hsi did not deprive Chin Hsi-tzu of her basic human right and freedom not to be the actress and drug-addict Chin Hsi-tzu.

The above observation about "The Last Performance" is not an attempt to assess the literary value of this short story; rather, it simply indicates an important watershed in the writing career of Ch'en Juo-hsi. Prior to this the characters of Ch'en Juo-hsi's short stories had been preoccupied with their individual emotional states. The society in which they moved, while not exactly "friendly," was familiar and ruled by established conventions. What brings "The Last Performance" in line with the previous short stories is the author's description of this familiar society; what sets it apart from them is that the scope of activity of the main character has gone beyond the self-obsessed emotional life of the individual and entered the real world. Though the whole line of short stories after "Mayor Ying" came as a great artistic breakthrough, the thread of realism can be traced back to "The Last Performance."

But this comes later.

The second stage is the period of study in America. Ch'en Juo-hsi graduated from National Taiwan University in 1961; in the autumn of 1962 she went to America. She studied at an exclusive school, Mount Holyoke College in the East, and later transferred to Johns Hopkins University, where she attended the Writing Seminars for one year. This stage can be called a blank page in Ch'en Juo-hsi's Chinese writings. In 1965 her teacher, Hsia Chi-an, died in America and to commemorate him, she translated one of his essays. Besides this there were the few short stories she wrote in English for the Writing Seminars.

The works of the third stage (after "Mayor Ying") are now all familiar to Taipei readers. The reasons Ch'en Juo-hsi's stories made such a sensation in Taipei are both subjective and objective. To say that her short stories were so well received in Taipei merely because she is anti-Communist would be to denigrate the already active anti-Communist novelists in Taiwan. The argument that her stories use materials of first-hand observation, and thus

readily gain credibility, fails also, since Ch'en Juo-hsi was not the only intellectual to have escaped the Mainland (or to have received a special exit visa) after the Cultural Revolution. Nor was she the only one to report in writing on her own experiences after leaving the Mainland. One work on hand is *We Dare Sing Songs of Grief that Moves the Earth — Poetry and Prose by Chinese Youth after the Cultural Revolution* (Hong Kong, 1974), in which are collected the works of young people who had experiences similar to those of Ch'en Juo-hsi. Included were poems, letters, diaries and short stories. The poetry and stories of these youth, however, did not engender as much interest among publishers as those of Ch'en Juo-hsi. "They exhausted their energy just in collecting the printing fees for publishing this book," as an editor confesses to us in the Afterword.

One can see from this that the reason Ch'en Juo-hsi received so much attention has very little to do with objective factors (such as that she was a Taiwanese). Her stories since 1974 can indeed "make political writing into an art." This is the major difference between Ch'en Juo-hsi and the young writers of *We Dare Sing*. In the case of such stories as "Keng-er in Peking," and "Ching-ching's Birthday," if the author herself had not been well grounded in literature and if she had relied solely on her own personal experience or grievances, the effect would be much less moving. Ch'en Juo-hsi is a short story writer of remarkable talent. It is said that after "House Checks" was published in Taipei, some readers were puzzled as to how inhabitants of the Mainland could afford to buy chickens. (Keng-er ate stewed mutton in Peking, and An Nai-nai in "Ching-ching's Birthday" bought fresh fruits and vegetables and one or two croachers in the free market.) No wonder that up to the present time, there have been very few critical essays in Taiwan concerning Ch'en Juo-hsi which get any nearer to the main point. Though Ch'en Juo-hsi is from the laboring class, the narrative viewpoint of her stories is that of the intelligentsia, and is fairly petty bourgeois at that. (There are a few extremely important remarks in "Ching-ching's Birthday": "An Nai-nai's frankness and simple honesty offered me some consolation, but I had no way of making her understand how different the political treatment of the intelligentsia was from the peasants.")

Ch'en Juo-hsi's departure from the Mainland was an intellectual choice and definitely not a question of material comfort, of having chickens to eat or not. In fact, the years from 1966 to 1973 could not be considered "years of famine" in

Mainland China. Richard Crossman, the editor of *The God that Failed*, put it well: "The attraction of the ordinary political party is what it offers to its members: the attraction of Communism was that it offered nothing and demanded everything, including the surrender of spiritual freedom."

Ch'en Juo-hsi was born and grew up in Taiwan and received her elementary, middle and college education there. When she came to America, the two universities she attended were, as it happens, private, exclusive universities. She left almost out of a religious sacrificial sentiment of preferring to do without meat and go about without a car. It is extremely important to recognize this, for otherwise we can very easily misread her works.

The Mainland that Ch'en Juo-hsi reflects is indeed poor. (Ching-ching's father wore "tattered cotton pants which had been washed until they were grey and had patches sewn on top of patches.") But it is not a society in which the people live in misery. The Mainland has had times and areas where the people lived in misery, but she either did not run into them, or did not see them. Even if she did encounter them, what concerned her was probably the hardship and frustration of the people under this system as seen and felt by a Chinese intellectual from outside, or to take it further, by a member of the "old intelligentsia" who had not grown up breast-fed by the Communist Party. The characters in her short stories are not all drawn from the intelligentsia, but the writer's narrative viewpoint is typical of the "old intelligentsia" who bore the sentimental burden. Apparently when she decided to leave America in order to "identify" with China, it had not occurred to her that the petty bourgeois education she had received for the last twenty years would be too deep-rooted to be eradicated altogether. When the author mentions Ching-ching's father, he is referred to as "*wai-tzu*" (polite for one's own husband), and not as comrade or *ai-jen* (loved one). The burden of the old thought, placed in a society with a new form of consciousness, is a factor in the various kinds of conflict found in Ch'en Juo-hsi's short stories.

It was stated at the beginning of this essay that in the stories of Ch'en Juo-hsi's freshman and sophomore years of college, it was the inner world which the characters were preoccupied with. In "The Last Performance" of her junior year, the inner world begins to extend outward. The individual and the society form an interacting relationship. When her stories developed to "Mayor Ying," the people no longer stood opposed to the society with which she was familiar, a society which allowed her to move

toward the inner world. This strange new society and system occupied a major place in the stories of her third period.

Keng-er's experiences in Peking were undoubtedly more lonely and isolated than when he was a student in America. In fact, besides his blood, mother tongue and eating habits, which he had in common with the compatriots of the country he identified with, Keng-er was a foreigner in Peking. In feudal China, a son or daughter's marriage often ran up against obstacles from the parents. China's feudal system was supposedly overturned many years ago. One would not expect Keng-er, a youth completely baptized by modern and Western civilization, to have his two chances of getting married wiped out by the Party chiefs. The Party's instructions are really like the parents of a feudal age who said, "My son, this is all for your own good!"

Party leaders or high-ranking cadres have never appeared in Ch'en Juo-hsi's stories, but everything they represent is felt as omnipresent. At the mere mention of the "saintly name" of Chairman Mao, Ching-ching forgets her own birthday. Living on the Mainland for seven years, Ch'en Juo-hsi probably never had a chance to see the James Bond movies, but some of the devices used in "Ching-ching's Birthday" remind one of the mad scientist in *Dr. No* who, his back to us, continuously strokes a white cat with his black artificial hand. Ch'en Juo-hsi's stories have little in common with Eileen Chang's *Rice-sprout Song*, but they do share one point. The Communists they portray are not as fierce-looking as we had imagined. She clearly recognizes the origin of the evil in Communism which is unkind and which treats all things like straw dogs. The knives and the chopping board are the Communist Party; the meat and fish are the common people and the cadres who carry out the orders. Ch'en Juo-hsi probably felt that they, like Keng-er, were all to be pitied.

For those living under Communism, besides an occasional chicken to eat, there are also times when a very thick measure of the "human warmth of the old society" can be felt. The moment old Lu, the restaurant employee handing out seat numbers, sees Keng-er standing in line in the crowd, he calls out, "Mr. Keng," and motions him upstairs to push him into a seat for which, if he had waited in line properly, he would have had to wait for ten people to be served before his turn came. Though Keng-er's heart cries out for shame, he sits down. He remembers "This morning during political studies, while having combined criticism of Lin Piao and Confucius, they had discussed how to put a stop to the evil practice of 'entering from the back door.' He had been the last

to express his opinion and had made an impassioned speech which had set Little Chao who was recording it to writing frantically, still unable to catch up!"

In Eileen Chang's *Rice-sprout Song*, the Communist Party trained the masses so well that even an illiterate old country woman could yell a proper slogan. Though An Nai-nai of "Ching-ching's Birthday," a woman over sixty years old from North of Chiang Su, has never yelled a slogan, when she scolds a child, she knows all the same how to frighten with weighty words. "You must never say that again." She admonishes Ching-ching, "Only those who are anti-revolution ever say such things . . . If you say that again, I'll certainly give your mouth a good smacking! You see how angry you've made your mother!" Yet when she speaks to adults, it isn't with this tone. We see in An Nai-nai the image of the faithful servant in the traditional Chinese stories. She consoles Ching-ching's mother by saying, "I don't think you should worry so much. Can children of that age be locked up for saying something? In our Hui-an district, the farmers all swear or make oaths in the name of Chairman Mao. It's even worse when they start cursing! Most of them are poor peasants from three generations, and no one does anything to them!"

While An Nai-nai warns Ching-ching not to use "anti-revolutionary" terms, she herself makes such frank and unguarded remarks. Not only does she speak in this way, she acts in this way as well. The morning that Ching-ching's father returns, she goes to the market at four o'clock to stand in line to buy food. The "old society" characters like old Lu and An Nai-nai have a positive symbolic function in Ch'en Juo-hsi's stories. In the cold-hearted, unfeeling society of "new China," their "old values" (whether good or bad) represent the still undestroyed humanity which gives a continual feeling of warmth. In a similar vein, Abraham Rothberg has written this concerning Solzhenitsyn's novels:

Even in the midst of human evil, there remains some core of humanity — of compassion and pleasure and even of saintliness. Most human beings settle for staying alive physically, but many try to do more, try to remain alive emotionally and intellectually, and there the heroism of common men is apparent — as the cruelty of the system is most apparent.

Humanity and compassion exist not only at An Nai-nai's level; they exist as well among certain of the high-class

intelligentsia who have been purged, such as old Fu in "Night Watch" who knocks on the gas stove to keep his mind alert. Though he leads a heart-rending existence, on the eve of Liu Hsiang-tung's return to Nanking, he does not forget to give him a "send-off feast" of egg noodles. Does not his reaction to the young peasant Wei-tung, who comes at midnight to steal from the vegetable garden — "A thief who comes to the pantry is just trying to get something to eat" — show what Rothberg calls the spirit of "comradeship"? In Chuang Tzu's parable, Wei-tung is a peasant dry fish, while old Fu is a dry fish of the intelligentsia. They must "wet each other with their slime" in order to stay alive.

Besides the points discussed above, Ch'en Juo-hsi's stories have this special feature: She has never engaged in any theoretical discussion of Communist beliefs. (This is also true of *Rice-sprout Song*.) This is quite different in its manner of representation from the Western anti-Communist writers. Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* is a very good example. Strictly speaking, it cannot be considered a novel since throughout Koestler's interest is not in characters or plot development, but in Communist polemics. The difference in the authors' backgrounds may account for the difference in their literary treatment of Communism. According to Koestler's own words, before joining the Communist Party, he spent a considerable amount of time studying the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Though he has said, "Belief is not from reasoning, any more than is falling in love with a woman the result of reasoning," his later decision to join Germany's Communist Party, at least as far as this is concerned, cannot be said to have been a completely emotional impulse. It is for this reason that the dialogue of *Darkness at Noon* is so full of "shop-talk."

When Koestler became a member of the Communist Party, he was a student of Communism. Ch'en Juo-hsi was not. Unless in the future some autobiographical writings of hers appear, we have no way of knowing under what circumstances she decided to repudiate all that had gone before and return to the Mainland. But then, whether Ch'en Juo-hsi herself ever actively studied Marxism-Leninism has no relation to the stories she has written or is about to write. (Liu Hsiang-tung of "Night Watch" is like Koestler: "What was sustaining him then was not just a patriotic fervor, but a beautiful ideal. For the sake of this ideal, he diligently studied the works of Lenin and Mao Tse-tung all night, taking extensive notes.") What interests Ch'en Juo-hsi is the art of the short story and the experiences of Chinese living under the

Communist system. What she writes is not political discourse. If she spent precious space proving in a "formal" tone that Communism was an anachronism, perhaps fewer people would read her stories.

The knowledge we gain from her stories is limited only to the reality she was able to see and reflect during her seven years on the Mainland. We have seen from newspapers and magazines various acts of violence of the Red Guards, and probably some of these stories are more tragic than that of Mayor Ying, but only after reading "Mayor Ying" do we get to know the feeling of loss, betrayal and waste on the part of a devoted Communist cadre during the heat of the Cultural Revolution. After reading "Ching-ching's Birthday," we realize that the phrase, "*tung-yen wu-chi*" (lit., no taboos in children's vocabulary) has already completely lost its original meaning on the Mainland. When a government can make a not yet four-year-old child's "whole face immediately stiffen" because he cried a "reactionary slogan," one can imagine the terror of its ruling tactics. "Ching-ching's Birthday" has opened for us a new vista in its successful description of terror. This kind of subject matter and the complex psychology of fear cannot be captured in journalistic literature and even less in theoretical essays.

According to a report in a recent issue of a Chinese language newspaper published in America, Ch'en Juo-hsi had no intention of writing short stories when she went to Hong Kong in 1973. Later on she felt lonely in Hong Kong, and unable to keep from remembering the friends she had made in the Mainland, she began writing. If this report is correct, Ch'en Juo-hsi had nothing in mind in writing the stories other than to recall the past. She did not have the *political* aim of which George Orwell spoke, though we have already said that she has done what the author of *1984* wanted to do, that is, make political writing into an art. It is not difficult for us to guess at Ch'en Juo-hsi's present contradictory mood. Perhaps when she wrote the short stories, she had no political aim in mind, but anyone reading her works can perceive the course of the author's political awakening:

Not love Chairman Mao? Where does one begin to explain! The child's father, fearing that he would be born in a foreign country, especially rushed back to China. Before he was even out of his mother's womb, he was given the school name of Wei-tung (lit., guard the east) while waiting. When he was no more than a few months old he could recognize Chairman

Mao's picture when raised up on one's shoulders. He could call, 'Mao, Mao,' before he could even say 'Mama.' . . . We adults don't love Chairman Mao? To follow him, we abandoned our friends and gave ourselves up to the Chinese Mainland where we had no friends. So many times the child's father has said to him, "Chairman Mao is our only relation . . ."

Teacher Wen of "Ching-ching's Birthday" is of course not Ch'en Juo-hsi. But if the author of this story did not have emotional reactions similar to those of Teacher Wen, she could never have written such a confessional piece. While Ch'en Juo-hsi's stories never make frontal attacks on the Communist Party, the particular grief, disappointment and confusion which come out in her language are almost transparent. This is something which, I believe, Ch'en Juo-hsi herself could not deny. After the ideal of Communist China was destroyed, what became of the "only relation" before Teacher Wen's eyes?

I sighed and looked up at the bust portrait of Chairman Mao pasted on the wall. The seemingly smiling countenance of the person on the wall appeared completely unmoved by the events which had just taken place and was so silent and indifferent as to make one terrified by the sight. Then without warning my stomach received a kick from the fetus, and I was so startled, I felt a numbness all over, followed by a dull, hidden pain. I hugged my stomach tightly and whispered, "Don't worry. When you're born, I'll certainly find some excuse to take that picture away!"

Teacher Wen's author was even more thorough. After clearly recognizing the true face of Communism, as soon as she had the chance, she gave herself up to the embrace of capitalism, which she had renounced seven years earlier. This may be the reason why Ch'en Juo-hsi does not want her works to be seen as "political stories" or "anti-Communist stories." Though she has severed relations with Communist China, she observes the virtue which she had learned from the "old society," which is that "When a gentleman severs relations, he does not make abusive remarks."

When she left the "new China" which she had once fervently identified with, it was hard to avoid the feeling of being a deserter. The kindhearted Chinese common people like old Lu, old Fu and An Nai-nai whom she had met during her seven years on the

Mainland have helped her bear the special emotional trials incidental to being a member of the petty bourgeoisie. Perhaps it is for this reason that she could not bring herself to call her own works anti-Communist, though her short stories are on one level similar to T'ien Han's *Kuan Han-ch'ing*, in that they "protest for the sake of the people." The only difference is that while T'ien Han's "poison weeds" were disseminated on the Mainland at his own risk, Ch'en Juo-hsi did not have the opportunity to recall the past until after she had safely left the Mainland.

—translated by Jeanne Kelly

MAYOR YING*

CH'EN JUO-HSI

I saw Mayor Ying only twice, but I shall never forget him.

In the autumn of 1966, I came to Sian from Peking and stayed at the home of my friend, Old Chang. At that time Old Chang's only son was an overbearing, self-important Red Guard. Still a minor leader and only a young kid in his second year of high school, he already had an uncommon air about him. Every other sentence out of his mouth was revolutionary doctrine: "Defend Chairman Mao," or "Rebellion is justified." So averse was he to taking off his dark green military jacket in order to wash it that the collar and cuffs had all become a grimy black. On his arm he wore a flashy red silk armband five inches long. Whenever he met anyone, he would place his right hand on his hip, forcing the other to confront the authority which that armband represented.

At the time he and another Red Guard were about to go to Hsing-an County of southern Shansi to kindle the flames of revolution. It was said that the revolutionary conditions of this region were far behind, and that they did not even have a Red Guard unit. So, the general headquarters of the "Red Command" of Sian had decided to send two capable cadres there to develop operations. Young Chang had taken the initiative in requesting to go. He was originally from Hsing-an, not having moved to the provincial capital with his parents until he was twelve. This trip, besides being necessary for the revolution, would be a chance for him to revisit his old home and see his relatives and friends, serving both public and private interests. Of course in those days one could never speak of "serving both public and private interests;" otherwise one would be in for certain criticism, for it was a time of "destroying the private and fostering the public." One could only take Chairman Mao's "Not benefiting one's self, only benefiting others," as a guideline for one's personal conduct. It so happened that I had completed my assignment with about two weeks to spare and had already been to see Sian's well-known scenic spots such as the large and small Yen Pagodas, P'ei-lin and Pan-pian-p'o, on a former assignment. Feeling it would be dull to sit around Sian, I accepted Old Chang's proposal that I go to

* The translator wishes to thank the author for checking over the manuscript and suggesting changes. The translator, however, assumes full responsibility for any errors.

southern Shansi with Young Chang and his friend to see the sights of the Han-chung basin.

It took us a full day and night on a bus to cross Ch'in Ling and reach Hsing-an. There was nothing but mountains and more mountains along the route. The bus remained in a constant tilt turning bends. I felt dizzy and uncomfortable the whole way, and even after we had reached the station and got off the bus, as I walked along I felt as though I were going to keel over. Ch'in Ling is really a thick, solid wind-screen with two distinct types of scenery in North and South Ch'in. On my previous trip, Sian had already taken on the dismal autumn shades of withered trees and dried grasses, but this area was such a rich green, I fancied myself in the warm south of the Yangtse river.

Young Chang settled me at the home of his relative, Old Ying. He and his classmate were to stay in the dormitory of the district high school. Old Ying, who was over seventy years of age, was still very robust. He had lost his mate only a year earlier and now lived in a large brick house in which the beds, tables and chairs were all kept neat and clean. To us visitors from afar he offered an obviously heartfelt welcome. As soon as we entered the door, he smiled happily, tossed aside his tobacco pouch, rolled up his sleeves and busied himself preparing dinner. Young Chang and his classmate had learned the liberation army traditions and laying down their baggage rolls, set about carrying water and chopping wood for him.

After dinner, just as Young Chang and his friend were about to start off for the school, a man wearing glasses and a cadre's uniform strode in the door. When Young Chang caught sight of him, he sat stunned for a moment, then greeted the guest uneasily in a strained manner, calling him "Uncle." He then introduced us to the guest, saying, "This is my distant uncle." He bit down heavily on the word "distant."

Not knowing the guest's family name, Young Chang's classmate and I greeted him politely as "Uncle." The moment the introductions were over, Young Chang hurriedly pulled my wrist up to look at my watch, and mumbling, "It's late. I'm afraid the students' dormitory will close up," he urged his classmate to hurry and together they carried out their bed rolls and departed.

Young Chang's uncle seemed to be both surprised and bewildered by this hurried encounter and departure. Except for nodding and smiling courteously to us, he had kept his curious gaze fixed on Young Chang's red armband. He was a very tall man, and although he was lean and swarthy, his back was held

stiffly erect. In his youth he must have cut a very imposing figure. When he looked at someone, he fixed him with his gaze, and when he listened to someone talking, his head inclined slightly to the side, as though he were afraid of missing something. The expression on his face, however, was gentle and unassuming. He was not yet fifty years of age, and the rather old grey cadre suit he wore was scrubbed clean. His cotton shoes and socks were quite typical of those of the cadre from north to south China.

He sat down and chatted with Old Ying. After conversing awhile about everyday matters, he asked me politely about myself. When he learned that I was an outsider and had especially come to southern Shansi on a pleasure trip, he seemed relieved and expressed his welcome to me. Then, in the simple, humble accents peculiar to the people of the middle plains, he said, "Our Hsing-an is a poor and secluded spot. Besides the Ch'in Ling and the Ta Pa mountains which stretch farther than the eyes can see, there is only the Han River. In the mountains in the north there are a few waterfalls, though, which are worth going to see. Too bad that lately they've been having another movement, and I can't get away. Otherwise I'd be delighted to take you around."

Perhaps the word "movement" made him think of something, for his look saddened, and he sighed faintly. Old Ying turned on the single light and brought him a bowl of boiled water. He sat absently for a while without drinking the water, then said good-bye and left.

The next day the guest-loving Old Ying broke with his habit of many years of having two meals a day and rose early to cook some congee. After a good night's sleep, my fatigue had completely left me, and remembering the salt pork, the dried beef, the shredded pork, and so on I had bought in Sian, I hurried to get it out and give it to Old Ying. While I was drinking the congee, I brought up the "uncle," and then learned that he was the Mayor of Hsing-an and was also named Ying, a relative of Old Ying's.

