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# *Thoughts on Politics and Critical Paradigms in Modern Chinese Literature Studies*

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Professor Liu Kang's "Politics, Critical Paradigms: Reflections on Modern Chinese Literature Studies" (1993 [this issue]; all quoted text refers to Liu unless otherwise specified) is a stimulating discussion that raises many important questions concerning the state of the field today. Liu's laudable goal is to bring the field of modern Chinese literature studies into the "global debate on postmodern culture and literature." On this account, perhaps, his narrative seems to have certain affinities with postmodernist metafiction in its refusal to state a coherent theme, its inscribing and then undermining of certain values so the reader never knows exactly what the author thinks (author being a dead category anyway, killed by Barthe in imitation of Nietzsche killing God), and its eschewal of closure. After making a number of assertions about the adequacy or inadequacy of various approaches to the study of modern Chinese literature in the United States, Liu goes on to what appears to be a generally positive assessment of one Chinese literary theorist and a number of largely unnamed avant-garde literary critics, and ends in a series of unanswered questions.

Like all serious students and scholars, Liu has engaged a great deal of intellectual and moral passion in the article