"He distinguished himself by revolting and became the provisional Mayor. After the liberation he continued to be on the county committee, so everyone still calls him Mayor Ying."

Mayor Ying had been an officer under General Hu Tsung-nan¹ in the Nationalist Party before the liberation and had

1. Hu Tsung-nan — (1895-1962) A Nationalist army commander who became known as the "King of the Northwest." During the Sino-Japanese war he commanded the First Army, the Seventeenth Army Group and the Thirty-fourth Army Group.

occupied a few passes in the southeast of Ch'in Ling with several thousand troops under him. Because Ch'in Ling was such a strategic area and could not be taken by force, underground party members were given orders to do thought reform work on Colonel Ying. Colonel Ying, who was then a young man of twenty some years, was very ardent. The troops under him were mostly boys from the Ch'in Ling mountain region and were very faithful to him. When he resolutely raised the standard of revolt and switched his allegiance to the Communist Party, his troops all followed to a man.

"So, without a single bullet wasted, the three counties of southern Shansi ran up the red flag."

When Old Ying had finished, he lit up his pipe, took two fierce drags, then exhaled contentedly, blinking his dim old eyes as if the recollection of this distant event still stirred him. I have always admired people who can clearly recognize the general trend of affairs and know where loyalty belongs, so I deeply appreciated Mayor Ying's wisdom.

"Though we're relatives, I'm not painting a pretty face on him for no reason. You can go and ask the people within forty *li* of here. When he revolted and switched his loyalty, he wasn't out for official rank or riches for himself. He asked only for the safety of the troops under him and for an opportunity for them to amend their ways and reform. There weren't too many KMT officers with that kind of understanding, I bet."

"No, there certainly weren't many of those," I agreed.

"Nowadays it's the ones from a good background who have it good. But during the period of land reform, the labor organization of his village classified his mother as a poor peasant. He asked for a reclassification, saying that when his father was alive, he often hired laborers during the peak seasons and that it was only in keeping with the policy for him to be designated a rich peasant. He finally ended up being classified a middle peasant."

"Then, Mayor Ying showed himself to be quite zealous."

"Ah, but you see, during the three-anti and five-anti movements,² he was the only cadre in the county who made it through. The party committee secretaries of our county were replaced several times. I remember the first one, during the three-anti and five-anti movements, was dismissed for corruption."

2. Three-anti and Five-anti movements — campaigns against, in the first instance, waste, corruption, and bureaucracy; and bribery, evasion and leakage of taxes, theft of state property, skrimping work and cheating on material, and robbing and stealing of state economic information, in the second.

"If the party committee secretary was always being replaced, wasn't production work affected?"

"Ah, this county of ours is rather complicated. On top of that it's a poor mountain region. Production never goes up and when it doesn't, all kinds of problems arise. When they can't be solved, then the party member is removed. To tell you the truth, since the liberation, the yield has changed. Our life is a little better than it used to be, but how can it compare with the Sian area? You just came from there, so you know. Around the 800 *li* area of the Ch'in River, one season's harvest can feed them for two. It's far from that here! Nine out of ten years there's a drought. Though the people's government does all it can, just let there be one period of bad weather, and we'll have a famine on our hands, and people will still be chewing on bark and leaves. A few years ago when there was a poor harvest, I went back to my old village in the mountains. The neighbor's elder daughter couldn't come out to greet the guests — she had no long pants to wear. Her mother had already exchanged the cloth coupons for food, and it was all eaten . . . This is between good friends I'm telling you this. I'm sure you wouldn't brand me an anti-revolutionary."

I shook my head gravely. "I'm not a party member and besides I hate reporting on people behind their backs."

Old Ying gave a "P'ei" of disdain to indicate he felt the same way I did.

"During those three hard years," he said, "we were in a sorry state ourselves. People should speak according to their consciences. I've lived to be over seventy. Before the liberation I went through worse hardships than this. Then it wasn't just selling sons and daughters, it was men eating men In those days of hardship, neither the cadres nor the common people had anything to eat. So when the party committee secretary was dismissed, nobody had any complaints. The Communist Party is willing to admit its mistakes. I admire them for that. And it's a lucky thing we had those three bad years, otherwise even Mayor Ying would have been dismissed."

"What, you don't mean to say *he* made a mistake?"

"During the period of free expression, he made a few remarks. What's important is that he took the lead in criticizing the agricultural policies. Then an anti-rightist campaign suddenly began, and he was nearly branded a rightist. His wife, who used to work in the county, was transferred. If she hadn't had the original investment of Mayor Ying's revolt to fall back on, which was clearly set by policy, she would have been sent to the loess

cave dwellings in northern Shansi. They were going to train Mayor Ying for entrance into the party, and he had made an application to the authorities. Then when the anti-rightist campaign occurred, everything was finished. But to get right down to it, he didn't really want to enter the party. He once told me that he couldn't ever get the hang of that Marxist ideology. Then after the anti-rightist campaign, rumor had it that they wanted to get rid of his permanent committee ship and do away with his position as Mayor. But in the spring and summer of 1960, we had a series of unprecedented droughts where there wasn't a grain of corn or wheat harvested. The peasant's conditions were terrible, and they refused to plant anything. Cases of theft and robbery of food began to occur. The government relief provisions couldn't solve the problem either. At that time they not only found it hard to dismiss Mayor Ying from his post, they even sent him especially to take charge of the agricultural production. Those two years he went down to the villages himself and appealed to the farmers to keep up production. At the same time he relaxed the quotas, encouraged their initiative, restored private plots and did household contract production. There was even a free market . . ."

"Ai ya, Ying Po-po," I couldn't help breaking in. "You still bring up that Three Freedoms One Contract business!³ Don't you know that the cultural revolution was to pin down the responsibility for the Three Freedoms One Contract policy? The large-character posters in Peking have already indirectly implicated Liu Shao-ch'i, criticizing him for that restorationist capitalist policy!"

"Is that what's happened?" The old man couldn't believe his own ears and stared at me with his mouth agape.

"You're darned right," I said restraining my voice. "I heard a lot of people discussing it with my own ears."

"I've really gotten old. I can't keep up with things anymore . . ." He let out his breath and shook his head. A few grey hairs on his forehead also began to quiver. Suddenly he grew obstinate and contracted his brows, making his face look like a dried up orange.

"I can't understand it," he said in a fit of pique. "If they hadn't done that then, the peasants surely would have rebelled?"

3. Three Freedoms One Contract — the practice of allowing (a) private plots, (b) free markets, and (c) free enterprise, plus the assumption of a contractual obligation to produce a fixed quantity of grain based on the household.

"Don't say such things!" I hurriedly cautioned him. "If your relative put that sort of thing into practice, more than likely he'd have been subjected to criticism."

When the old man heard this, he burst into laughter and declared indifferently, "What does criticism amount to! Criticism isn't just the common fare of the cadre. Even this petty commoner in these last few years has been through any number of criticism sessions large and small."

"Yes, you're right. This time they say it's to oppose and guard against revisionism. The most important thing to dig out is Liu Shao-ch'i's revisionist roots. For the people who are putting the policies into actual practice, don't they just eliminate the poison and let it go at that?"

"That's right," the old man agreed, as if his anger had somewhat subsided. "For Mayor Ying, putting through the Three Freedoms One Contract practices was nothing but carrying out orders from above. How could it have been his own idea? Since the anti-rightist campaign, his county committee position is only nominal, anyway."

Though he defended himself in this way, Old Ying took on a preoccupied air and grew quiet from this conversation on. When he had nothing to do, he would sit on a low stool in the doorway puffing on his pipe and nervously blinking his eyes as though mulling something over in his mind.

Things changed very rapidly. Young Chang had been absent for one or two days when in the tiny county seat there appeared colorful large-character posters announcing the establishment of a local Red Guard Unit and calling on the townspeople and students to rise and join the revolution, asking the cadres especially to "Light the fire under yourself and awaken your revolutionary consciousness," etc.

The vital part of the entire county seat was a highway running east and west; Old Ying's house was on the west end. I stood along the roadside and gazed eastward, on tiptoe. The main buildings of the county — the county middle and elementary schools and the movie theater furthest way, the county committee office, the department store, and the bus station in the middle, and the county hospital near the west end — all were within sight. For a few days I watched as middle-school students carrying buckets of flour paste and holding brushes spread paste on the walls with great flourishes, then pasted up large-character posters. Peasants entering the town on business all stood watching with curiosity. Young people exchanged remarks while pointing and gesturing.

At one point the sound of a motor was heard and people's attention was immediately diverted. It was a truck from the mountains parading through the streets, a tiny cart packed with excited faces, red and shiny from the wind and sun. After the truck had passed, everyone's eyes returned to the dipper-sized ink characters with the rousing slogans:

Out with the pro-capitalist anti rebellion XXX!
Whoever tries to cover up will be fought to the end!
XXX must bow his head and admit his guilt!
XX has come to light. The end has come!
Shansi Red Command Rebel Group, bravely forward!

People could be heard all about the streets discussing in loud tones the bombardment the county party committeeman was receiving. The Red Guards wanted to call a criticism and a struggle meeting to criticize him for his opposition to the "Sixteen Conditions," for his opposition to the movement, for his greed and corruption, and were even ready to parade him through the streets. When the situation reached its most heated point, a new large-character poster was suddenly pasted up on the main gate of the county elementary school with the battle spear pointing toward another cadre. By the time I had heard about this and had walked over to look, the main gate was already surrounded by on on-lookers three to four rows deep. After much effort, I finally managed to squeeze my way into the circle.

The slogan on the poster read: "Who is the real class enemy?" Underneath a small caption read: "Don't let the big fish slip away while groping for the small shrimp!" It called upon everyone to cooperate in picking out the real class enemy in the county committee, the hidden villainous tyrant scoundrel, the warlord of the KMT era, declaring that he had feigned activism, falsely reported his element, and exploited as a matter of course. His "landlady" wife had opposed reform, etc., etc. At first I didn't know to whom this was alluding. Later I heard by-standers discussing it vociferously and finally realized it referred to Mayor Ying.

So the fire had finally burned its way to Mayor Ying. I knew well enough this was the direction events had taken, and it was bound to happen. Still I heaved a sigh.

That day after dinner, Young Chang came to see me and gave me a bus ticket to Han-chung for the following day. I mentioned the large-character posters I had seen during the day and asked him about them. Just what was all this about "Uncle Mayor."

When he heard the word "Uncle," Young Chang's face suddenly reddened and his nostrils flared, barely hiding a feeling of rage underneath. He began to complain how difficult the organizational work was, that the youth of this mountain region were backward and stubborn in their thinking and that furthermore, they just didn't understand the policies. He said that the newly formed rebel group was being manipulated from behind the scenes by someone and that an ill-wind had suddenly risen calling for "Rectification of the county committeeman."

"It's definitely the work of some petty little royalist dog," declared Young Chang, gnashing his teeth. "They want to protect the capitalist roaders, change the general direction of the struggle, and start beating the dog in the water."

"What, you mean your uncle is an old 'movementer?'" I asked curiously.

He shrugged his shoulders. "At the most he's a rightist who's slipped through the net. My uncle . . ."

He immediately caught himself at this point and gave his head a rapid shaking as if he had resolved to throw off this family tie.

"Everyone knows that for the past several years Ying Feilung has been a mayor in name only. To make a big hullabaloo about getting him ousted is departing completely from the main line. That is really what you call 'groping for the little shrimp while letting the big fish slip away.' That party committee secretary was corrupt and fooled around with women. The people were completely fed up, but he was let off lightly . . . I suspect he's the one controlling part of the Red Guards from behind the scenes and creating a split. But as soon as I talk about catching the villain, somebody turns around and says I'm trying to protect my relative. What bullshit!"

The more he talked the more enraged he became, seemingly overwhelmed by the injustice of it all; and unable to sit still on the bench any longer, he suddenly stood up and pounded the dinner table with his fist, nearly shattering the bowls and plates. I started with surprise, but had no idea how best to console him. I glanced over at Old Ying. He blinked vacantly a couple of times and went on puffing on his pipe as usual. Now and then he coldly eyed Young Chang but said nothing.

That day after the sun had set behind the mountain peaks, a wind arose. After darkness settled, it began to wail, the gusts becoming ever more frequent. Young Chang was afraid the weather was changing and refused to stay longer. Turning up his

collar against the wind, he left in a hurry. Old Ying turned on the light and cleared the dinner table, then boiled some water and banked the fire. I packed up a small hand-bag ready to take along the next day.

By the time we had washed up, it was already nine thirty. Most of the people in this mountain village had by this time already entered the land of dreams. I was just getting ready to turn out the light and get into bed when suddenly I heard a knock on the door. It was very faint. Old Ying was sitting on the edge of his bed, bending over to remove his shoes and apparently had heard nothing. Curiously I lifted the bolt on the door and a man's figure darted inside, followed by the howl of the mountain wind, and closed the door for me behind him with a clean, smooth movement. In the flickering light of the lamp I saw that it was none other than Mayor Ying. I could not help being surprised that he would be out calling at this late hour.

He immediately apologized to us for having come disturb us so late. "I don't often get to meet a comrade from Peking, and I couldn't help wanting to ask you a few questions."

I invited him to sit down at the dinner table. Old Ying put his shoes back on and came over to join us. Mayor Ying took off his hat and removed his glasses. Perhaps because he did not know for a moment where to start, he pulled out a handkerchief and concentrated on wiping his lenses. Once he had taken off his glasses, his dark yellowish face seemed to become slightly enlarged and clouded over with an expression of bewilderment and fatigue. Sitting close to him, I noticed he had a scar at the corner of his left eye which ran all the way to his ear. On the back of his right hand he also had a surgical scar about an inch long. These must be the marks of his former military career, I thought; otherwise his present appearance would never have prompted one to think that this was the "warlord" referred to in the large-character posters. I didn't know whether or not he was aware that the large-character posters had been pasted up about him, but for my part I could not bring myself to mention it.

He remained silent for a moment, then suddenly he looked closely into my face and coming right to the point, he asked, "Just why do they have a cultural revolution?"

From the urgent tone of his voice I could already imagine the distress he was suffering inside. But at that time I didn't understand the real meaning of the cultural revolution myself, and so I just recited to him by rote all that I had read over and over in the newspapers and heard again and again.

It seemed the more he listened, the more confused he became. His head inclined heavily to one side and he furrowed his brows.

"I still don't understand what this cultural revolution has to do with me," he began finally, after listening to a long discourse from me, and slowly and unhurriedly he secured his glasses carefully into position. "I've never been number one in the county, nor even number two. I've never done any organizing, I pay no attention to propaganda, and I have never schemed or counseled. Whatever the party wants, I do. I've only one head, and I reform along with the party . . . As for my past, since the liberation I've made confessions five or six times. What do I have left to hide or falsify?"

This last sentence was actually said to himself. When he had finished, his head dropped downward, and he cradled it with his right hand. The scar on the back of his hand, looking like a grape branch which had been eaten bare, shone bright red in the lamplight.

Neither I nor Old Ying knew quite what to say. Old Ying coughed a couple of times, then groped in his pocket for some matches, and methodically lighted that mainstay of his existence, the already shiny black pipe. I pulled out a pack of Front Gate and offered it to Mayor Ying, but he shook his head, saying he never smoked. I then lighted one for myself and began to urge him kindly to believe in the party's policies, to believe in the people, and to believe above all in "criticize with severity" but "handle with generosity." . . . When one cigarette had burned through, my throat had also gone dry from talking. To say anything more would have been to tell an outright lie.

He listened carefully throughout, now and then nodding in agreement, though his expression could not conceal the suggestion of a sardonic smile.

"I'm not worried for my own sake," he declared frankly. "That's the one advantage of having no children. I just feel regretful. As for what I regret, I can't say exactly myself. It's as if I've never done anything, never made any contribution to the country or the people."

"You mustn't expect too much," I said, "None of us can expect too much. If everyone does all in his power, then he is making a contribution to the country."

But he smiled sadly and shook his head in denial.

"It's been almost thirty years since I learned about Communism," he recalled. "At that time I didn't know for sure whether Communist ideals could definitely be realized or not, or when they

were realized, what it would be like. But I believe it's better than the Three Peoples' Principles.⁴ The Communist Party's way of doing things is better than the KMT's, and Mao Tse-tung is better than Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang Kai-shek didn't do his best to resist the Japanese. Unfortunately I realized that too late I was pulled into the army at the age of fifteen and suffered a great deal of hardship. All I thought about then was getting by, of climbing up and some day becoming a regiment commander, a division commander, a general. All I ever thought about was myself. So when people told me that Communism taught people to live for others, to work for the Chinese common people, I began to realize how tiny and dirty I really was. I felt I had been living all the time for nothing. I remember being so moved my hands and feet perspired so much the whip I had in my hand became dripping wet. But after all, I come from crude beginnings. I didn't get proper schooling when I was young. Since the liberation, though I took part in study groups a few times, my cultural level is too low, and I just never could understand Marxist-Leninism. Sometimes I think it was meant solely for the intelligentsia to read, or else it wasn't actually meant for Chinese to read. Before the anti-rightist campaign, the organization advised me to study Liu Shao-ch'i's 'On the Party,' and I did get something out of it. Now, that was a Chinese speaking. Nowadays they urge everyone to study Chairman Mao's works, so the day before yesterday we finally took out a few volumes from storage, all coated with dust."

I told him that Liu Shao-ch'i already stood aside and that his "On the Party" had become a poisonous weed because he quoted from Confucius and Mencius. He was not merely startled at this, he was simply dumbfounded.

"Now, what's wrong with what Confucius and Mencius said?" he asked me. "I studied one of Chairman Mao's articles before in which he quoted from Confucius and Mencius."

"Well, that's different of course, when Chairman Mao quotes them," I said with neat logic. "Other people quote them with their own ends in mind. They have foolish notions about restoring the old regime."

On this point I wasn't much clearer than he, so I quickly changed the subject. "Why did you report your element differently on two occasions?"

4. Three Peoples' Principles — the three principles of nationalism, democracy, and livelihood laid down by Dr. Sun Yat-sen.

When he heard this, he gave me a stunned look as though someone had grabbed him by his braid and wouldn't let go.

"I falsified the report," he admitted frankly, his face filled with remorse. "Not long after I'd switched my allegiance to the party, I was assigned to a study group. Every day we studied the policy on the special treatment of prisoners-of-war. The cadres called on everyone to confess and make a clean breast to the party. Someone took the lead in giving account of himself to the party, and the crimes he testified to were truly appalling. Execution would have been too good for him, yet he was treated with generosity and was not investigated at all. We soldiers who had switched our allegiance were all moved to tears. Everybody scrambled for a cadre to talk and confess to, wishing we could dig out our very hearts, and it seemed the worse we made ourselves out, the the more glorious it was. I even regretted then that my father hadn't been a warlord or head of the security police. So, when I filled out the forms, it seemed at least a little more believable to report myself as being a landlord. Weren't all officers of Chiang's clique considered to have come from the class of landlord tyrants? In 1953 when our village assessed the achievements of land reform, the work group classified my family as poor peasants because it happened that during the time of the liberation we had no land or fields. Actually we had had a few *mou* of land which were given to my younger sister in 1948 as part of her dowry. My parents depended on me to send them money for support. It was a lot better than tilling the land themselves. At the time I felt it was really disloyal to the party to be classed as a poor peasant. As my father had already passed away by then, I wrote a letter to the local county committee asking to be classified as a rich peasant. Later the district informed my mother that we had been changed to upper middle peasants. But my brother-in-law was the unlucky one because having acquired those few *mou* of land, he was classified as a rich peasant, making him one of the five categories of black elements.⁵ The couple both bore this 'stigma' and they didn't get along very well."

Gradually he grew hoarse until his voice broke and no sound was heard. Only a sad smile remained. Besides heaving a sigh, I had no words to console him with.

5. The five categories of black elements — landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, rightists, and bad elements.

"It's late." Old Ying spoke for the first time. He had at some time already put away his pipe and with clasped hands gazed anxiously at Mayor Ying.

The mountain breeze had noticeably died down, and along with this came the pattering of the rain, light and quick like spring silkworms munching on mulberry leaves. Mayor Ying stood up as though waking from a dream, put on his hat and mumbled something incoherently. Old Ying kept shaking his head and saw him to the door with me in silence. Old Ying offered him the umbrella next to the door, but he refused it and in one stride was out the door. We watched until his tall form disappeared into the dark night with the wind and rain, then Old Ying bolted the door and immediately put out the light. With neither of us uttering a word, we groped our way through the darkness into bed.

The next day I set off for Han-chung.

I returned to Hsing-an a week later. It was sunset. The mountain peaks, the trees and houses, were all bathed in the resplendent golden glow of the setting sun. The bus station was dazzling with its large-character posters everywhere. There were also magnificently colored comic strips and propaganda posters. The colorful sight was overwhelming. Carrying my bag, I took a turn around the waiting room with its two benches. From a mere glance at the slogans I knew that Mayor Ying had already become a target of public attack. I decided to go over to the county middle school to see the large-character posters. When I passed the door of the theater, I saw a large slogan had already covered up the movie poster. The notice "Quit your businesses and turn your energies on the revolution" sealed up the ticket window. The front of the main gate of the district committee was bleak and deserted. Only a middle-aged man, his head bent over, his body stooped at the waist, was sweeping the steps. A young fellow stood to the side watching, leisurely blowing out smoke rings. Perhaps this was the party committee secretary who had suffered the first blast, but I wasn't in the mood to inquire. People came and went on the street with a little more bustle than previously. Many of them were middle school students dressed in green uniforms with red armbands. Everywhere one beheld the color red, red-character slogans, red large-character newspapers, red signboards. In the setting sunlight there was a new atmosphere about the place. I looked carefully at the shops on both sides of the street. All their names had been changed: The Red Guard Department Store, the People's Restaurant, the Red Guard Photo Studio, Protect the East

Snack Shop, the East is Red Theater, the People's Farm Implement Repair Shop . . .

I saw from afar that a large crowd had gathered at the gate of the middle school. When I approached, I discovered that there was a debate in progress. The crowd was packed so densely it seemed a needle could not have been stuck into it. At first I was going to walk back when suddenly I heard a voice on one side of the debate which sounded very familiar. Who could it be? My curiosity aroused, I decided to see just who it was. With my back against the school wall, I used my bag as a stepping stone, and supporting myself against the wall, stood up to take a look. There were three Red Guards debating. One was pitted against two others. The lone valiant was a square-faced youth with bushy eyebrows who was obviously on the defensive. His face was a bright red and he spoke in rough tones, ceaselessly mopping the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief. Because they held the upper hand, his two opponents were glowing with satisfaction. The spittle flew, their heads were back, and their eyes wide opened like triumphant cocks. There in the middle appearing especially pleased with himself was Young Chang. He too had a reddened face and bulging neck, but his manner was overbearing and his head was held higher than anyone else's.

"I still stick to what I said," said the square-faced young man doggedly. "We must follow the party's policies. If one has revolted, then we should let bygones be bygones. Only then are we in keeping with Chairman Mao's teaching . . ."

"P'ei!" Young Chang angrily refuted him. "You still haven't got the point of Chairman Mao's teaching. Chairman Mao said, 'If there are injustices, revenge them; if there are grudges, revenge them.' It's not that we weren't going to revenge them, but the time hadn't come yet! So? Now is the time to avenge our class brothers!"

"You see! He can righteously destroy his relative. So just where do you stand with that view of yours?" demanded the other with vehemence.

"A life to pay for a life. Is there any other choice?" pressed Young Chang relentlessly.

"A debt of blood should be paid with blood!" The other simply raised his voice to a shout.

A few students chimed in. The square-faced young man continued to argue stubbornly, but his voice was cut off and finally drowned out.

Perhaps I was worn out from the journey. Suddenly I felt dizzy and sick at heart. I hurriedly jumped down, picked up my bag and set off into the dim rays of the setting sun toward Old Ying's. All along the way my ears seemed to reverberate with the cry "A life to pay for a life."

As I reached Old Ying's door, the last ray of sunlight disappeared without a trace. I was tired and hungry and just wanted to lie down and rest. But as soon as I pushed the door open and entered, I was greatly disappointed. There were two guests seated in the room. One of them, an older grey-haired man about Old Ying's age, was holding a red book of "Mao's Quotations," reading something which I couldn't make out in the tones of Shansi opera. The other was an old woman. She sat immobile, staring at the red book in her hand until the sound of my footsteps entering the room seemingly aroused her, and she sat upright, fixing me with a curious stare. Her mouth opened wide and her chin hung down as though disjointed. The old man who was reading paused a moment, then after throwing a glance at me continued his muttered reading. Old Ying stood up from the edge of the bed and nodded to me, then sat down again and picked up the little red book, laying it on his knee. Instead of opening it, he regarded it in silence.

I laid my bag beside the small bed that I had slept in a week before and went to draw water to wash my face. I began to regret coming back to Hsing-an. I could have returned directly to Peking from Han-chung via Sian. All I wanted was to come back to pick up a bag and buy a wooden wash basin for a friend in Peking. Who'd have guessed I'd arrive in time to see Old Ying being rectified! He was already having a hard enough time looking out for himself. Having an outsider come stay with him was certainly adding to his difficulties! As I wiped my face, I resolved that if I could just get hold of a bus ticket, I'd leave immediately.

Old Ying came to ladle out some water to wash the rice and lit the fire to cook a bowl of congee. He then sliced up a plate of pickled vegetables and brought it to the table. When the old man and woman saw all this, they rose as though letting go of a heavy burden and, picking up the small benches from under their bottoms, departed. Their front feet were no sooner out the door than Old Ying went to the cupboard and lifted out a bowl of Hunanese salted pork. It was the meat I had brought from Sian. He had been reluctant to eat it and had specially set it aside.

I told him that I intended to return to Sian the next day. He nodded several times.

"You'd best leave here soon." With that, he bent over and drank his congee without a word about his own affairs.

We had no sooner laid down our bowls and chopsticks than the people in charge of the study group came again. This time it was another pair: an older woman and a woman in her forties with cropped hair and an air of quiet composure who seemed to be a cadre.

"Have you thought it over, Old Ying?" asked the middle-aged woman the moment she had entered, sweeping a sharp glance back and forth twice across the bowls and plates on the table.

"I really don't know," answered Old Ying absently, busy collecting the dishes.

"Well, get your mind working and try to remember, then!" she said with great patience. At the same time she found the most comfortable seat which had its back to the wall and was next to the table and sat down as though preparing for a long siege.

The old woman also sat down at the other side of the table, taking from her pocket the "Quotations" while she fixed her gaze on Old Ying as though readying herself for combat.

"It happened only twenty-some years ago. Why can't you remember?" the middle-aged woman asked. "He was after all under your son's command. Quite a number of people know about it. You mean to tell me he never mentioned anything about it to his own father? A spirited young lad of eighteen to be cut down by that warlord tyrant Ying Fei-lung — now that is class hatred. Are we to let it go unavenged? And how was your own son killed? The cultural revolution is a time for settling these scores."

"My son was killed a year before the liberation of Shansi," Old Ying replied quietly as he carefully wiped the dinner table.

"How did he die? He was made into cannon fodder by Ying Fei-lung, wasn't he? He stubbornly opposed the Communists and forced the young men off to become cannon fodder. A truly horrendous crime! What are you worried about at your age? Stand up and draw a clear line with him!"

"Protecting a relative makes the crime even worse!" the old woman put in. "Never mind the fact that he often comes to look after you. That's like the weasel sending New Year's greetings to the chicken. Don't go setting your mind at rest. If he had done nothing disgraceful, why would he be so anxious to seal your mouth shut?"

The room was already so dark the faces were no longer clearly visible, but it hadn't occurred to Old Ying to turn on the light. While the two women were opening their books of quotations and

finding their places, I took the opportunity to slip out the door and go to the district middle school to find Young Chang.

Young Chang seemed to have quite a name for himself, and I found him right away. He had become the deputy commander of the rebel group and chief of the Propaganda Section. He had a classroom all to himself, provided even with a female secretary. The door of the classroom had recently acquired the sign "Reserved Area for Propaganda Section. Loiterers Keep Out" in red letters. People came and went, and the lights shone brightly in an atmosphere of all-night work. Dressed in a brand new military uniform with a wide leather belt around his waist and his face flushed a bright red, Young Chang himself was the picture of a successful young man puffed with pride.

At first I was going to ask him why he had changed his attitude toward his uncle, but as the secretary was glaring at me so fiercely, I had to stifle my curiosity. I merely told him I had to hurry back to Peking on urgent business and must leave the district seat tomorrow, asking him if he could arrange transportation. He answered me very brightly.

"Leave it to me," he said patting his chest, "I'll let you know early tomorrow morning."

In less than a fortnight Young Chang appeared to have changed radically. From his tone of voice and manner, it seemed he was delivering a speech. His expression was filled with self-confidence — it was downright arrogant.

As the matter was settled, I rose and said good-bye.

"Going already? It's still early." He made a great fuss of raising the sleeve of his left hand and giving the new watch on his wrist a careful scrutiny.

I smiled but said nothing and left this "Reserved Area for Propaganda Section" to wander along the street. It was only nine o'clock, but the pedestrians were scarce, and most of the shops had closed for the night. Many people had already put out the lights in their houses. A mountain breeze was blowing, giving the evening air an icy chill. As I had only a sweater on, I could not help shivering. The sickle-shaped moon hung over the mountain range, and the peaks reaching up into the clouds appeared dark and ominous in the dimness of the moonlight, like a fierce beast peeking out from its hiding, awaiting its chance to strike.

Heading into the cool breeze, I crossed over from the west to the east side of the street and strolled back. After all the shop fronts had been locked up, I had no choice but to return to Old

Ying's. The two women were still there trying to prevail upon Old Ying. He sat, with his pipe in his mouth, still listening respectfully, on the edge of the bed. I was so tired I kept yawning continuously. When I looked at my watch, it was almost ten o'clock already. When the woman who seemed like a cadre saw me look at my watch, she stood up and said, "Why don't you go to bed early. We'll continue tomorrow." She departed quickly with the old woman.

It was indeed a mountain home, so full of warmth. I was quite moved as I thought about it. Those in charge of the study group even thought to let people get to bed early. Outside, wasn't it always battling by turns from eight in the morning right up until one or two at night?

Because I was so exhausted, after I had turned out the light and gotten into bed, I discovered my legs seemed to have completely come apart at the joints and were extremely sore. Before I closed my eyes, I struggled with myself, then turned toward Old Ying in the bed opposite and pleaded with him, "Old Ying, if you have something to say, you'd best say it. That kind of 'speak out and convince' all day and all night, never stopping until the goal has been reached, is it worth all the trouble? It's better to believe in the party, believe in the people and get the matter straightened out once and for all."

My voice dropped lower and lower as I spoke, as though I were talking to myself. Finally it drowned in the darkness. After a long pause, Old Ying's long sardonic laugh could be heard.

"I'm sort of confused about it myself. I just heard that there was a soldier who once disobeyed an order in battle and was shot by Ying Fei-lung himself. I never knew the soldier and never saw what happened. So what can I say about it? If they want to do away with Ying Fei-lung, then let them do away with him. But they insist on digging up these rotten old scores! My son was killed fighting the Communists. So how can I say anything?"

How can one say anything . . . This unanswerable question accompanied my sigh and together they were carried into my dreams.

The next day, to my surprise, Young Chang proved to be marvelously resourceful. He sent someone over with a letter of introduction for me to take that day's flight out. Furthermore, in a shake I had been transformed into a "special observer" of their rebel group and did not even have to pay for a plane ticket. As the plane was taking off, Young Chang rushed up to wave good-bye to me. I waved to him through the plane window. Unfortunately in

the blink of an eye I had lost sight of him. Even the provincial capital of Hsing-an had disappeared. Outside the plane window, there was nothing but mountains and more mountains in an unbroken line reaching back to antiquity, through thousands of autumns, the great Ch'in Ling . . .

One windy afternoon in the spring of 1968, I was strolling in Tung-tan Park when I suddenly came upon Young Chang's cousin. I had only met him once when I was in Sian. Luckily he recognized me first and greeted me. He had on a wadded cotton jacket and carried a bag at his waist. He was sitting by himself on a bench peeling a pear. Surprised and overjoyed I sat down beside him and began chatting with him. He had come to Peking with a few Red Guard representatives to file charges. The Red Command of Shansi had split into two irreconcilable factions, "attacking with reason and defending with force" in a never-ending tangle. Their faction was getting the jump on the other by sending a representative to the capital to wrest the support of the central cultural revolutionary committee.

I inquired about the recent situation in Sian, asking about his uncle and cousin. "Has your cousin made his way further up?" I said jestingly. "What office has he risen to now?"

To my surprise Chang's expression suddenly changed when he heard this.

"My cousin isn't doing so well . . ." He began to stammer slightly, as if unable to make up his mind how much he should let me know. "He hasn't been home for more than three months. No one knows where he is. My uncle is so angry at him he's come down with stomach trouble. . . ."

When I heard this, I felt very sorry for my old friend. Chang said that unfortunately he and his cousin were in opposing factions. Young Chang's faction had become fiercely militant, and most of the leaders had received orders for arrest. Perhaps when the situation got critical, he had gone into hiding.

"You two cousins are exposing yourselves too much," I began rudely criticizing them. "What time is it now? Are they still going to let you go on rebelling? Pretty soon the army will step in. Young people won't learn. They pay no heed to the organizational discipline, quarreling all the time, and scrambling after power and gain. If you keep on like that, there's no telling what will come of it!"

When he heard me take the Red Guards so harshly to task, he was quite put out and said in defense, "We have our faults. My uncle has said so too. But this is the first time I've been out of

Shansi. I've always been in the background. This time I grabbed my chance to come to Peking for a visit. I'm not like my cousin. He's gotten in too deep to extricate himself. His father said he's let victory go to his head. After that business of Mayor Ying's execution, he was really at the peak of success."

"What did you say?" I broke in at once. I simply could not believe my ears. "They executed Mayor Ying?"

He nodded. "It happened in the beginning of 1967."

"For what crime?"

As soon as the words were out of my mouth, I immediately waved my hand at him, while in my heart there was an inexpressible feeling of anger, disappointment and sorrow.

"Never mind. I know all about those crimes. All farfetched to the extreme. He did revolt after all, so why did he get sentenced to death?"

"At the time everyone considered it necessary for the revolution. Unless one or two people were executed, there wouldn't be a sufficiently dominant influence established. After it was over, everyone did feel it was a little too extreme. There were some in our faction who wanted to exonerate him, but the time hasn't come yet, and it hasn't been brought up. Ying Fei-lung's wasn't the only case of this sort."

As he was speaking a wind arose. Dust and scraps of paper were curled up and tossed about in the air. The sun had been chased off somewhere and the dim and dismal sky became a hazy yellow. I shut my eyes tight and hid my face from the wind. My face stung from the wind brushing against it. The youth, who had been raised in the loess highlands, seemed to think nothing of it. Instead, when the wind blew hard, he opened his arms excitedly as if to capture it. After the wind had died down, he went on with what he had been saying.

"I arrived at Hsing-an just in time for Ying Fei-lung's public interrogation. I remember after the judgment 'Immediate execution' was read, Ying Fei-lung's head fell forward. If the two Red Guards behind him hadn't been holding him, he probably would have fallen over in a faint. His wife tried to rush forward to the stage screaming: 'Follow the policies! You must follow the policies!' She was carried off on the spot. At this, the crowd's reaction wasn't enthusiastic, either. Only the Red Guards in the front and on both sides of the hall clapped their hands and cheered. My cousin immediately jumped to the stage yelling a slogan, 'Blood debts must be paid in blood! Execution of the warlord tyrant anti-revolutionary Ying Fei-lung is a great victory

for Maoist thought . . . ' At first we took up the cry, but the sound became weaker and softer. My throat seemed to be stopped up by something, and my chest swelled uncomfortably. By the last 'Long live Chairman Mao,' only the people on stage were still yelling. Then everyone noticed that Ying Fei-lung was yelling along with them! His arms were held behind his back and his glasses had fallen off, but his head was still erect. His face was an ashen yellow, but he yelled low and powerfully with his mouth wide open, 'Long live Chairman Mao, Long live Chairman Mao . . . ' We were all stunned. The entire assembly fell completely silent, and only his yelling could be heard."

"Ah . . ." I let out a long breath. My chest too had swollen up, and I couldn't speak.

"At first when a public trial was proposed, they were going to muzzle his mouth with wire as usual for fear he would yell protest slogans. But someone said that wasn't necessary, that there was little chance he'd be so bold, so in the end it wasn't done. Now, seeing him yell 'Long live Chairman Mao,' the people who had tied him up didn't dare clamp their hands over his mouth for fear of committing an error. Then the audience in the back began to get aroused and pressed toward the stage. No matter how much the chairman of the meeting yelled 'strengthen the revolutionary discipline,' no one paid any attention. The Red Guards hurriedly fought their way to the stage to prevent the people from coming forward. Fearing a commotion, the chairman had no choice but to proclaim the immediate execution. So four or five men pulled Mayor Ying onto a truck. The planned parade through the streets was cancelled, and they went straight off to the rock pile. You know the rock pile at the mouth of the gully?"

I nodded. Once I had taken a cart into the mountains and had passed the spot — steep precipitous cliffs on both sides with a rocky deposit spewed out from the gully in the shape of a fan in the middle.

"Mayor Ying was tied to a post which had previously been stuck in the rock pile. When the rifles were raised and aimed at him, he again threw back his head and cried loudly, 'Long live the Communist Party! Long live Chairman Mao!' His eyes were bulging, and his eyeballs seemed about to burst. His lips had been bitten through so the blood flowed. Everyone refused to go ahead until he had stopped yelling slogans. My cousin happened to have two handkerchiefs with him, so he went up and gagged his mouth. Only then did the executioners open fire. This time there wasn't a single cheer, and no one wanted to go near to look. The body hung

down by itself from the post . . . But I turned my head away and dared not look. A peasant turned to me and asked, "Since he kept yelling 'Long live Chairman Mao' like that, why was he still executed?"

"And how did you answer him?" I asked.

He smiled bitterly and shrugged his shoulders. "I told him to mind his own business."

We both fell silent. A strong wind blew again. Dusk had fallen early.

"Is Old Ying all right?" I remembered that guest-loving old man.

He shook his head and replied, "He's already passed away."

Then Chang stood up, saying he had to return for a meeting and rushed off. I didn't ask how Old Ying had died. A phrase of Mao Tse-tung's grown familiar through repetition kept running through my head: "There will often be people who die."

— translated by Jeanne Kelly

NIGHT WATCH

CH'EN JUO-HSI

Liu Hsiang-tung strode into the dining room of the collective farm, a large bowl tucked under his arm and a pair of chopsticks in his hands. The dining room was already full, a long line of people standing in front of each window of the food stalls and even the window down at the corner of the room where soup was usually sold had a long file of people waiting. The room was more than usually crowded because of the teachers who had newly arrived that afternoon and after having been assigned beds for the night, had come in for dinner; and then there were those who had come early to stand in line as they were returning to Nanking the next morning and wanted to enjoy a last meal at the farm. The tables were all filled up, so most of the people were standing, eating out of their bowls. As Hsiang-tung took his place at the end of one of the lines, he dug into his trouser pocket for his rice and vegetable coupons, all the while studying the new menu on the poster pasted on the wall.

It was written with black ink on a piece of bright red paper, extremely eye-catching. It seemed that in order to welcome the newcomers and say farewell to the ones who were leaving, the kitchen staff had presented several special dishes, such as lion head,¹ sweet and sour pork, and the salt-water duck that Nanking people were so proud of. His appetite was already stimulated as he read over the menu, and as he watched those around him, devouring their food, his stomach began to rumble with hunger. Ever since he came back to China a year ago, his appetite had greatly increased, more than doubling. And he never had any trouble with his stomach as he had when he was in America, always worrying that he may have ulcers. He thought to himself: a man's stomach really adjusts itself most rapidly.

Soldiers of the revolution each must remember
Three regulations and eight points to observe:
First, obedience in every action . . .²

The farm's broadcasting had begun. Hsiang-tung did not need to look at his watch to know that the time was five-thirty. Each day, early in the morning, the loudspeakers would begin to blare

1. A popular dish of pork meat balls cooked with cabbage.

2. A popular revolutionary song in mainland China.

out "The East is Red" to hurry people out of bed; there were also revolutionary songs during lunchtime and work breaks to supply some relaxation, and then "The East is Red" to send people off to bed again. Life was thus regulated, never changing, so that it was actually unnecessary to have a watch. He remembered when he first arrived in Nanking, he was very unaccustomed to the shrill loudspeakers. He felt they invaded personal freedom, interfering with one's thinking and almost forcing one into conforming. He even thought of talking about this to the Comrade Leader so as to suggest some improvements. But he found out very fast that this was part of the daily life of New China which he had to force himself to accept until now he could even take it casually. A while ago, during rice planting season, when work was heavy and especially tiring, he had actually fallen asleep before the broadcast ended.

"Hurry! Hurry! There's no more salt-water duck! Cabbage is three cents"

As he finally reached the window, he heard the comrade selling food call out. Peering in through the small window, he discovered that all the good dishes had indeed been cleared out. He could only ask for two small dishes of sliced meat with greens and some rice, then holding his bowl carefully, he looked around for a less crowded place by a window to stand and eat.

"Little Liu!"

He heard someone call out, turned and saw that it was Lao Ho, who shared the same dormitory with him, waving his chopsticks for him to go over and join him. Lao Ho and several colleagues from Hsiang-tung's department occupied a table, already eating heartily. When Hsiang-tung approached, they squeezed over to let him have a corner of one of the benches.

"You're late, the duck is sold out." Lao Ho said to Hsiang-tung, in a condoling manner.

"Never mind." Hsiang-tung shrugged indifferently. Being a "grasslander,"³ he still could not appreciate the salt-water duck, he felt that the plain cooked duck of his homeland Taiwan was much tastier. From the piles of bones right and left on the table, he could see that each of them had eaten a dish of duck meat.

"Little Liu, will you be going to classes as soon as you go back?" a comrade sitting opposite him asked, as he spit out a piece of bone, at the same time noisily scraping his bowl clean.

3. Referring to the peasant in Taiwan.

"Instructing first year mathematics." Lao Ho answered for him, in an envious tone of voice.

Hsiang-tung muttered an assent, and made no further comment as he pretended to be engrossed with his food. The present policy of rotating labor not only upset teaching schedules, it also caused many teachers to lose their teaching jobs on their return from their period of labor. This naturally made them envious of anyone who had classes to go back to. Wasn't Hsiang-tung himself in a hurry to go back to classes? But the universities had only just begun to take in students so there were only first year classes and Hsiang-tung's special course had to wait until the third year before any decision could be made as to whether this course should be offered or not. He could have remained free for two years but he had urgently requested to be placed on the frontlines of teaching school, so the leader had put him down for this assisting mathematics job, to begin as soon as he returned from his term of labor. This so-called assisting job was in reality being the assistant to the math teacher, helping the students with their math during classes and in the dormitories.

Hsiang-tung's earnest determination to dedicate himself to the socialist fatherland enabled him to ignore being laughed at for using his talents at such a lower level. He even brought many reference books with him to the farm so as to fully prepare himself. By chance, there was a very young teacher in the same labor group who had just come from teaching mathematics. As soon as Hsiang-tung heard of him, he immediately went to ask his help and advice. When this colleague saw the pile of books he looked completely aghast, then burst into wordless laughter. Later, he found an opportunity to secretly tell Hsiang-tung that at the present moment, first year mathematics began with decimal points and addition; that even when they finished university they would not be up to taking calculus, let alone anything further.

"If you can make the students understand that zero point one added to zero point one 'equals' zero point two; and that $1/2$ added to $1/2$ 'does not equal' $1/4$; that'll be enough."

It was as if a whole basin of cold water had been poured over Hsiang-tung's head, the coldness seeping right down to the bottom of his heart. He carefully tied up his books, placed them under his straw mattress and never again mentioned assisting in teaching mathematics. He realized that it was not because he was disappointed with the students — they were assigned to the university, to study mathematics, it was no fault of theirs — then what was it? Why was he so upset and disheartened? He could not

find the answer so his distress became a piece of lead, pressing down on his heart.

"Comrades, attention!"

The announcer of the farm suddenly broke off the revolutionary songs to report:

"Tonight at seven o'clock sharp, all comrades please come to the dining room for a meeting to evaluate the achievements of these three months of labor. At the same time this is to welcome the new group of teachers to join us in following chairman Mao's May 7th Directive.⁴ The party cadre will make his report; each small study group representative will report to the meeting what they have learned from this period of labor; there will be group discussions after the general meeting ends. Please be on time."

Everybody had known of this meeting long ago so the announcement did not arouse any excitement.

"It's the last night, so hopefully it'll not last too late." Saying this, Lao Ho picked up his bowl and left first.

"What I've learned is exactly the same as last time so I'll finish what I have to say in two minutes," a comrade sitting next to Hsiang-tung said lightly. He had already finished eating, his white porcelain bowl scraped shinningly clean. Suddenly, he turned to Hsiang-tung with an interested look: "This is the first time that you have followed the May 7th line, you must have acquired many deep impressions so you can give a long speech tonight."

On hearing the word "speech," Hsiang-tung flushed slightly, saying hurriedly:

"I'll wait until I go back to Nanking to talk. I'll be on night duty tonight so the group leader has given me permission not to attend the meeting."

"You really should attend the meeting," another comrade said softly, in a considerate manner, "You'll be going back to Nanking tomorrow and being on night duty tonight, you'll not be able to catch up on your rest. It's not worth it."

"It doesn't matter, it's all right if I don't sleep for one night."

It was just because everyone had taken great care in making their plans that Hsiang-tung had been able to acquire this night watch duty. He had deliberately wanted to avoid attending this meeting. He had experienced this kind of a meeting three months ago. At that time, he had listened to the previous group of teachers

4. Based on Mai Tse-tung's letter to Lin Pao dated May 7, 1966, in which Mao urged Chinese in all walks of life to take up manual labor and political lessons in revolutionary schools in order to be reeducated and reformed.

get up and expound emotionally on how they had been effected by their having joined in the "re-education" at the poor, lower and middle farm level in northern Kiangsu, how their views of life had changed, how their convictions had completely turned over, like being reborn. Some teachers even wept profusely, and he had been so moved that his hands were clenched into tight fists, his palms wet with perspiration. The blink of an eye and three months had passed. Now, he was afraid of this meeting. He knew that when the time came, he could not be like the others, emotionally eloquent, singing praises, and cooperating in acting a part in a splendid play.

But when his colleagues said he could make a speech, they did not mean to be sarcastic at all. He himself knew that he could speak well. A few years ago in the United States, when he had participated in the Tiao-yu Tai movement,⁵ he and several other friends with the same convictions, had talked all the way from Berkeley, California to Chicago. From platforms, car tops, any place where he could stand up, hadn't he talked for hours at a time? At that time, what supported him was not only whole-hearted patriotism, but also a beautiful ideal. For this ideal, he would stay up nights to study the works of Lenin and Mao Tse-tung, taking copious notes. And in fear of being investigated by the FBI, he even did not dare close his eyes unless he had his papers under his pillow.

Thinking back, those days were fiercely exciting. In comparison, life after he returned to his own country was indeed quiet and uneventful. Excepting for these three months of personal involvement in farm labor, the rest of the time had been entirely occupied with anti-Lin movement and study sessions. Half a year was spent on learning a thin little book "Country and Revolution," going over each word, each sentence, almost memorizing the entire book. At the beginning, he joined in the discussions with great enthusiasm, especially when he discovered that very many teachers had not the slightest idea of the inevitability of "breaking through the mechanism of country" and the future of communism, so he quoted all kinds of theories and sayings to

5. Tiao-yu Tai, a group of 8 islets situated on the oil rich continental shelf about 102 miles northeast of Taiwan, belonged to China since Ching Dynasty. Overseas Chinese launched a movement to protect the sovereignty over Tiao-yu Tai in 1971 when Japan proclaimed ownership of the islets. The movement was later controlled by Chinese leftists. The issue still remains unsettled after Japan recognized Peking.

prove the possibility and inevitableness of this future society. The more he talked, the more he himself became drunk with the ideal of a future one world. Once, he lost track of how long he had been talking and when he stopped, he discovered someone had fallen fast asleep and the discussion group leader had his mouth open in a huge yawn, but when he saw Hsiang-tung's eyes on him, he had to force a smile. Maybe this was what had established his reputation of "speech maker."

However, what pained him was not this nickname, but the truth that he slowly began to realize, little by little. So these higher echelon intellectuals were discussing for the sake of discussion, what they were saying were not what was actually in their hearts and furthermore, they were using questions for the purpose of pouring out their own frustrations. And it was this that hurt him the most. He could not help but begin to doubt: in this, which was known as the center of the world's revolution, how many people truly believed in the theories of Marx and Lenin and the thought of Mao Tse-tung? Like so many other questions, this also could not be answered. So, as his reputation as a "speaker" grew and spread, he actually became more and more silent as the days passed by.

"Eat slowly, eat slowly."⁶

One by one, the colleagues left the table and soon Hsiang-tung was the only one left. There were then but a few people scattered around the dining room, the deserted stillness broken only by the thunderous revolutionary song blaring out from the loudspeaker. Hsiang-tung continued eating slowly when suddenly someone came over and sat down on the bench opposite him. He looked up and saw that it was the young farmer that the farm had hired to weave baskets. With a grin at Hsiang-tung, he used his aluminum lunch box to push away all the bones on the table in front of him, clearing a space to place his lunch box and a small dish of green cabbage. Hsiang-tung noticed that there were only three mantous⁷ in his lunch box, and except for the dish of greens, there was nothing else. He glanced again at the bones strewn all over the table and felt too embarrassed to look again at the man opposite him devouring his mantous.

"You're going back to Nanking tomorrow?" the young man addressed Hsiang-tung only after he had finished one mantou.

6. A Chinese form of politeness, the one who finishes eating first excuses himself and asks others to take their time.

7. A kind of Chinese steamed bread.

"Yes," Hsiang-tung answered, "You're also going back to Hwai An soon?"

He used his chopsticks to push two large mouthfuls of cabbage into his mouth before answering:

"Not certain yet. After I finish the baskets on your farm and if there is no more work in the surrounding area, then I'll go back."

As soon as he finished talking, he grabbed the second mantou and stuffed it into his mouth, his cheeks puffed out, one higher than the other. His face was large and round, deeply tanned, with heavy black overhanging eyebrows, his eyes staring fixedly at the mantou in front of his nose.

Hsiang-tung had talked a little with him before and knew that he was called Wei-tung — his name having been changed after the cultural revolution, as his own had been — and that he was from a poor farm family in northern Kiangsu. This farmer was only around twenty years old; he hardly ever talked or paid attention to other people, so was not well liked at all. The farm treasurer had often complained behind his back that he was a very lazy worker. It turned out that the contract between the farm and his labor union was according to labor hours, not finished piece work; so he would often take his own time about it and would take two or three days to finish one basket. Once, the treasurer — an old party member at that — just could not take it any more and went to bargain with him into changing to payment by piece work. He flatly refused: "Contract labor? This is Liu Shao-chi's line of revisionism. Wasn't the cultural revolution supposed to do away with that line of thought? Chairman Mao tells us to always believe in the people, to always rely on the lower middle poor farmers . . ." Everything he said was according to reason and the treasurer, his face and ears flushed a bright red, could not find anything more to say. Although this was only through hearsay, it caused Hsiang-tung to regard him with different eyes.

"You have been out for quite some time, are you homesick?" Hsiang-tung asked as he scraped away at his rice bowl.

There was a grunt, as the heavy eyebrows rose, his large round face completely expressionless. It was not until he had swallowed the food in his mouth that he said coldly: "Going back will also be labor — land labor."

Hsiang-tung nodded wordlessly. He finished pushing the neatly scraped-together kernels of rice into his mouth and stood up. As he was about to lift his right leg over the bench, he heard a dry laugh.

"Your kind of labor, huh!"

Startled, Hsiang-tung's face flushed. But the man opposite seemed to be talking to himself, muttering very softly, eyes staring at the mantou that was left, one corner of his mouth lifted in a disparaging manner. Hsiang-tung picked up his bowl and pushing aside the bench, he walked away in silence.

* * * *

May nights in Northern Kiangsu are soft and cool. A thin crescent moon slanting on the edge of the sky, a sprinkle of stars, and with the sparsely scattered lights of the farmhouses, the sky appeared exceptionally vast and deep, the plains spreading out endlessly, so far and wide. Hsiang-tung strolled back alone down the highway, his arms crossed behind him. The water in the sewers on both sides of the road trickled into the rice fields, and in the boundless quiet sounded discordant, yet familiar. Everything about this night served to arouse his memories of his homeland. At night in his old hometown of Hwalien, it must be now the time when the insects were buzzing and the ocean breezes blowing. Over there the mountains would be shadowy and obscure, the moon seemingly low enough to touch with one's hand, not like these flat plains, so vast and all-compassing that he felt infinitely small, to the point of helplessness. In truth, he didn't know when this feeling of helplessness had begun, but it was certainly intensifying as the days passed by. He could not help being surprised that within only a year of coming back to the fatherland, his state of mind should have undergone such a great change. Wasn't it degenerating before he was even approaching old age? How long ago was it when he and some close friends, all determined idealists, had stood facing icy cliffs of the Grand Tetons and reciting Chairman Mao's poem "Hsin Yuan Chun," singing loud and clear the words: "Of all great men of history, the greatest is yet to be."

But now, where had this proud brave spirit disappeared to? Then, for the sake of defending the sacred territory of Tiao-yu Tai, he had given up his doctorate thesis and would have even gladly given up his life. But now, what had happened to Tiao-yu Tai? Once, he had asked a colleague at the university about this. The man had scratched his head for a while before remarking: "Tiao-yu Tai? Is that situated south of Peking? I hear that is the place where they take care of the higher echelon officials and visiting dignitaries." Since then, he had never mentioned it again.

At times, he could not help wondering if he were guilty of being an immature leftist, not keeping a cool head so that all his

strong patriotic emotions had become discouraged disillusionment. When he returned in '73, he had been filled with a high fighting spirit. He remembered the first two weeks after arriving in Peking; although he was busy running around visiting and seeing places, he had very quickly discovered that nothing was known about the situation in Taiwan. Whenever Taiwan was mentioned, the middle echelon cadres would only quote information and statistics that were old and passe, either saying that the Taiwanese eked out their living by selling their children, or predicting that as soon as the fatherland decided to "liberate" Taiwan, all the people would rise and welcome the conquerors with food and drink.

He had been so shocked that he had stayed up a whole night writing a memorandum that he had sent to the State Council the day before he left Peking. He had also called on the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League and discovered that their knowledge and way of thinking and his own were separated by at least one generation. Not only were they ignorant of the average per capita income of an ordinary Taiwanese laborer, they were also unaware of the actual significance of "Self-Government." He had been so upset and angry that he had stalked out without having even sipped a mouthful of tea. Thinking back he felt somewhat apologetic.

The memorandum he wrote was like a stone cast into the ocean. However, in the papers written on the national day of the year '73, they had added the expression "Blood Brothers" regarding the Taiwan compatriots, and the things they said contained a warmer, closer feeling. Although this was only in the usage of words, it already comforted Hsiang-tung greatly. Not long afterwards, he heard people say that this added expression was because Premier Chou had received a suggestion from a Taiwanese who had come back on a visit; it was also said that this Taiwanese had even once been an ardent supporter of the "Taiwan Independent Movement." Nobody knew whether this rumor was true or not, but it made one think. Hsiang-tung often asked himself: what is after all the best possible way for overseas students to contribute to their homeland?

* * * *

Thinking about all of this, he sighed deeply. He gazed up at a lone star on the edge of the sky which stared silently down at him. He approached the dormitory of the farm; it was very quiet and most of the lights had been turned off. He looked at his watch, it

was almost half past ten, time for him to go on duty, so he hurried to the duty office. Without his having noticed it, the night wind had risen and with each passing gust, it became chillier.

The duty office was to the east of the dormitory area, next door to the agricultural equipment storeroom. The windows were closed and the only thing that could be seen was a stream of yellow light. Hsiang-tung pushed open the door and went in. He saw that Lao Fu was already sitting under the light, carefully cutting at an empty tin can; and on the table beside him was a yet unfinished oil stove, an awl, a round mallet and various other instruments.

"Huh, Little Liu," Lao Fu muttered a greeting as he peered at him over his glasses, his hands still occupied with a pair of large scissors.

After returning Lao Fu's greeting, Hsiang-tung went to sit down across the table from him. This was the second time that they had shared a night duty and he was still occupied in the making of an oil stove. Lao Fu had become famous for making oil stoves and it was said that since the cultural revolution, he had already completed over a dozen oil stoves which he gave away free to those who needed them desperately. Because of this, he was much liked.

"Tonight I'll invite you to taste some of my egg noodles as a farewell gesture on the eve of your departure for Nanking, after having successfully completed your course with the May 7th Directive." As he talked, Lao Fu had already cut open the tin can and spreading it out on the table, had begun flattening it with the mallet.

"Last time you treated me, it should be my turn now," saying which, Hsiang-tung opened one of the desk drawers to take a look at the noodles and eggs that had been placed there earlier. There was also a copy of Lenin's works.

"All right, all right," Lao Fu agreed, "I have all the ingredients, I'll just cook it."

After all, it is he who thinks of everything — Hsiang-tung felt embarrassed for he had forgotten all about the necessary ingredients. He took out the book and closed the drawer. Lao Fu had begun to drill holes in the piece of tin. Watching him pounding away so intently, Hsiang-tung's eyes could not help but follow the movements of his awl; with every punch a hole appeared, always the same size, very quick and neat.

There was a story behind this craft of Lao Fu's, and Hsiang-tung had only heard about it when he came to the farm this time.

He had been a talented student of Central University and not long after the Liberation, he had joined the teaching staff there. After that he quickly rose to the position of senior assistant professor and just before the Cultural Revolution, he was already one of the nominees to the position of associate professorship. Unfortunately, towards the later part of the cultural revolution, at the very beginning of the "Class Purges" someone had sent in his name as being suspected of having been a member of the "Three Principles of the People Youth Corps"⁸ while still a student at the Central University, and of having lied about his age. The leadership, according to their customary rule of "it is better to believe that there is than to believe that there is not," established a special committee to begin an investigation.

Two years passed without their having found any proof. The four to five members of the special committee had taken turns in going several times to his old hometown to investigate; they had also gone to other provinces to interview some of his old classmates, all without any results. But since they could not find any actual proof that he had not participated in this Youth Corps, they did not dare to just let him go, so they kept him "dangling" indefinitely. Of course, the one who suffered was the one who was most concerned. During the "Purge" period, he was jailed for over half a year, after which he was put to labor under observance. Then he was sent together with all the other teachers of the university, to northern Kiangsu to open up a collective farm. But the "One Attack and three Antis,"⁹ "Criticizing Lin" and other movements occurred one after the other and the school had no time to pay any attention to him.

The affair was left unfinished, and within the political hierarchy they seemed to have even forgotten that he had ever existed. However, he himself was quite optimistic, always good natured and level minded, never despairing to the point of suicide. That was not true of his wife back in the old home in Honan. After they had come investigating three or four times and not having heard a single word from him, she did not know what crime he could have been guilty of, so had thrown herself into the river in desperation. Fortunately, she was saved in time. Afterwards, his relatives wrote to him about it but he did not show any emotion at

8. A nationalist organization formed on Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People.

9. A purge movement launched in 1970. One attack was to attack the antirevolutionary; three anti are anti-corruption, anti-waste and anti-opportunism.

all. If it were not for the fact that the leader there had written to notify the leader in this area that his wife was under the suspicion of having tried to commit suicide because of her sense of guilt, nobody in the school would have known about it.

It was during the period that he was jailed that he became interested in making oil stoves. He first remade his own old one, then during his labor reform period, he would try in every way to find old empty tin cans and whenever he had some spare time, he would cut and pound away. And while he was about it, his entire mind would be concentrated on the work, disregarding everything that went on around him.

"Wei, Lao Fu! I heard some of your colleagues talking and it seems that the leader is considering setting you up with some classes this autumn."

Ever since Hsiang-tung had heard about his background, he felt very sympathetic, so he was happy to tell him what he had overheard.

He never thought that Lao Fu's only answer would be a disinterested "Is that so?", his eyes still on his hands, his hands still continuing to poke holes. Hsiang-tung gazed at his hunched back, his head bent over the table under the light so that the premature white strands in his hair were especially dazzling to the eye.

Suddenly, Hsiang-tung couldn't hold back any longer and said compassionately: "You have been a teacher for so many years, don't you feel wasted not being able to be in classes but spending your time planting on the farm and making oil stoves?"

"I rather like living on the farm," answered Lao Fu, and this time he stopped working. He lifted up his head and gazed at Hsiang-tung through his glasses, with a half-smile. "And as to waste, as if there were only one or two things that have been wasted?"

True! — Hsiang-tung agreed — as if there were only one or two things!

"I think the farms should be closed down," Hsiang-tung said straightforwardly. "In the future when there're more students, how can they spare the teachers to be sent out? Then also, it's a money losing thing! None of the socialist countries — even Albania — ever did this. Every university to build up a collective farm is indeed laboring the people and losing money."

"The Chinese Communists have always done what others have never done before them," Lao Fu stated solemnly, then broke into a smile. "Talking about losing money, that's nothing worth

mentioning. During the past three years, when did we not lose more than thirty thousand a year? This is only the investment in seedlings, fertilizer, and agricultural equipment, and does not include the payment of the teachers. Just think, we have an average of one hundred people on the farm and a year's produce can only feed these people for a half year; how can we not lose money? And not to mention what has been stolen"

Hearing this last sentence, Hsiang-tung's brows knitted tightly together. He remembered when he first arrived at the farm and the committee chairman had taken time from his busy schedule to hold a meeting to decide on the program for night duty. At that time, he was already surprised: Chairman Mao ordered us to come and learn from the poor lower middle farmers, and since we would be living surrounded by the poor lower middle farmers, what were they on night watch patrolling for? But they had night watch every day, and they chose the strongest of the men for this assignment. The result was that there was never enough labor in the fields and work could not be finished on time. Even thus, thieving often occurred until even Hsiang-tung felt let down. At this point, he seemed to hear the dry laugh of the young farmer at dinner time.

"Intellectuals need to participate very often in labor." Yet Hsiang-tung stated emphatically, "but the universities really need not carry the load of a large farm."

"Chairman Mao says: the May 7th Directive should go on forever." Lao Fu quoted a line from the sayings of Chairman Mao in even tones, then picked up his awl again to continue punching holes. "His many years of revolutionary experience: Only labor can change one's thoughts."

Labor, labor, Hsiang-tung repeated the word soundlessly and suddenly he felt it was meaningless. Aside from posing for photographs, it must have been years since Chairman Mao has touched a rake, yet he had kept his youthful revolutionary spirit, and was still going strong at his age. He must have a secret and Hsiang-tung felt sorry that he was unwilling to share it with the people. A pity! Sighing deeply he stood up and with his arms behind his back, he began to walk back and forth across the duty room. Tuoa! Tuoa! The sound was dry and monotonous as Lao Fu hit the tin plate with his awl. Hsiang-tung tried his best not to look at him, nor to hear that empty sound. He looked upwards and began counting the beams: one, two, three; one, two, three

"Shall we go and make a round?"

He didn't know when Lao Fu had stopped working. He had taken off his glasses and was rubbing his eyes.

Hsiang-tung loosened his arms and looked at his watch. It was indeed midnight. He answered with a "yes" and went over to take a flashlight from the drawer. Lao Fu put on a blue cloth cap, threw a torn old padded jacket over his shoulders, then went over to open up the damper of the charcoal stove in the corner of the room to put some water on to boil. After that he picked up another flashlight before pushing open the door to walk out of the room with Hsiang-tung.

"Ai-ya, the weather has changed, the wind has begun to blow!"

He did not know that the weather in Northern Kiangsu could also change so fast; in just a little while the sky had become an expanse of black, the moon completely invisible, the wind whistling loudly and it had turned chilly. Hsiang-tung shivered.

They began walking by the two rows of dormitories on the right, then along the rice paddies, inspecting the animal shed, thrashing grounds, the barn, then circled toward the broadcasting room, offices, kitchen and dining room, then back to the duty office.

"All is quiet," Lao Fu remarked lightly. He took off his cap and jacket and hung them on the wall again. Then he began to cook the noodles. He had lived alone for so long that he was quite familiar with cooking and his movements were quick and sure. After handing him the eggs and noodles, Hsiang-tung could only stand by and watch him working busily.

"You people have been rather lucky these three months, only losing some meat, fish and mantous." Lao Fu chatted with Little Liu while he cooked. "The autumn before last, in one night, we lost seven bags of wheat, each bag weighing more than one hundred to two hundred catties. That was the worst time. The next morning they discovered the barn door was open, there were wheel marks on the ground and nothing else."

"You mean to say," Hsiang-tung found it hard to believe, "someone had brought a cart and it was more than one person who came to steal the grain? Did they find out who it was?"

"Find out?" this time it was Lao Fu who glanced disbelievingly at Hsiang-tung. "The incident was reported to the County Guard Section, they sent people over to investigate. And the farm's party chief and chief of administrator were even with them for half a day, but nothing was found. Afterwards, they never reported anything again."

Hsiang-tung said nothing more, and crossing his arms behind his back, he began walking back and forth beside the table. But Lao Fu quickly produced two bowls of noodles and urged him to hurry up so Hsiang-tung sat down to eat with him. The ingredients were very ordinary but after Lao Fu had finished with it, it was indeed tasteful. Since Lao Fu had done the cooking, Hsiang-tung insisted on washing the bowls and the pot. When he had finished cleaning everything and took them back to the table, he found that Lao Fu had again begun cutting out some piece of tin. Looking at the white hairs on both sides of his cheeks, Hsiang-tung smothered a sigh. He sat down across from him and opened up the book of selections from Lenin.

However, he could not concentrate and after reading two pages, he did not know what it was all about. He was jealous of the way Lao Fu was able to concentrate so intensely on his work.

"Before," he could not contain himself and began to question the other man, "I mean to say before the cultural revolution, what did you do with your spare time?"

Lao Fu raised his head, looked at him curiously, glanced at the book in his hands, then said coldly: "Read books."

"Is that so?" Hsiang-tung lost control, and also muttered coldly.

Lao Fu stared at Hsiang-tung, then lowered his head to continue his cutting. It was only after quite a while that he began to speak again, nonchalantly, as if he were talking about someone else's past, his head still bent over his work. "I used to love books," he said. "Aside from the books of my trade, I especially loved literature and history. My father studied literature and had left me very many books. I also liked to buy books, so I had collected almost eight to nine hundred books. At the beginning of the cultural revolution, when it was tearing down the "Four Old Traditions" — old culture, old customs, old habits, old thoughts, — I burned all of the old copies of the traditional books. Afterwards, even the new writers started to fall, one by one. I did not even have the time to sort them out, so I just rented a wooden cart and took the whole lot to the garbage station and sold them as useless paper; four cents a catty. From then on, except Mao's selections, I have never bought another book."

Listening to him, Hsiang-tung's mouth fell open. He didn't know whether it was from shock or from distress, he was completely speechless. But there flashed across his mind a scene that he had often seen in newspaper clippings: Chairman Mao receiving foreign visitors and behind him were bookcases filled with books, all valuable treasures at a glance.

Books, books. Abruptly, he pushed away the book in front of him and stood up. Tuao! Tuao! Lao Fu had begun punching holes again, monotonous, mechanical, continuously punching. Hsiang-tung crossed his arms behind his back again and once more began to pace back and forth across the small room. He was so upset that he felt like stamping his foot with all his might, knowing all the while that would not help matters at all. He could only walk over his own foot steps, back and forth, hopelessly.

Why do I read books? He suddenly asked himself. If Chairman Mao was the only one left in the entire country who read and collected books, then how much future will there be for Chinese culture? And what will be the results of the cultural revolution?

A whole string of questions crowded his mind, one after the other, until his head felt like bursting, but his heart felt unusually empty. He walked to the window, stuck his face against the glass pane to cool his hot cheeks. It was pitch black outside the window, only the wind whistling by.

He was unconscious of the passing of time until in his confused mind he seemed to hear a dog's bark. Then another bark. He suddenly lifted his head. The light, Lao Fu, the oil stove, they immediately pulled him back into the present reality.

"I heard a dog bark," he told Lao Fu. "Shall we go and take a look?"

There was a dog over in the dining room, maybe something was going on over there; he was instantly alert.

"A dog bark? All right," Lao Fu agreed carelessly, and putting down his work, he stood up.

Hsiang-tung ran to the table and picked up the flashlight. "I'll go toward the right, you to the left and we can meet at the dining hall."

As he spoke, he opened the door and ran out. It was certainly a dark night with a high wind. He flashed on the light and jogged towards the dining hall. Except for the sound of his own footsteps, there was only a dead silence all around. He began to wonder if he had been overly nervous and had mistaken the sound of the wind for a dog's bark. He flashed the light on the door of the dining room, it was well locked; he then went along the windows, sweeping his flashlight over each one of them. All the windows were tightly closed.

So he went around the dining room to the kitchen behind. The cook's dog was on top of the awning over the kitchen door and he growled softly at the flashlight, then when he recognized Hsiang-

tung, he began to wag his tail. Hsiang-tung flashed his light upwards to the windows and discovered that one of them was open a crack. At that same moment, he heard the sound of something heavy falling on the ground. He ran towards the window and peered inside the kitchen. Yes, the opposite window above the stove was also open. He quickly turned around and ran in that direction. Before he got there, he saw a shadow running towards the vegetable garden. It was truly a thief! He was first startled, then he became angry, so without even thinking he began to give chase, all the while leveling his beam directly onto the back of the shadow.

The running figure was very tall and big; he also had strong legs. Hsiang-tung clenched his teeth and chased after him, but although he seemed to be getting closer, he could not reach him. He burst across the vegetable field into the potato patch. At the end of the potato patch was a large water sewer and as the man neared it, he suddenly slipped and fell, but he immediately got up again. Just before he jumped into the sewer, he looked back and the beam of the flashlight shone straight into his face: a large round face with two heavy brows. What a familiar face! Hsiang-tung stopped abruptly in his tracks, almost dropping the flashlight in his hand.

He stared in front of him, a vast darkness; the wind had begun whistling again and intermingled with it, the heavy sound of his belabored breathing. Then, he heard the dog barking again. It must be Lao Fu chasing over with the dog. He started to walk back, carefully shining his light on the potato patch, picking his way along the sewer. He met Lao Fu and the dog at the edge of the vegetable garden.

"Did you see anything?" asked Lao Fu.

Hsiang-tung shook his head. Maybe he had run too fast a while ago, for his heart was now beating slowly and heavily. "It looked like a black shadow, I chased it a while but did not see anything"

He wanted to say something more, but his mouth felt parched, his tongue dry, and he gave up. He only hoped that Lao Fu would not ask any more questions. And it was as he had hoped, the latter only remarked: "The thief who comes to the kitchen would only be trying to steal something to eat. Let's go, we better wake up the cook and have him see what is missing."

Hsiang-tung followed him back silently.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE POETRY

DOMINIC CHEUNG

I.

When Cyril Birch edited his second volume of *Anthology of Chinese Literature*,¹ he candidly selected six modernist poets whom he thought to be the nucleus of modern Chinese poetry in Taiwan. However, the editing of the poetry section in his anthology has failed to recognize contemporary Chinese poetry in its entirety. In a western environment, where translations of modern Chinese poetry are scarce, it is often easier to focus on dominant trends in confirming the historical position of the established elites than to sort out, meticulously and even sometimes painstakingly, the diverging phenomena which contribute to the final shaping of contemporary Chinese poetry. Can we avoid speculating that the Chinese anthologies appearing in the late sixties were edited with an intent to confirm the historical significance of modernism? If so, what perspective shall we adopt in order to attain a more comprehensive view of contemporary Chinese poetry without being overwhelmed by one dominant trend and by established figures? Do the existing poetry anthologies in translation suffice to supply a comprehensive information for a more in depth understanding of recent developments? Again, despite the deluge of western modernism from whose influence Chinese poets could not escape in the second half of this century, what are the new forces that drive on the forward waves?

These are only general observations. What about technical problems? Thematic problems as well? For instance, do contemporary Chinese poets start and end with loneliness and alienation? Cultural problems? Do the retreats into the framework of classicism and Buddhist philosophy resuscitate the westernized poet's long-hibernated Chineseness? What of problems in expression? What role does the vernacular language assume in the development of contemporary Chinese poetry? In what way does the modernized diction contribute to the forming of modern poetic expressions? Were the early stages of contemporary Chinese poetry only a subtrend of the Shanghai modernism of the

1. See Cyril Birch, *Anthology of Chinese Literature, Volume 2: From the 14th century to the present day* (New York: Grove Press, 1972), pp. 451-471.

Thirties? In what way did the westernized diction, notorious for its syntactic preciseness, help to achieve the intensity needed in modern Chinese poetry. What will be Chinese themes? People and affairs in Taiwan? Or outside Taiwan? How are we to deal with materials which bear Chinese significance but remain outside the locality of Taiwan?

We may say the development of contemporary Chinese poetry can be divided into two stages. In the first stage, lasting from 1955 to 1965, these problems first appeared and developed, but remained unsolved. In the second stage, lasting from 1965 to 1975, these problems were faced and tenaciously tackled by a few poets. We also have to understand that the division between the two stages does not necessarily imply a clear division between two groups of poets. On the contrary, the different conditions that marked the two stages have influenced the entire field of modern Chinese poetry, driving it in a new direction.

The characteristic resistance to a modernism locked in a special consciousness of a critical historical moment in contemporary Chinese poetry is the affirmation of life and reality. In contrast to the modernists, who pursued human existence to a deeper but less clearly delineated realm with their sophisticated interpretations, the new realist poets attempt to coordinate their inner sensibility to a more solid and unsophisticated outer environment. Of course, the attention paid by the new realists to common, daily themes of life does not necessarily prevent them from viewing reality more meaningfully, although sometimes they may appear to be "simpler" and less sophisticated than the modernists. In Chiao Lin's poem "Air," he describes the city as

People, right and left,
people, back and front,
To and fro, all are people.

I want to breathe in the air,
but am pushed to left and right
back and forth.
What is kept from me is air.²

The poet, unlike some of his modernist predecessors, does not attempt to evade reality by drawing deeper within himself into a dark corner of alienated existence. Instead, he extends his ego

2. "Air" by Chiao Lin, *The Face of Christ* (Taipei: Lin P'ai Press, 1972) p. 23.

onto a social plane of existence, protesting the threat to his personal ecology, but nevertheless views himself as part of the society. Such is the world-view of Chiao Lin and his "*Lung Tsu*" ("The Dragons") colleagues, including Lin Huan-chang, Shih San-chih, and Hsin Mu. Chiao Lin himself once stated, "Poetry must primarily possess the element of man. Without it, poetry will not be real or creative, but factory-manufactured poetry. The poet must also possess the element of man. This is basic. No matter if this man element is found in bad perspiration smell, or in other undetectable abstract tastes, it is still the element of man given to his readers by the poet. What if the poet himself is tasteless, how can readers perceive him as a man from his works?"³

Under the great premise that man and real life are primary sources of poetic imagination, contemporary Chinese poets encounter a new reality in their poems. What is the new reality? Will the new simplicity, contained in the new reality, conflict with the complexity of modernist views? Wu Sheng's preference for village themes is an attempt to reveal and reaffirm the simple sweetness of the soil. "Impressions of My Village" is a series of poems attempting by means of a simple gesture to depict a more naked and true reality. The theme of life is often presented as a return to the village soil. For example:

Across the river, over there
Far away, over there
Flows a series of murmuring sounds
Tempting my mute villagers
to sing.

Across the rice paddies, over there
Far away, over there
Tumbles a bundle of clamorous weeds
Grabbing my villagers' mute legs
noisily.⁴

Instead of seeing in Wu Sheng's poems simply a return to the village, it is more appropriate to emphasize the recognition of the new reality in them. The emphasis on truth, innocence, and the sweetness of his village hints strongly at Wu's rejection of the machine and the city. His rustic stubbornness only reveals in him

3. See Chiao Lin's "Poetic Views," in *An Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry 1966-1975* (Taipei: Lien-mei Press, 1976), p. 320.

4. "Silence" by Wu Sheng, *ibid.*, p. 140.

the realistic virtue of viewing things in their appropriate contexts. In this regard, Li Nan, Wu T'e-liang, Sha Sui and Huang Chin-lien are outstanding in demonstrating their awareness of the new reality according to their professions.

And yet, this recognition and the return to the village involve much more than just a search for origins. How will the viscosity of a poet's rural nature affect the depth of his poetic expression? How can a poet understand fully the lives of the farmers, fishermen, miners and workers if he is to remain himself on his own level of intellectualization? How genuine and authentic are these experiences imposed upon the simplicity and crudity of the rural themes?

On the other hand, contemporary poets' use of the overseas Chinese themes and intellectual drifters has introduced a new kind of reality in modern poetry. Ao Ao's delineations of the early Asian settlers in the United States and his tracing of their blood, sweat and tears, as found in the poems "Angel Island" and "We Began to Know," have gone beyond his Chinese materials to capture a new Asian experience. Wang Jun-hua's unyielding exploration of new imagery, his conversion of Chinese landscapes into universal images, and finally, his new interpretation of Chinese ideographic reality have created a new phase in realism.

Although Lo Ch'ing's most significant works reflect a continuation of modernist influence in contemporary Chinese poetry, nevertheless the large variety of objects he presents and the unique insight of abstracting them have indeed opened for Lo Ch'ing, and his post-modernist contemporaries, such as Su Shao-lien, a new way out of the modernist impasse. His copious production of lyrics on various themes, social and intellectual, and his inquisitive nature in searching out the ultimate meaning of reality have also accorded Lo Ch'ing a significant role in new realism.

II.

In the new realism, the simplicity of themes and directness of expression — although Lo Ch'ing, Wang Jun-hua, Su Shao-lien are exceptions — influence the language used. We can observe a preference for a clearer mode of expression to replace the sophisticated, manipulative diction of the modernists.

Regarding the effort made by the modernists in the past twenty years in the development of contemporary Chinese poetry, one of the major achievements is their establishment in the

modern tradition of a unique form of expression, a poetic diction which is based on the structure of the vernacular language. Despite its basis, however, their language is unlike that of the common people, for they have subjected it to a purifying process of abstraction to attain a high degree of density and intensity. In committing themselves to highly technical language, some modernist poets have transcended naked reality only to find themselves in a realm of mere symbols and imagery. The distortion of reality in these symbols and imagery results in an evasion of articulate presentation of reality, in a dwindling of realistic elements, and indubitably in a search of self-expression.

Although poetry possesses the most condensed form of expression, yet condensation does not necessarily mean the expression of objects and experiences in new, transformed images. Condensation can mean precision, which can be looked on as a spontaneous exposure of natural feelings. Yet, the extremity of naturalness is looseness. Will the new realist poetry lose its poetic tension and fall into vernacular crudity? A more serious concern is the possibility that the new poetry is again falling into the age-old trap of poetic-prose. The successful use of language in the following poems present at least an answer to the question:

A came to see me
and asked me about B's poems.
I replied:
Not too bad,
good, very good,
so good that I . . . like them. . . very much.
Her poems are like. . . Ugh. . .
Have you ever seen a river with many subsidiary/
streams?

A was very satisfied with my answer.
B came to see me
and asked me about A's poems.
I replied:
Not too bad,
nice, very nice,
so nice. . . that they look like
a river with many subsidiary streams.
B was satisfied with my answer.
A and B came to my place
and asked me to explain my own poems.
I said:

That's easy;
 Haven't you seen
 a river with many subsidiary streams?
 They were greatly amazed.

Yuan Tse-nan: "Have You Ever Seen A River
 With Many Subsidiary Streams"⁵

When I first came to Hong Kong
 Friends showed me,
 "This is Central District,
 This is Upper District,
 This is West District."
 They spoke in Cantonese
 I followed their moving hands
 And looked here and there,
 Not knowing which were
 The Central, Upper, or West Bays.
 I only felt
 Their houses, people, buses, trams,
 And the undulating slopes and overpasses
 were all similar.
 I only knew
 I've come to a warm, friendly place.

Lin Huan-chang: "Hong Kong Poems 2"⁶

The tone of the above poems varies greatly from that of modernist poems; however, as far as the effects of the use of vernacular language in these poems are concerned, the use of common diction has not affected the poem's density, nor has it prevented the poets from creating a more vivid means of expressing their ideas. We might also note that the new realist poets, in contrast to the modernist poets, are now attempting to express simpler themes in a more relaxed manner. Symbols and imagery, though often employed in contemporary Chinese poetry, are absent in the above poems, and the main technique is the use of direct description to express ideas indirectly. In other words, despite the

5. "Have You Even Seen A River With Many Subsidiary Streams," by Yuan Tse-nan, *Portrait of An Artist As A Crane* (Taipei: Lin P'ai Press, 1974), p. 105.

6. "Hong Kong Poems 2" by Lin Huan-chang in *Poetry Monthly*, no. 52 (Hong Kong, Sept. 1976), p. 9.

rather plain and straightforward expression of the first poem, when we finish reading it, we must ponder its meaning. For example, why were A and B amazed to hear the same answer? We find here that, rather than hindering the emergence of the theme, the use of plain daily diction actually makes the theme more vivid and profound. In Lin Huan-chang's poem, we also perceive behind the plain daily language two kinds of feeling, one of the fear of a strange new place and one of the receiving of warm friendship. The poet's cognition of his friendship converts his fear into a desire to know about the strange new place and to make new friends.

Linguistically speaking, we may be convinced that the adaptation of daily forms of expression may suffice to denote a deeper layer of meaning. Nevertheless, using daily forms of expression freely may appear more prosaic than poetic. The following passage of a poem has been once accused of being an example of such prosaic writing:⁷

Father

Mother

Quarreling

A little girl

in snowwhite skirt;

A fan, unfolding,

wavering;

How could she know—

This was the time

not to be spoiled,

not in the time

when father and mother were both mad

to ask for

father

or mother.

moreover,

not when father was mad at mother

to ask for mother . . .⁸

As we know, there are two types of poetic diction in contemporary poetry, namely, pure poetic and social poetic. The

7. See Ch'en T'e-en's "Comparing Two *P'ai-hua* Poems" in *Ta Ti Poetry Quarterly*, no. 18 (Taipei, Oct. 1976), pp. 45-49.

8. Ao Ao "Ching Wen and the Fan," *ibid.*, no. 16 (March 1976), p. 5.

vehicles of the first type are metaphors, symbols and imagery, while the second consists mainly of daily expressions. Structurally, modern poetry has progressed from the controversial "content decides form" to the "form arranges and copes with content." The basic technique employed by the new realists is to use daily language to create an organic structure. The syntactic arrangement decides the poet's intention.

The poet's intention includes the inner and outer intentions. The inner intention includes all metaphoric activities of the mind. In between perception and expression, the poet activates his mind on a personal level. The incident of a little girl who is unreasonably scolded by her parents and cries may incite the poet's mind with the following stimuli: (a) the little girl, (b) unreasonably scolded, (c) by her parents, (d) cries. In the poet's inner intention, he may regard these stimuli as chain reactions, or he may select any one of them to interpret according to his personal perception, which can be either metaphoric, symbolic or imagistic.

The outer intention includes the poet's humanistic contact with his outer environments, ethically, socially and historically. Since his individuality is merged with social elements in his outer intention he will diminish his personal perception to submerge himself in a more humanistic collective consciousness. Consequently, the outer intention stimulates the inner intention, so that its metaphoric activities will be relevant to their outer environment. In this manner, the outer and inner intentions work collectively in creative processes.

The relations between the inner and outer intentions distinguish the new realist poets from the modernist poets. The modernist poets wander only in the realm of inner intentions and submerge themselves deeply in personal consciousness. The new realist poets exhaust their inner intentions to the point that their metaphoric activities will interact with the activities of outer intentions.

The tone of all poems decides their structure. The series of thoughts and their spontaneous outbreaks, flows, inflections, pauses, repetitions and endings are based on the rhythmic tone of the poet. Such tonal structure in new realist poetry must be different from that of prose. In other words, the structure must be still based on poetic syntax, not prosaic syntax. This is the difference between prose and new realist poetry.

How, then, shall we decide on tonal rhythms? They depend on the breath and beat of the poet's intentions. Since each poet

differs from others in his or her inner and outer intentions, the breaths and beats are then different, and therefore tonal rhythms are different.

III.

Progressing abreast with the new realist poetry is the post-modernist poetry, in which the use of images and symbols has matured, contributing to the making of each independent poem an organic whole. Lo Ch'ing's *Ways of Eating Watermelons*⁹ and Su Shao-lien's *Shock Collections*¹⁰ are most elaborate and rewarding contrivances. Wang Jun-hua's struggle in expanding and exploding images to create extradimensional meanings in his "Image Beyond Images" poems has opened a larger and yet more profound area of consciousness for poetic imagination. The "Stone" poem is a good illustration:

Close to the mountain
I am the mountain
Close to the sea
I am the unending coast
Down in the water
I am the sand pebbles
In the graveyard
I am rows and rows of gray tombstones.¹¹

Other post-modernist poems like Ch'en Chia-tai's "Six Events of the Floating Life,"¹² Kiu Ling's "Seven Taoist Songs"¹³ and Tu Yeh's "Telephone Booth in the Rain"¹⁴ have all injected into modernism a strong rejuvenating dose of new imagery and symbols. At least, they have led the modernists to a more precise way of elaborating their perceptions. Su Shao-lien's poetic views can well be regarded as a proclamation of the post-modernists. He said, "In today's society, poetry can only be meaningful to poets, not to a general audience. The key is in the incomprehension of poetic meaning among a general audience. What the audience is

9. Lo Ch'ing, *Ways of Eating Watermelons* (Taipei: Youths Press, 1971).

10. Su Shao-lien, *Ching-hsin Collections* (Taipei, forthcoming).

11. "Stone" by Wang Jun-hua in *Epoch Poetry Quarterly*, no. 44 (Taipei, Sept. 1976), p. 29.

12. See *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*, pp. 235-237.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-211.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 346.

used to perceiving are prosaic meanings. Therefore, poets should not doubt themselves for not getting a large audience. When people's minds are prosaic, and when the environment is a prosaic society, who has any reason to accuse the poet for not being 'popularized'?"¹⁵ Su's protest seems totally unnecessary, since the evaluation of a good poem does not depend on different receptions between the poets and the people, but rather on its quality. If his "A Piece of Seven-Foot Cloth" was so well received by his senior poets,¹⁶ Su should be, at the same time, most confident of his ability to elevate his audience to a higher level of appreciation.

Translator's note: The following poems, unless otherwise noted in parenthesis, are my translations. I am responsible for any modifications or errors.

Dominic Cheung

15. See Su Shao-lien's "Poetic Views," *ibid.*, p. 460.

16. An amusing anecdote was told by Chang Mo in an article in which Shang Ch'in, a senior modernist poet, was so impressed with Su's prosaic poems that he expressed his praise of recognition emphatically to Hsin Yu, another senior poet of the Epoch group. See Chang Mo's "New Poetic Voices," in *Youths Literature Monthly*, no. 275 (Taipei, Nov. 1976), p. 155.

Ao Ao

Angel Island¹

There is an island by the coast of San Francisco, as renowned as the birdman's island of Alcatraz. One hundred years ago, the island was used for detaining and deporting Chinese laborers.

Angel Island
 Angel Island
 Angel Island is the island
 For white-robed angels
 Golden-haired angels
 Angels carrying fierce swords.

"I, a slave from China,
 Gave up my kids, crossed mountains and rivers,
 To come to San Francisco, the town of gold,
 To make some money
 And return to China.
 And buy a few acres of land
 With a few pigs to raise.
 How would I expect to be caught, and detained,
 By the foreign devils, who complained of my lung/
 conditions?
 When will the boat set sail from San Francisco?
 When will I make it back to China?"

Angel Island
 Angel Island
 Angel Island is the island
 For white-robed angels
 Golden-haired angels
 Angels carrying fierce swords.

"I remembered in the junk boat I came to San/
 Francisco—
 The sailors molested me.

1. Angel Island is located outside Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco and is a popular tourist area. There are guided tours of the island.

My chaste body,
My chaste character,
My chaste China—
All sank into the Pacific
With the western setting sun.
My female companions,
Jumped into the water,
Strangled themselves.
And I, bear all insults
In Angel Island.
I cover my head with a paper bag to use the toilet,²
I dread the day to be put back to the junk boat again,
To become a maid,
A prostitute,
And get venereal disease.
When will I be delivered from the sea of sorrow?"³

Angel Island
Angel Island
Angel Island is the island
For white-robed angels
Golden-haired angels
Angels carrying fierce swords.

I came to the City of Angels⁴
And my eyes were full of flowery splendor,
Angels singing in the City of Angels—
Bicentennial, Bicentennial,
Black Liberation,
Freedom, Equality, Fraternity.
I shook hands with them,
They embraced me.
Angels singing in the City of Angels—
Great country,
Great tradition,

2. There were no standard toilet facilities on Angel Island, only buckets in rows. Chinese women had no way of hiding their shame but to cover their faces up with paper bags whenever they used the toilet.

3. The information was taken from the October issue of the *Los Angeles Sunday Times*, 1976.

4. Los Angeles.

Great pursuit of love and peace,
Great melting pot.
Among them,
I saw angels wearing
White robes,
Yellow robes,
Brown robes,
Black robes,
Singing and dancing around a pot.
I also saw
Small angels lining up
And jumping into the pot, one after another,
To take a bath,
To make themselves clean and white.
In excitement, I approached,
And tried to play with them.
Fearing they would catch cold,
I attempted to make them a brighter fire—

Suddenly I discovered,
My fingers were on fire,
My hair,
My clothes,
My body were on fire;
My tears,
Fell on my crooked pine-like body,
Giving a squeaky noise and resin-like fragrance.
Small angels in the pot,
Clapping, laughing, jumping, and singing:
“Five little monkeys sitting on a tree,
Watching Mr. Crocodile,
‘You can’t catch me,
You can’t catch me.’
Pow!
Four little monkeys sitting on a tree,
Watching Mr. Crocodile. . .”⁵

But songs drowned my roars,
And my anger,
Only the most beautiful bundle of fire,

5. A nursery rhyme. The song is in six stanzas, each begins with the number of monkeys left until they are all eaten up by Mr. Crocodile.

Beneath the pot burning,
 Brighter and brighter.
 Suddenly, deep in the fire center
 Arose the low, heavy singing of my Cantonese/
 pioneers:

“Sing, countrymen, sing,
 Let’s sing together,
 Sing, until the Tenth Centennial—
 Angel Island
 Angel Island
 Angel Island is the island
 For white-robed angels
 Golden-haired angels
 Angels carrying fierce swords.”

Cockroaches

Why are there roaches in America
 Of course, America has roaches
 Where are the roaches
 Roaches are in Chinatown.

Why are there roaches in Chinatown
 Of course, Chinatown has roaches
 Where are the roaches
 Roaches are in Chinatown apartments.

Why are there roaches in apartments
 Of course, apartments have roaches
 Where are the roaches
 Roaches are in apartments’ native products.

Why are there roaches in native products
 Of course, native products have roaches
 Where are the roaches
 Roaches are in ferries from the Orient.

Why are there roaches in ferries
 (Why are you so curious)
 Because Chinese want Chinese food
 Chinese food is stored in Chinatown apartments.

Then America must have a lot of roaches
Oh, yes, different kinds,
And they are slow,
Lazy to move;
Once you strike,
They're doomed.

Window

That tree
Outside the window
Beyond me and beyond my window.

I close my eyes
And leap through the wooden frame.
Then trembling, my finger touches a leaf.

Beyond the window
There should be a mountain
There should be a lonely man in the mountain.

My eyes open,
Framed in draping images.
'Til one, the tree, explodes like a cloud.

And I wonder,
Do the eyes become a window
Or does the tree hang within the pane.

Perhaps,
Since I began to forget the season,
I had to return and leave the tree.

Still the tree—
And still the window,
A glacier, unwilling to dissolve.

The scenery,
So extremely obstinate
Will not transplant the tree back through my/
window.

Love Poems of Tea

I.

If I, the boiling water,
And you, the tea;
Then your fragrance
Has to depend solely upon my plainness.

II.

Let your dryness inside me
Softly uncoil and stretch;
Let me dissolve,
Imperceptibly, your tension.

III.

I have to be hot, even boiled
Before we consume each other;
We have to hide, see and hold
each other in water
to decide
a tea color.

IV.

No matter how capriciously
you drift;
Gradually and slowly
(O' gently)
You will into me submerge—
Deep.

V.

By that moment
The most bitter tear of yours
will become a best sip
of my fragrance.

WANG JUN-HUA

Landscape Philosophy*Above*

Mountains faraway,
ridging, in slumber,
no rocks.

Ancient trees
verdant, and gray,
no branches.

Green river,
murmuring,
no waves.

Man in wilderness,
cloud-watching,
no eyes.

Middle

Tracks,
end in bushes.

Streams,
lost in mists.

Shores,
broken by moors.

As the waters split,
a remote sail.

Below

Two mountains
compress water
into a creek.

Two lakes
press the mountains
back to cliffs.

**Outdoor Collections—
Imitating Chia Tao**

Buying A Tree

The monk carries the pine,
The pine carries the birds nest,
The nest hides dark clouds of a thousand mountains,
The clouds come with the storm,
The storm spreads out a wilderness of ice and snow.

A Picnic

Weeds on an old wheel
 crawl into the deserted garden;
A seed on a broken tile,
 grows into an old pine;
A lonesome walking shadow,
 flickers in the pond.

Recluse

A distant pagoda
 submerges into the autumn pool;
White clouds sojourn in the crane's nest,
 Fierce birds
 dwell in deserted wells;

Autumn insects
 crawl into the cleavage of cracked steps;
 an alert snake
 drills into the core of the old *wu-t'ung*;
Foot tracks in the woods,
 overlap the blue mountain shadows.

Out

Fireflies fly out from a dried wood,
A bird soars from a deserted well,
A musical stone, struck out from deep woods,
A stream runs from dark rocks,
A sail emerges from splashing tides,
And hung in full-blown autumnal colors.

Doors

Way deep at the end of the silvery creek
are the temple's opened doors;
Profusedly are the cicada cries
would the green shades be allowed
to enter the lute hall;
A recluse's thatched doors
are never closed,
But to let mountain rains
in and out freely.

Chaos

River sands,
toe-tracks of homebound birds;
Ocean tides,
no signs of faraway sails;
Barren hills
Big rocks left by the white clouds;
An old temple,
no kitchen smoke.

Metamorphosis

A lotus in the summer pond,
blooming in fiery fragrance;
A hundred roots in the autumn water,
all covered with mud.

LIN HUAN-CHANG

The Beginning Of A Day

What shall I tell you?
Morning is the happy hour—
To work.

We'll all wake up
At this hour;
Sunlight, opened windows,
And the melodious cries of birds.

But do you know
This is the beginning of a day?
Work, work,
Work is what I like,
Not to long for,
Work itself is happiness.

What shall I tell you?
Flowers?
We're not here to enjoy.
If I tell you such, then,
Shall it be a blooming flower,
Or a withering one?

Life is a journey;
What it reveals is truth.

"I'll speak,
But please don't search into me."
Thus He spoke,
And I always heard,
Mind in supreme tranquillity.

In the morning,
I can only tell you—
Work!
This is the beginning of a day.

Spring Morning

When birds
start
to call,
they seem
to be so far away;
In
a short while,
they are seen
flying
to my
window,
moving
their small, tiny beaks,
pecking and playing
with the sunrays,
which fall and form
a golden-yellow,
silk window drapery.

Door

I am a door of few words.
But how can I bear
You guys coming in and out?
Furiously I bit my lips, even my tongue.
Today, I'll speak out,
"Please, don't just walk in and out."

LI NAN

Children Poems**1. The Fifteenth Evening of the
First Lunar Month**

After the stars have disappeared,
The lonesome moon, in tearful eyes,
Searches for them everywhere.

The stars have sneaked out to the streets
And changed themselves into warm, cozy lanterns.
They play joyfully with the children,
Hand in hand, in the human world.

2. Papa and Mama

Mama is a tree,
Papa's words are breezes
Sweeping gently in mama's ears;
Mama used to laugh loudly
Like a joyful tree
Flapping in gentle breezes.

3. The Rooster

Taking the universe as a big piece of cake,
The young rooster begins his trip,
And at the same time, pecks at earth.
The soil, at times, is delicious.
But when he pecks at his own shadow,
He sadly droops his head sideways.

4. A Dream

Father fell asleep one day,
Whistles blown in his mouth.
There must be lots of dream-ships
Loaded in father's head.

5. A Dog

There is a secret in a dog's mind,
And he doesn't know where to hide;
He runs back and forth outside the house,
Sometimes pausing to dig a hole,
At times sticks out his nose,
Meticulously sniffing for a while.
Somehow, he can't trust
His secret to be left in a hole.
He then arises and continues to run.

Getting tired, he rests beneath the shades,
Unaware, his secret falls into slumber
With him in the gentle breeze.

6. Breeze

Breeze wearing an invisible dress,
Passes the garden on tiptoe,
And steals away the flower's fragrance.

The flower annoyingly shakes her head,
A few shivering leaves drop.

7. Fireflies

When mother was small,
She used to catch tiny fireflies in the yard.
I also see flickers in my house
And always want to catch them.
Whenever I get closer,
I discover they are
but my father smoking on his sofa.

8. Telephone

Telephone is a house without doors,
Sometimes father's friends stay inside,
Sometimes mother's friends.
They always ring to talk to my parents.

I also have a toy phone
With my friends inside,
But they never talk to me first;
They are always not home
Whenever I try to find them.

HSIN MU

The Second Winery

Like a rich has-been,
The Second Winery leans slantingly
Against the side of Chung Hsiao Road.
With a big tobacco pipe in his mouth,
From dusk to dawn, smoking.

Children are playing in black snow.

Flight

We still have
to fly,
rest, sometimes
play, sometimes
do what we have to do.

Flying
together may not be cheerful;
Flying alone may be blissful.

Yet, still want to fly;
No need to be paired in sleep,
Or become featherless.

The Meadow Upon The Mercy Of Heaven

Except heaven,
no one can help.

This land
is as bald as Old Third Uncle's head,
Bare, hairless,

But with mouth wide open,
No sound.

SU SHENG

Impression Of My Village**—A Preface**

Long time ago,
My village people knew how to gaze up.
My village sky, unattached,
Carelessly dim, or clear.

Long time ago,
The closing in of the stretched mountain shadows
from the left side of my village
was a large piece of
gloomy splash-ink painting,
stuck to my village people's faces.

Long time ago,
My forefathers, perspired,
raised, and multiplied
their helpless descendents,
in a land which grows no wealth,
nor fame, nor miracles.

An Elegy

Yes, I've experienced youth—
The young hoverings
O'er the small village I once grew;
I've experienced youth bewilderments,
Every dreary starlight knows.

Yes, I've experienced springtime—
The fragrance of spring
In the small village I once grew;
I've experienced mildew smell of spring,
Every petrified flower petal knows.

Yes, I've experienced love—
The intoxication of love
In the small village I once grew;
I've experienced the agony of love,
Every heartbreaking gaze of yours knows.

Yes, I've experienced singing—
The charm of songs
In the small village I once grew;
I once seemed to have heard my own dirge,
Every blade of the cemetery grass knows.

An Accident

How does a timid seedling
Sprout, bud, and become a green sapling?
How does my reluctant cries protest
The frightful coming of the tiny me?
This is just a casual
Tiny little accident.

How does a green sapling
Branch, leaf, and flower in silent fragrance?
How are my small talents,
After so many dreary nights of torturing,
Appreciated by someone through a small poetry journal?
This is just a casual
Tiny little accident.

How does a common flower
Bear common fruits?
How, after the jolting of the storms,
Will my little name
Turn into a charming fame?
This is just a casual
Tiny little accident.

How does a common fruit
Ripen, fall,
Burgeon timidly into an old tree?
How does an old tree defoliate and dry up
With a last choking cry of farewell?
How would someone discover my vanishing
From a piece of small obituary?
Oh! This is just a casual
Tiny little accident.

LO CH'ING

Six Ways Of Eating Watermelons

The 5th way: Consanguinity of Watermelons

No one will mistake watermelons for meteorites.
Stars and melons, they are totally irrelevant,
But since we can't deny that Earth is a satellite,
We have to admit watermelons and stars
Are consanguinous.

Not only do watermelons and Earth share blood tides,
They also possess fraternity feelings,
Like the moon with the sun,
The sun with us,
And us with the moon.

The 4th Way: Origin of Watermelons

Apparently, we live on the Earth's surface,
And they live inside of the watermelons.
We rush here and there, thick-skinned,
Trying to stay outside, turning light
Into darkness to wrap ourselves,
Who are cold and who crave for warmth.

They meditate zen, attentively
Shaping inward darkness into
Substantial, calm passions;
Forever seeking self-improvement and self-progression.
Someday, inevitably we'll be pushed to Earth 'inside,
And eventually they'll burst themselves out of the watermelons.

The 3rd Way: Philosophy of Watermelons

The history of watermelon philosophy
Is shorter than Earth, but longer than ours;
Watermelons are Taoistically *wu-wei*, detached,
They also practice the three don'ts:
See no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil.

They don't envy ova,
 Nor despise chicken eggs.
 Watermelons are neither oviparous, nor viviparous,
 And they comprehend the principle
 Of attaining life through death.
 Consequently, watermelons are not threatened by invasion,
 Nor would they fear death.

The 2nd Way: The Territory of Watermelons

If we crushed a watermelon,
 It would be sheer jealousy.
 Crushing a melon equals crushing a rotund evening,
 Knocking down all the stars,
 Crumbling a perfect universe.

And the outcome often makes us more jealous,
 Because this will clarify the relationships
 Between meteorites and watermelon seeds,
 Between the friendship of watermelon seeds and the universe.
 They will once again encroach into our territory,
 More penetratingly.

The 1st Way:

Eat it first.

The Writing Of The Character "Tree"

My younger brother and sister rushed up to me,
 Arguing, "How to write the character tree?
 How many strokes?
 How difficult?"

I looked at my sister's
 Round little mouth in her round little face,
 Slightly rearranged the slippery queues by her mouth.
 Picking up the pencil that was handed over to me,
 I tried to say,
 "Ought to find a piece of good wood first,

Carefully saw it, sand it, inch by inch,
 Saw a square, sand the four corners,
 Then build it into a miniature village.
 Don't forget, sprinkle ten little lovely beans
 In the middle."
 Patting my younger brother's fatty legs,
 I touched his black hair.
 Looking into his big, shiny eyes,
 I tried to say,
 "One stroke goes down like this."
 But then I wished to say,
 "A hundred slanting strokes go like that."
 And then I was more eager to say,
 "Even a round dot will do."
 I pondered. Finally looking at
 The standard textbook on the desk,
 I studied the character for a long while,
 And wrote down distinctly the character "tree,"
 Saying, "Very easy,
 Just do it slowly and patiently,
 Like writing the 'brother-sister' characters,
 All together, sixteen strokes."

Answers

Why are stars in the sky
 so crowded like the people underneath?

Why are the people on earth
 so sparse and distant like the stars in the sky?

Arising

Each leaf
 falls
 on the shadow
 it will
 recognize and embrace
 next year.

WU T'E-LIANG

Nostalgia

Sit down,
Please sit down,
And listen,
Listen to the ocean tides.

Let's presume we've arrived at the seacoast
With rice grain ears above our heads,
Our light dimples
Heavy with sweet wines.
And someone assures
We must have fallen asleep.

Let's row on the watery moonlight
And wake up all the fish.
While the sky is not yet dawn,
And we haven't full awakened,
Let's copy down our drunken words
And sing,
All the way back.

Please sit
And listen to the ocean tides.
In case someone assures
We've woken on the quiet beach,
Please use all our home letters
To dry lightly our tears.

YEH SHIH

The Border Gate¹

The bus paused,
And started to move again.
Tourists lazily passed the circular square,
Stayed and watched for a while.
A row of young dames on a stony bench,
Chuckling clamorously.
Wet soft drink bottles.
By an antique stall,
A foreigner approached,
Picked up a Buddha,
"Want some jades?" the old woman
Eager to sell, "They are fakes,
But some others . . ."
Yet nothing pure and verdant.
Behind the scene,
The finger of a tricycle peddler
Slashed past a row of green trees.
Eyes watching an empty truck
Coming from the Gate
And rolled over
A muddy path of crisscrossing trails,
Then switched to another road.
Winds in an overcast day
Tearing off maps in the tourists' hands.

The Lottery

He gets a set of Alferte furniture,
an ear-plug,
a wig,
a floating melon,
a night gown,

1. The Border Gate is a tourist spot in Macau next to Mainland China. Tourists visit it to take a view at the mainland.

a Chinese chiropractor,
two wealthy aunts,
a parrot,
a computer,
an automatic electronic radio cooker.
He gets a pension, commissions, gift money . . .
free show tickets, cocktail party invitations,
second-class special discount tooth-brushes,
an investigation committee
composed of a dozen Englishmen,
a chair of the Philosophy Society,
a monopoly of country arts,
a soaring stock,
and a sinking mansion.

Only I
still am empty-handed.
Each time I raise my head,
I seem to have heard
a distant snicker,
circling down through dark clouds and rain showers,
I cast down the dice,
but get the smallest number,
I buy a newspaper,
but miss the train;
By the wrong train station,
I fish with cigarette cans;
At the wrong pier,
I wait for the next ferry.
I am a horse on the freeway.

She gets a canned husband,
a bunch of electronic relatives,
a set of brand new fingernails,
eyelashes, and a nose,
a vice chairperson title for all local organizations,
four singing crocodiles,
a hippopotamus delivering flowers punctually,
a rhinoceros waiting at the street corner,
a controversial hairy turtle,
a shower cap,

two blood-dripping hearts.
She gets her neighbor's vacuum,
and the same kind of dust,
twelve official matriculated qualifications,
all free dishes
from all sorts of soy sauce companies.

Only I
still am empty-handed.
Sitting by the stagnant river,
I sing the blues.
The weather is cold,
and I forget my coat.
The chair was empty,
but someone is there
with a scarf and a flower,
flipping silvery coins.
Luck is the head,
but it's always the tail.
Someone stole my bread;
By the empty jar,
The sunflower has an exhausted neck.

They carry those things from the lottery
and rush home hurriedly.
I am still around,
walking slowly.
"Goodbye, gentlemen,
Goodbye, ladies."
I call at their backs,
"Goodbye, pumpkins and Indian corn,
With so many things,
Please don't stumble."
They all think I am going to get them,
and run even faster.

YUAN TSE-NAN

Fortune Cookies

Alice
the American girl
came to tell me the other day
that she just loves Chinese fortune cookies
I answered coldly
that there are no fortune cookies in China
that they are phony American inventions
that even since they started eating those damned things
China's never been fortunate
Shocked, agape, she stared at me
I told her with a half smile
not to look at me like that
Since the time
I was talked into tasting one
When I bit
and discovered that it's hollow inside
—a great bang in my ears
Since then
I have never been shocked.

(translated by William Tay and the author)

**The Chinese Art Collection In
DeYoung Museum, San Francisco**

So
that great robbery
actually ends here
Here you'll see
the incorruptible
carved screens
of emerald
and the transplanted
jade coral trees
and the green grapes . . .
Your eyes on fire
you gaze
again and again
at these gems

that stay green
for thousands of years
Suddenly you remember
Confucius
Mencius
and some few things
of the past.

(translated by William Tay and the author)

CHIAO LIN

Falling Leaves

Departing leaves,
Endearing leaves,
Silent leaves,
Cardiac leaves,
Tender leaves,
Blade leaves,
Hammer leaves,
Tearful leaves,
Individually withering,
Falling.

Pay The Bill

Dried bean-cake: \$1.00,
Bok-choy: 50¢,
Fish: \$2.00,
And a bowl of rice.

All over the streets,
Rain flowers competing,
Blooming and withering;
Shoes competing,
Walking.

Yes, one more Daikon soup,
And a bowl of rice.

Rain flowers flickering,
One supper follows another.

Oh, heaven,
You hand me the bill.

The Face of Christ

No tears
In my eyes,
No water
In my sweat,
No flesh
In my beard,
No breathing
In my nostrils,
No words
In my mouth.

SU SHAO-LIEN

Weeds

The water bridge by the river is eaten up by weeds.
Sunset is the weeds' tongue
Twirling the sky to swallow.
You cannot ferry your name across the river,
Your hands are the most hungry blades of grass.
Brother, why is your body
Hidden in my eyes?
I cry. How can you run away from this world?
Wind starts to puff at the weeds,
Bending my brother's neck.
The swollen river slowly arises,
Holding me and say,
"I want to drink you!"
I then close my eyes
And into the river I sink.

The Black Bird

On the leanest black bough, the blackbird rests,
Leaves are his wings,
His wings are the black clouds of the sky,
Once they flap,
Leaves fall,
Clouds spread.
Under the tree is my lost brother,
The spider weaves him an umbrella,
And a map to find his way home.
Because of him,
The spider falls and dies in the mud.
Everywhere is my brother's face,
Gyrating up the tree
And rushes towards the blackbird
To turn into the face of the blackbird.
On the leanest black bough, the blackbird rests,
In the year-rings, the sun expands.

A Piece Of Seven-Foot Cloth

Mother bought only a seven-foot piece of cloth. I was regretful for not having purchased it myself. I said, "Mother, seven feet is not enough. We need eight feet." Mother replied, "Seven feet was enough last time. Have you grown tall?" I didn't say anything, just making mother conscious of her shortness.

Following the old measurements, mother outlined my figure on the piece of cloth. She then scissored slowly. I cried slowly, "Oh! Please, cut me, open me, sew me, mend me . . ., and make me man."

CH'EN FANG-MING

Mr. Nixon

No matter how we try,
We can only get a silhouette of Mr. Nixon,
Like watching the statue of a prominent figure.

Mr. Nixon consistently observes the law,
But no one knows
How did he climb up the wall?

We see only his right mouth and cheek,
He raises his right hand, moves his right leg,
Waves kindly at us,
Sincere, and friendly.

As to whether his left face is smiling,
No one can tell.
He now sits seriously on the wall,
His nose pointing to the great void,
We see only his right mouth and cheek.

He gives great headache to the bankers,
In case a memorial coin of him is to be circulated,
Which side shall they mint, left or right?

SHA SUI

My Swallow Mistress

I do not know when did I become
An ant crawling on my Swallow Mistress' face.
When I am thirsty, I take a shower in a black waterfall,
(which runs down from a pretty skull.)

Canton is most productive for eyes,
My Swallow Mistress' eyes speak
Cantonese, in heavy accents.

I understand, because I am also Cantonese.
Yet I am only an ant,
A Pearl River ant, too fragile to bear a drop of tear.

After many years, the waterfall
Turns into a skein of gray hair,
I comb it with my wrinkled hands,
(but my Swallow Mistress looks at me as her face's mole.)

Ant or mole, it does not matter,
I will spend all my life on her face,
Multiplying my yellow origin on her complexion.

HUANG CHIN-LIEN

Voice

A voice
in the void
upstairs,
downstairs,
in the splendid grass
before a pavilion,
in the wilderness
at the end of the grass splendor,
in the blue mountain
at the end of the wilderness,
on the lean shoulders
of the lean traveller,
bearing the lean sunset
at the end of the blue mountain.

The lean sandals
stepping on yellow leaves,
the yellow flowers—
a voice
far away, outpouring
the living sorrow, the life's sadness.
The voice,
heard in my weakening ears,
gyrates in my body.

TU YEH

Telephone Booth In The Rain

suddenly

a flash of thought strikes
O' blood-dripping roses

wither.

For Myself

In memory of the forever gone nineteen

In the beginning, I really did not know what was happening. Until I heard myself making the first cry, Tu Yeh! (Oh! All the heavy echoes were sad, sad summons!) I then rushed incessantly to the core of a dark cave. I recalled later, ". . . Darkness . . . was my beginning . . ." Yet I had already seen, and had no time to intercept, so many, oh, so many Tu Yeh rushing out, continuously: "FOR THE SAKE OF BIRTH."

Until all Tu Yeh
Drown the barren hill
Completely.

CH'EN CHIA-TAI

Noon Clock

Clouds, aimlessly chase the sun.
My mind circumambulates around
The noon clock, in circles, and in squares.

When dials split,
Longing is unbearable;
Even to condense sunlight into blood
Is monotonous.
When the time comes,
Those are the tears that crystallize into salt.
When dials meet,
Intimate murmurs tingle—
Winds in the city,
Exchanging each other's visited scenery.

Separate the mountain and the river,
Let people long for each other.
The clock surface is spacious,
Distance seemed to be close, yet it is far.
The lazy crawling of the dials is inevitable.

And when those highrising clouds
Violently transform into a curtain of spring rain,
How many time tracks will they have harvested?

This noon, we can look up at the clouds,
And bend down to escape the rain.
There will be a time to look up
And have our eyes fallen into the valley.
Watching the wall clock,
I wait beyond a layer of nightfall.

K'U LING

A Winter Poem

Outdoors,
two poplars,
outside,
lawns, winds, an old house,
outside is what is beyond

outside.

Next time when you enter,
don't forget to leave
your tiny shoes outside,
and let moss climbing all over them
to reach into my chilly eyes.

Next time when you enter,
don't forget to reveal
the light flowery fragrance of your toes.

A door shutting noise
shuts the door outside,
shuts outside outside,
shuts the freezing temperature outside;
Yet please do not be afraid,
there will still be warmth by the hearth.

If not,
that's fine.

BEYOND CRAFT TO ART

YU TA-KANG

After viewing Ju Ming's wood sculpture on two separate visits to his home, I am left with the impression that the uniqueness of this art derives from tradition, but a tradition that is given a fresh expression. This is a new development in wood sculpture, one which I have never before seen in China.

The Middle Kingdom's distinctive style of sculptural expression has been largely the result of the materials used — clay and wood — in lieu of the bronze, iron and stone of Western sculpture. This is not to say that clay and wood have been the sole medium of sculptural expression in China. On the contrary, there were monumental accomplishments in bronze art throughout the Shang and Chou Dynasties, and the brilliant achievements made in stone sculpture during the Sui, T'ang, and Northern and Southern Dynasties have been acclaimed throughout the ages.

Bronze and iron, however, were required for the manufacture of weapons and farming implements, as well as for the minting of coins, and inevitably came under a strict state monopoly. In addition, an inadequate transportation network often necessitated the carving of large stones in situ. Works of brass, iron and stone were therefore limited largely to the commemorative monuments commissioned by religious sects, the court and the aristocracy, and were, as a result, never as widespread as those of wood and clay.

Then too, the ubiquitousness of wood and clay, used in the construction of everything from palaces, temples and the houses of the common people to the vessels of everyday use, gave rise to a popular affection for these two familiar materials. While massive leviathans of stone and bronze might have evoked awe and respect, they were unable to shed the aura of cold remoteness and inapproachability which clung to them.

A combination of the above factors ensured the inevitable popularity of wooden sculptural art among the people. In every town and village there arose innumerable artisans who decorated homes and fashioned everyday implements. Although created for practical use, their work lost none of its esthetic attraction in the process. Beds, chairs, stools, even doors and screens made of wood were embellished with designs of flowers, fish, animals, immortals and natural scenery. Craftsmen, known as "decorative carvers," employed "fine" as opposed to "bold" brush strokes, and their

techniques were characterized by realism, with lines being used as the primary mode of expression. Their work was very finely done; their most intricate designs were executed without the slightest oversight. This expression of delicate wood carving on materials of limited size proved a formidable test for the decorative carver and required a thorough knowledge of the nature of his medium — wood — as well as a deft touch with the carving blade.

The models on which wood craftsmen base their work have been scrupulously passed down through generations of masters and apprentices, while their simple unadorned workmanship has been largely subject to the unsophisticated demands of the rough-hewn country folk of the villages and towns in which they work. With the imposition of such limitations as these, it is easily understandable why so few of them have been able to transcend the bounds of their craft and advance to the level of art. Yet it is this rugged simplicity of style, forged by the common experience of life and rich in the spirit of realism, which imbues the viewer with a feeling of closeness and warmth. These qualities are the major strength of these folk artists.

In the cities, artisans produced another type of handicraft — carved wooden pedestals for jade and stone carvings, porcelains, and the tools of scholarship — much admired by art lovers everywhere. These bases were fashioned to blend with the contours of the items they supported, and the intricacy and elegance with which they were wrought are a superlative tribute to the skill of the decorative carvers.

Although most of this decorative wood carving was done in relief, some were also fully three-dimensional. A number of gods, immortals and fishermen provide exquisite examples of the latter. Although there is a distinctive difference between this three-dimensional work and the more commonplace relief carving on doors, windows and utensils, most people continued to view them in the same light. Thus, the three-dimensional wood-carvers were unfortunately unable to break out of the "craftsman" mold in which society had placed them.

In regards to the subject of three-dimensional sculpture, we should not neglect the art of puppet carving. Carved wooden puppets originated very early in China, and wooden funerary figures, which developed along the same lines as puppets, have been excavated from tombs dating as early as the Warring States period. The carving of puppets was very highly developed during the T'ang and Sung Dynasties, and though no puppets from these periods presently exist, paintings of Sung Dynasty marionettes

are still extant, showing heads that were invariably carved from wood. The art of puppet carving continues among the people today, with the heads of human and animal figures so popular in the puppet shows of southern Fukien and Taiwan still carved with the realism of old. But these — as is the case with larger religious images in temples — are covered with a coat of paint. And though this may increase the effect of realism, the natural grain of the wood is hidden and the peculiar beauty of the carved wood lost.

I have briefly described the beauty and value of China's wood sculpture and its widespread popularity among the people. Unfortunately, wood decays easily, and the religious wood carvings in temples, as well as those on the doors, windows and furniture of individual homes, were not easy to preserve even with a coat of paint. As for smaller items such as desk top decorations, they were treasured by members of the court and other persons of refinement. A few of them have been passed down to the present. But wood carving, relegated to the status of a mere decorative craft, failed to enjoy the esteem of society. Burdened by the exigencies of life, the wood-carvers themselves had no choice but to continue plying their trade as plebeian hewers of wood, incapable of elevating their art to the level of unique, individual expression.

JU MING'S ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT

Ju Ming was born into this profession of wood and clay sculpture. Growing up in the country, he was apprenticed to a master carver at an early age and underwent a rigorous training in the traditional craft of decorative carving. His artistic achievement can be explained in terms of both his past environment and his unique ability to blend the currents of expressionism with realism.

Ju was born during the Second World War in Tunghsiao, Miaoli, an area noted for the barrenness of its soil and the poverty of its people. To avoid the frequent bombings by Allied planes during the latter part of the war, the family was forced to move into the neighboring mountains, where Ju — his studies having been brought to an abrupt halt — spent most of his time tending cattle in the hills. This kind of life gave him a feeling of kinship with the land and the animals that lived on it. At the same time, the simple, rugged existence of the Chinese farmer and its close association to the soil imbued Ju with a simple and diligent nature, which is very apparent in the content of his art.

Dense forests blanket the many mountains and hills of Miaoli, and the neighboring town of Sanyi had, as early as the coming of the Japanese at the turn of the century, already developed into a center for wood-carved handicrafts. Even then many of the inhabitants of Miaoli made their living at carving, and it was natural that Ju Ming should later also apprentice himself to a master carver.

I have noted that decorative wood carving is basically realistic, and that the structure of realism is primarily an accurate rendering of lines to match those of a real subject. The method of expression in the art of wood carving is very close to that of the *kung pi* paintings, with their meticulous and fine brushwork. When the brush is replaced by the carving knife, the lines are even more clearly drawn. Ju Ming's works, too, are basically realistic, with primary emphasis on the expression of line. In this sense they bear a close connection to the fine style of decorative carving described above, and make extensive use of the knife techniques employed by the decorative carvers. His sculptures are realistic in another way too; they embody a realism derived from the experiences of life itself.

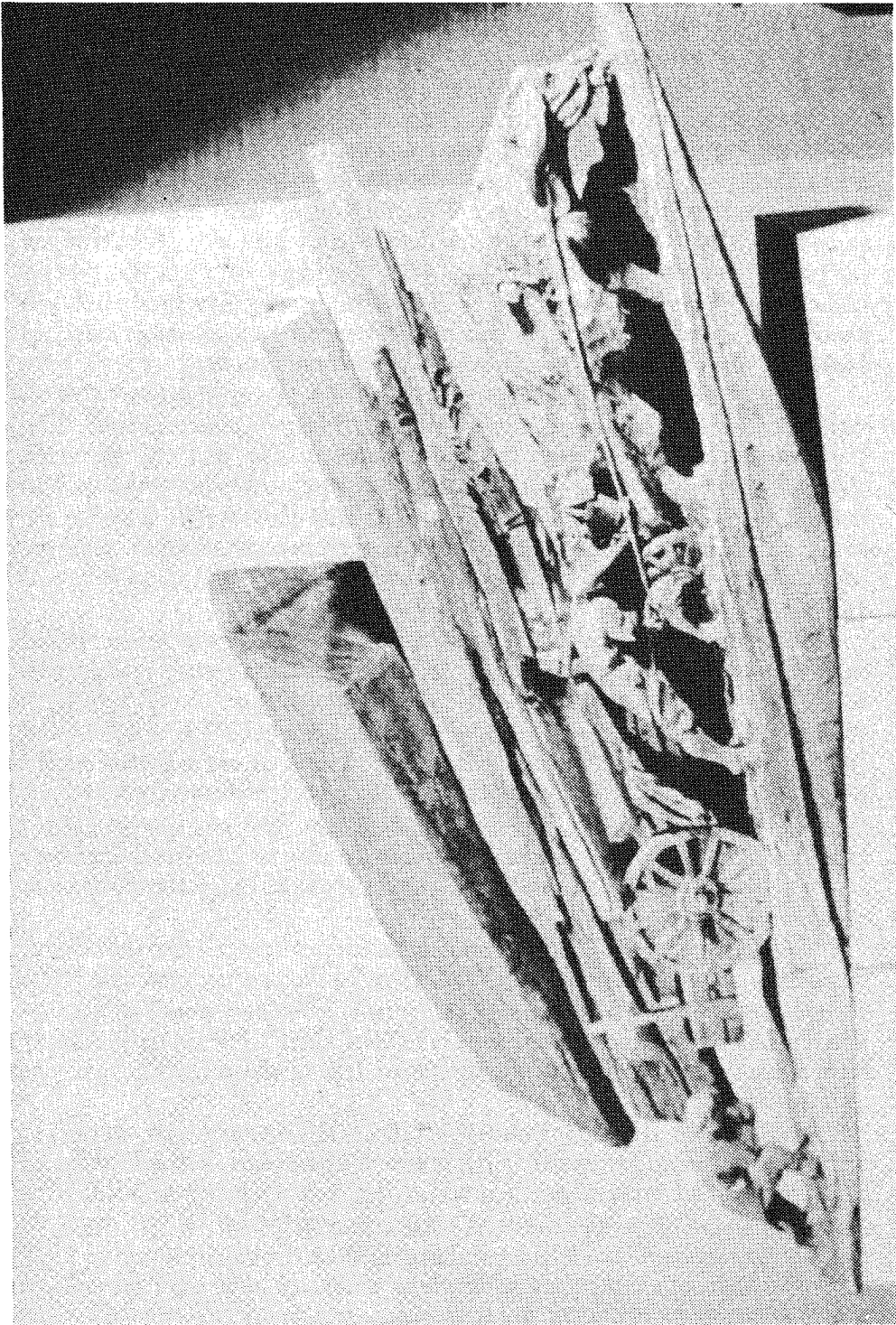
Ju Ming is different from other craftsmen in that he has been able to break the bounds of tradition and add an element of expressionism to his realistic milieu. This shift to expressionistic technique, perhaps the influence of past Chinese expressionistic painters or of contemporary sculpture, has freed him from the prison of realistic line and brought a unique charm to his work.

THREE SCULPTURES

I would now like to discuss the characteristics of Ju Ming's sculpture by discussing three of his works:

1. "Ox Cart"

This large wood sculpture (173 cm x 75 cm) portrays a water buffalo, struggling to pull a heavy cart up a muddy slope, with three men clambering alongside, two pushing and one pulling — a completely realistic scene often seen in rural villages. It expresses the heaviness of the burden through the exertion of strength and through the heavy load on the cart. The buffalo, the human figures, the sloping surface of the earth are all realistic. Even the grain of the wood on the cart is left intact, while other necessary details, such as the little wooden bucket, the thin rope, and the clods of mud clinging to the belly of the animal, have all been



Ox Cart

meticulously added. The points of physical exertion — the nose of the buffalo touching the ground, the three straining men, and the position of the wheels — are all appropriately located.

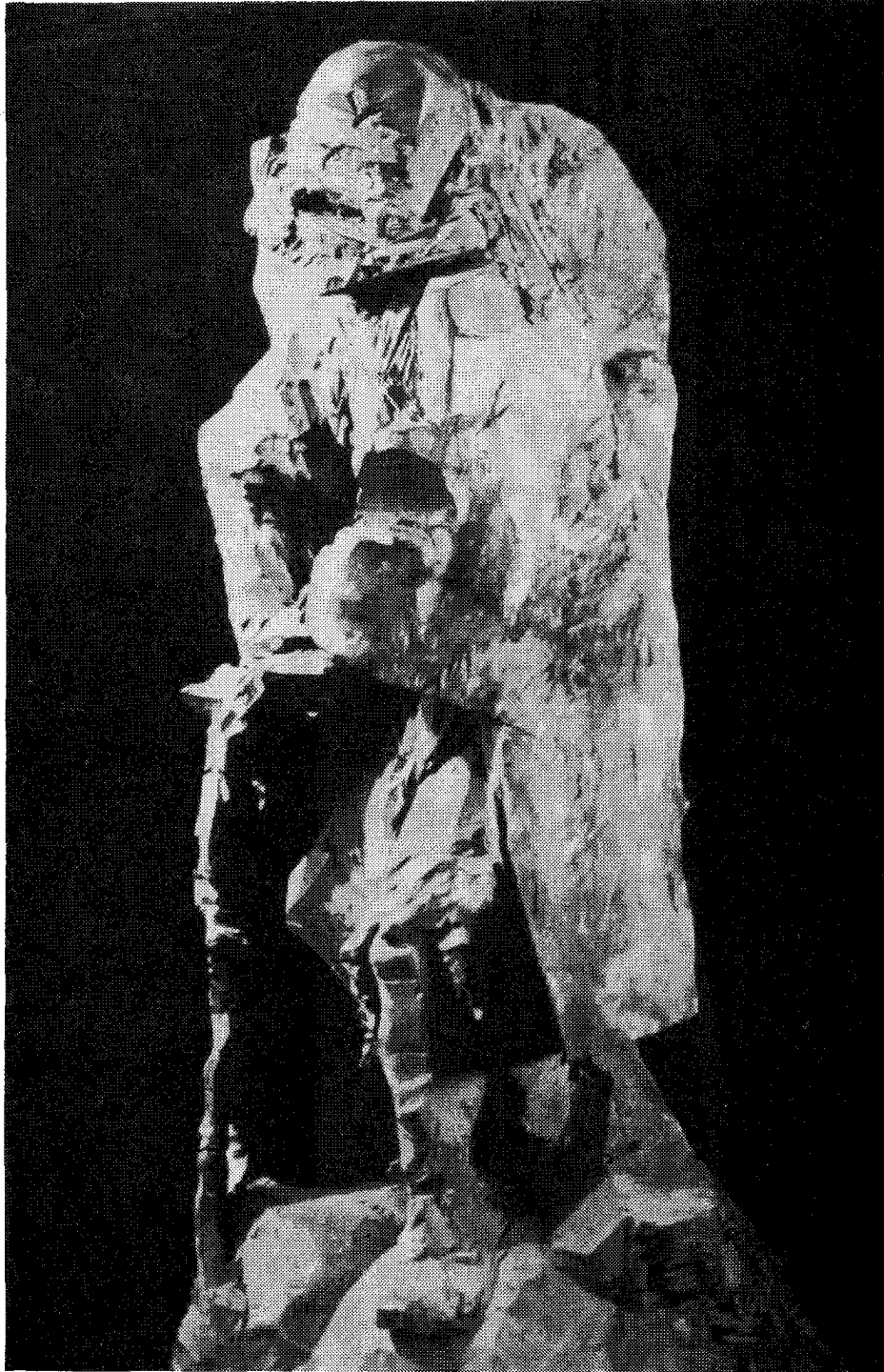
It is here, however, that an expressionistic touch is given to the work by an exaggerated lengthening or shortening of certain proportions. The body of the ox and the cart, for instance, are elongated, the wheels disproportionately small and not completely round, while their spokes are unevenly spaced. All this is purposely done to emphasize the feelings of exertion and heaviness. The whole work has a look of “being dragged through mud” (*to ni tai shui*), a normally derogatory expression used to describe art works of coarse and sloppy execution.

This expression when used to describe the struggle of the ox cart up the muddy slope, however, seems appropriate indeed. The mud-encrusted hooves of the buffalo and the feet of the men struggling through the soft and slippery spring muck make us feel the vitality of the life force stored within the earth. But for Ju Ming’s actually living in the country and his careful observations, he might never have been capable of such deep and inspirational expression.

From this work we can see Ju Ming’s strict attention to the selection of material and the excellence of his carving technique. “Ox Cart” is carved from relatively soft camphor wood, which is suitable for the use of various types of knife work. It has both bold coarse strokes and fine delicate lines. Meticulous attention has been given to the characteristics of the wood selected (the type of tree, its shape, age, water content, oiliness, age rings and grain) and a detailed study made of which knife techniques (light or heavy, strong or weak) are most appropriate to the particular type of wood being carved.

The ultimate objective of this process is the expression of form in such a way as to impart a feeling of both quality and quantity. This is an ability peculiar to traditional Chinese wood sculptors. But Ju Ming goes further than this. “Ox Cart” shows very clearly how closely he related the essence of his medium to the artistic expression of vitality.

Aside from its rare beauty, “Ox Cart” excites the emotions and stirs the soul by expressing a sense of burden — the burden of 5,000 years of Chinese culture weighing down on the shoulders of every Chinese. The refinement and concentration of his style or artistic expression and his consummate and comprehensive skill in doing this piece lead us to wonder whether he’ll ever be able to produce another work of such stature.



Iron Crutch Li

2. "Iron Crutch Li"

This work, featuring Iron Crutch Li, the cripple member of the Eight Immortals, is more expressionistic than realistic. We seem to have seen the face of this immortal somewhere before — in the Sung painter Liang Kai's painting titled "Flung Ink Immortal."

It is very difficult to endow wood sculpture with the flavor of a painting. In "Iron Crutch Li," however, we seem to see the expressionistic human figure paintings of Liang Kai, Hsu Wei and Shih Tao. The nose on the face of "Iron Crutch Li," which should by rights protrude, is, on the contrary, a hole. His laughing, welcoming mouth is given an exaggerated execution that serves the same purpose as the white spot on the faces of clown actors in Peking opera. Ju Ming, in fact, often says that his inspiration for this particular work came from the clown role. The wood is relatively hard and Ju Ming has made use of its natural shape, adding only a minimum of artistic embellishment to express the simple charm of his subject. Even when viewed in a poor light, each stroke of the knife and cut of the chisel, each slight depression and protuberance, expresses the existence of life.

Iron Crutch Li, like Chi Tien, is in Chinese tradition an immortal who went around insulting his contemporaries while feigning madness. Although he often appeared to be sporting with humanity, he was in fact very concerned about its well-being. The immortal's character finds full expression in the form of "Iron Crutch Li."

3. "Baby Chickens"*

This work, also derived from the experiences of Ju's life in the country, is an expression of the liveliness and innocence of tiny farm creatures. He has used camphor wood carved with bold, coarse strokes for this piece; it has none of the flavor of the meticulous *kung pi* style. The spirit of this sculpture is expressed in its form, in a fully expressionistic style. Yet without his training in traditional Chinese realistic wood carving, Ju Ming could not possibly have been able to attain such a profound and comprehensive understanding of the form of baby chickens.

"Ox Cart," "Iron Crutch Li" and "Baby Chickens" are more than typical examples of Ju Ming's art; they also signify three stages in his development from realistic folk carving toward an expressionistic style. As such they represent an accomplishment never before seen in Chinese wood carving.

* Illustration not available — ED.

JU MING AND CHI PAI-SHIH

Ju Ming's wood carvings closely resemble the paintings of Chi Pai-shih. The latter's works have been characterized as embodying three important qualities: (1) A complete rendition of spirit and form: In painting baby chickens, he not only painted the feathers on the chicks' bodies, but also managed to capture the lovable innocence of the little creatures. (2) Expressionism combined with detail: The broad sweeping lines of Chi's expressionist paintings capture the emotional essence of his subjects, yet his works also contain an abundance of meaningful details. (3) A compromise between resemblance and non-resemblance to the subject: Chi once wrote this inscription on one of his paintings: "The secret of painting is to compromise between resemblance and non-resemblance to the subject. If the resemblance is too close, then the artist is toadying to vulgar tastes. If there is no resemblance at all, the painting is a fraud." These three qualities encompass the spirit of Chi's painting; they also apply equally well to Ju Ming's sculpture.

The similarity between the art of Chi Pai-shih and that of Ju Ming is not coincidental. Both of these artists were born into farming families and were accustomed to the life of the herdboys. They were both apprenticed to decorative wood-carvers and received rigorous trainings in that craft. Chi, however, abandoned wood carving and switched to the sculpturing of stone and metal chops, turning later to painting and calligraphy but mixing with them the techniques of wood and stone carving. His art differed from the seal carving, calligraphy and painting style of Wu Chang-shuo, another expressionist who had carved only stone and metal but no wood. In its strong simplicity, Chi's work possessed an air of gentleness that Wu's does not have; this is due to Chi's use of wood-carving techniques.

Chi's technique of combining realism and expressionism in the compromise between resemblance and non-resemblance of his subject was aided by his friends Chen Shih-tseng and Hsu Pei-hung. Chi himself once wrote in a poem that he was opposed to lifeless imitations: "I laugh at the famous artists of former times whose slavish imitations represent a dead art." "Imitation," according to Chi, should refer to copying not only the works of ancient masters but those of nature as well. Chen Shih-tseng, the monk Jui Kuang and Hsu Pei-hung were the first to approve of this viewpoint. We know that Chen studied painting in Japan and Shu in France. The two of them indirectly introduced Western techniques to Chi, who combined them with expressionism and

realism in developing the unique style of his middle and later years. Of course, he could not but have been influenced also by the expressionistic tradition reaching down from Hsu Wei through Chen Lao-lien and Shih Tao to Jen Po-nien, who was a contemporary of but slightly younger than Chi himself.

Ju Ming's progress from realism to its combination with expressionism was an inevitable artistic process in his search for novelty and change. What influenced him to take this path I do not know, but I do not believe it was the Hsu Wei tradition of expressionism. He may, however, have been strongly influenced by contemporary Western concepts of abstract art; foreign influence is obviously stronger in his work than in that of Chi Pai-shih. Thanks to his own efforts, he has been able to combine the concepts of Western abstractionism into his works while still remaining a purely Chinese Sculptor.

Wood sculpture in China, which has remained thus far a mere decorative craft, has an even greater potential for development than painting. If Ju Ming continues on his present path, we can say with certainty that his place in the history of Chinese art will not be secondary to that of Chi Pai-shih.

HUNG T'UNG, THE MAD ARTIST*

HUANG CHUN-MING

Nankunshen, a small village in the northwestern corner of Tainan county, is famous for its salt fields which stretch inland from the sea. The people here use the tides and wind-driven water wheels to raise the sea water into the fields, where the year round heat of the sun evaporates it leaving only the snow-white edible salt. This is then piled high along the sides of the paths which crisscross the fields.

Dawn, the sun is peering over the horizon casting golden rays onto the salt fields. At five the roads are empty except for a lone taxi cruising down the road toward Nankunshen's Temple of Five Kings. In the distance a young girl is working the wheels churning sea water into the fields. Soon thousands of pilgrims will be coming by foot, by bus, by train to the temple, for today is the birthday of the Five Kings (*Wang Yeh*).

By six, people were beginning to fill the temple courtyard. Food stands, retail stores were being set up to garner quick profits in the carnival atmosphere later in the day. Amidst all this activity so early in the morning, we saw Hung Tung's paintings, hanging from a rope strung up between two trees.

The paper scrolls were the same as those ordinarily used for traditional Chinese paintings and calligraphy, but the artistry on the scrolls was neither that of traditional paintings nor calligraphy. The colors, the designs, the way he had packed everything in, his control of space were extraordinary. One couldn't take one's eyes off of the many miniature paintings on each one of the scrolls. With the now brilliant sun providing a back light, the effect produced was most powerful. They reminded me of shadow plays of the T'ang Dynasty. Small figures seemed to be winking at me, beckoning me to come closer; the flowers and shrubs even seemed to exude a sweet fragrance. Huang Yung-sung, the photographer who had come with me, began photographing the scrolls.

Just then, a medium height man in his fifties walked up to Huang and said, "Go ahead and take your pictures, fella. If they're any good, send them back to me and I'll reward you handsomely." Then he turned away, laughing silently as if he had said something extremely funny. Standing between us, his eyes shifted from one to the other. Hearing his speech and taking a second look at his strange and slightly arrogant expression, I

* Illustrations on pp. 123-126.

found myself wondering whether the man was sane. There he stood, on a blistering day, wearing the wool liner of a U.S. Army steel helmet on his head. His long-sleeved white shirt was a bit too big for him. In addition, he wore a pair of old khaki pants and a pair of ancient Japanese shoes that must have once belonged to an upper class gentleman. This jarring image plus the strange light in his eyes served to convince us that the man was indeed insane.

What is one to do when confronted by a madman? All I dared do at that moment was to go along with whatever he said. Trying to soothe him, I said, "Yes! these paintings are just marvelous. It's impossible to do justice to them with a camera."

I was surprised by the effect my words had on the man. Suddenly his arrogant expression vanished as he disclaimed, "No, No. I'm an uneducated, illiterate person, a country bumpkin. I really can't paint. I just do it for fun. Heh, heh, heh." The laughter was an attempt to conceal his embarrassment.

Although I had only spoken a few words with this stranger, the experience was full of the unexpected. What surprised me most was that the moment I linked this madman with the art displayed, he was transformed into a warm, cultivated person.

"Honest, your paintings are great. You paint really well." Praising him in full sincerity, I suspected that he was deliberately hiding his training from us. "But you've been to school," I said, pointing to the character-shaped forms in one of the paintings. "Not only do you know how to write, you also know how to transform them." At that point I also discovered English letters and Japanese kana in the paintings. "And you know English and Japanese, too!"

"Oh, I didn't know what I was writing," he said. "I don't even know what it means. Heh, heh, heh."

After talking with the artist, I realized that his "heh, heh" laughter and his silent smiles were reflections of two separate psychological states; the former is his shy, humble state, while the latter is his arrogant, self-satisfied state. The two interchange frequently and randomly. Observing him, I decided finally that he was a typical madman; but examining his paintings carefully, I saw that he was also a first-rate artist, a genius. This contradiction, I felt, could be explained only by the theory expounded by many psychiatrists that insanity and genius are often separated by no more than a thin line, and that by overstepping the line one moves into the other realm.

By the time the gongs from the Temple ushered in the first "incense-offering group" from Mailiao Village, the stalls in the rear courtyard were ready for business. Soon crowds of pilgrims were weaving in and around the temple and the stalls. When we returned to the courtyard the second time that day, all the stands were surrounded by small crowds of customers; only the stand where Hung T'ung had hung his paintings was vacant. Hung himself was squatting on the bare ground in front of the stand with his arms locked around his knees and was staring intently at his paintings. We caught sight of a three to four-year-old girl playing around the stand; at times she would poke her head out from behind the paintings and make faces at the artist.

As I was contemplating further discussions with Hung, I offered him the customary cigarette. But he declined and pulled from his shirt pocket a pack of Kinma, a brand much stronger than mine and lit up with me.

"Mr. Hung," I asked, "How many years have you been painting?" "Three years," he replied. (ED. NOTE: This conversation was held in 1972).

"Three years?" I couldn't believe it. "Heh, heh," he giggled.

"How old are you this year?" I queried. "53, heh, heh, heh, I'm an old-timer now. Heh, heh."

"Have you ever gone anywhere?" Fearing that he might misunderstand the question, I rephrased it: "Have you ever lived anywhere else?" "No, I've always lived right here. I live right over there," he said, pointing to the right of the temple.

I realized that I still had doubts about his three year success story. Our society is such that it takes years of training and formation before acceptable results can be expected from any person or any one project. Just as when a complete mechanical process must be completed before raw materials can be transformed into finished products, so when a society desires doctors, lawyers, engineers, pilots, or even artists, it sends its young through its teaching factories and testing institutions. As society gets more and more complicated, there are fewer exceptions to this rule; Hung T'ung's case is an exception among exceptions. Living in the second half of the twentieth century, being illiterate, without formal education, and having begun to paint only three years ago at the age of fifty — these conditions are even more unusual than those accompanying the career of America's Grandma Moses.

But there is still one question which defies comprehension. People in the area told us that Hung T'ung has lived there all his

life; he spent his formative years there and has never left the village. As a man who has never been out in the world, whose experience is necessarily limited, Hung can best be described as a "frog in the bottom of a well." But no matter from what point of view his paintings are regarded, whether from color or texture, from brush-work, from form or image, much in them is a syntethesis of East and West, of past and present. They seem to exude at the same time a primeval fragrance and the bloody odor of modern warfare. What is even more interesting, members of both the black and white races can be seen in his paintings; Christian churches and the cross are also evident in scenes depicting Buddhist and Hindu settings. Even weapons of the future appear; and outer space, along with herbs and flowers, birds and animals of the earth, and fish of the sea — all are there, existing together in the same painting. But there is no sense of improper contrast, and if one wants to use the word "sensitive" to describe the paintings, they are sensitive beyond all belief. Upon careful inspection, Hung's control of texture and his organization and arrangement of shades of light and dark all seem to be subject to extremely rigorous standards. To gain a better understanding of his work, we asked Hung to take us to his home not far from the temple so that he could show us more of his work.

On the way, we passed by several fish ponds and salt fields and arrived at a small village where most of the houses were old and dilapidated. Hung's was especially so; its walls were patched with thin sheets of red-rusted steel. The shack was so small everything inside was visible from the door.

The room was equipped with a single 40-watt light bulb, and a table about two by three feet stood against the opposite wall. When I opened the small window we saw that the table was one-third filled with empty, flattened watercolor tubes, poster materials, and one rusty can with several old, balding writing brushes in it. There was also a small plastic palette and a green plastic cup. The stool, only slightly lower than the table, looked very much like the chairs made for three to four-year-olds in kindergarten. All of this — table, stool, etc. — were placed on top of the platform which Hung used as a bed during the night. Just from looking at the arrangement and height of the table and chair, we could imagine the conditions under which Hung must have worked. He most probably sat on the low stool, his body bent almost parallel to the table over the paper, with his derriere sticking out in the back, slightly higher than his head.

He showed us a number of his paintings there, and even took out volumes of his sketches as well. We were much moved by the drawings and handled the volumes as if they were priceless treasures. At that moment, however, we were interrupted by a very unpleasant outburst: Hung T'ung began screaming at us, claiming that we had stolen one of his portfolios. "You'd better give it back to me!" he yelled. "If you don't, you'll regret it!" Then he stood there with his lips slightly opened, but not in the smile we had seen earlier.

He would not accept our innocence even after we had let him inspect all our bags. "Don't think I'm an ordinary man," he said insanely, "I've taken lessons in the martial arts." He raised his voice and recited a Chinese poem; then he performed a set of Chinese boxing steps from the "monkey boxing" style, which he claimed he invented himself. "You'd better turn over my portfolio," he continued. "Besides that, I know black magic; let's stop kidding around." This speech was followed by his silent laughter, leaving us totally bewildered.

"Do you mean that if we took your portfolio we wouldn't be able to get back to Taipei safely tonight?" we asked.

"Well, I don't know," he replied, but from the tone we understood it to mean "of course."

Just then a young middle-school teacher who lived in the neighborhood came up and told us that Hung was crazy and had begun painting madly three years ago. He also informed us that the artist had strangely acquired the ability to read a few words over that period, but no one in the village, he said, thought much of his paintings. "You needn't concern yourselves with him," the school teacher added. "There's nothing to his paintings."

Finally, after repeated assurances of our sincere admiration for his art, Hung T'ung resumed talking and giggling. This set us at ease again, but he kept ordering us not to fool with him and to hand over his portfolios.

In China there are many things that cannot be explained, and although I don't believe Hung's claim to magical power, neither do I disbelieve it. We've been back in Taipei for over two months now and nothing mysterious has befallen either Huang or myself; but does this prove anything? I want Hung to know that we did not take any of his portfolios. We did want to buy them, however, but he refused to sell any.

What else can be said about a painter like Hung T'ung? As for his accomplishment, the best we can say is that he is an artist

forged by his environment, an artist created by the sun, the sea,
and the land.

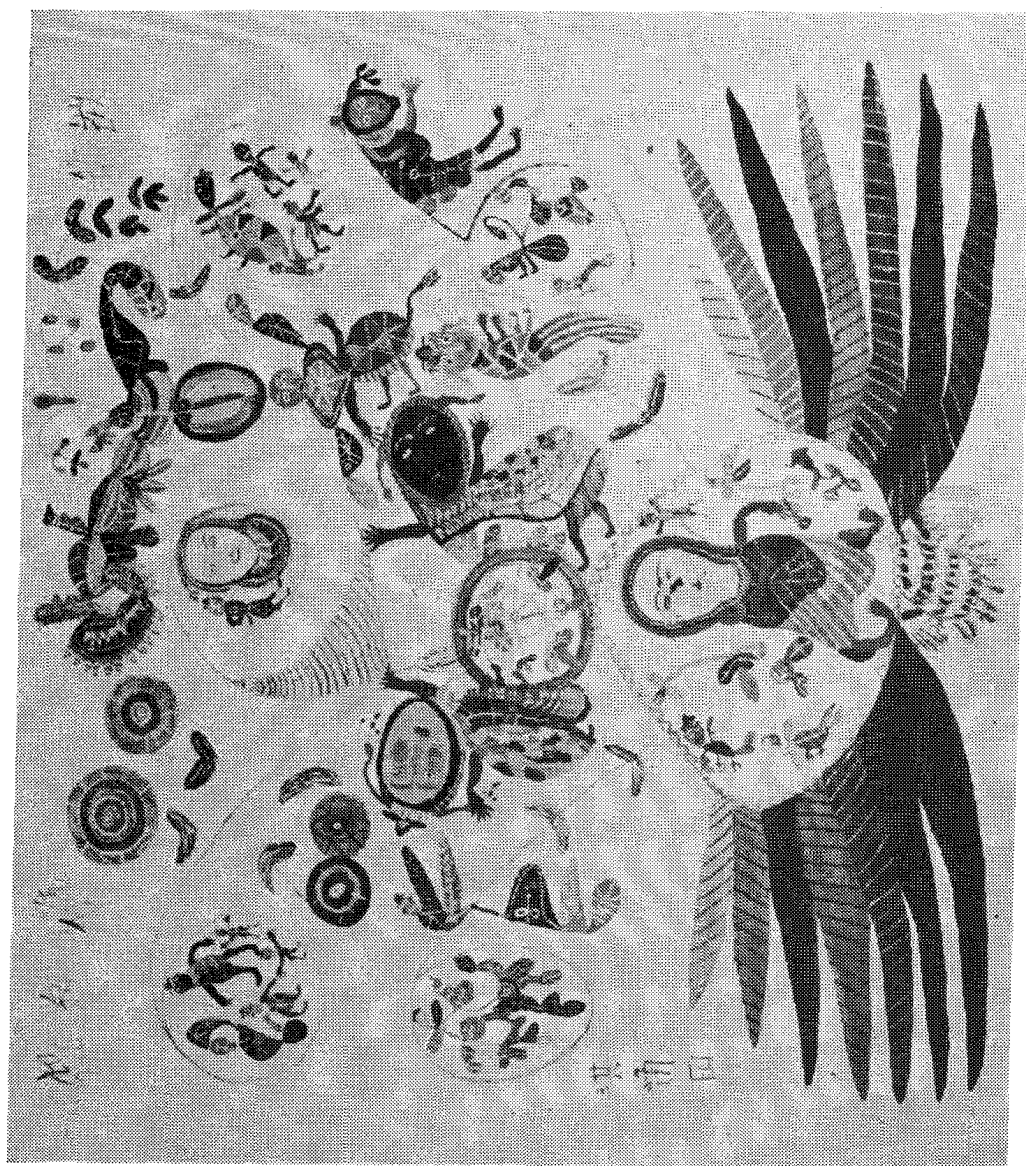
—translated by Jack Langlois
(Courtesy of *Echo Magazine*)



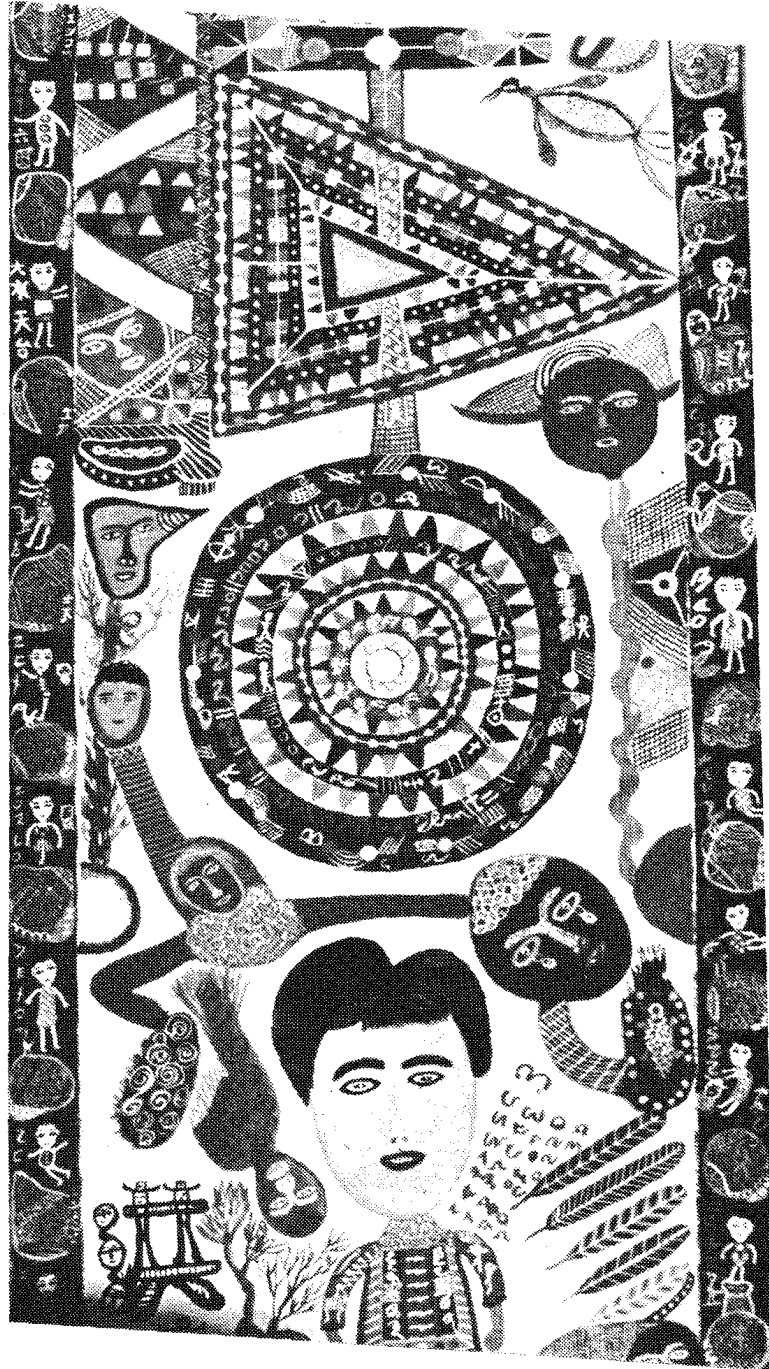
A Scroll of Hung T'ung



Detail of preceding scroll



A Scroll of Hung T'ung



A Scroll of Hung Tung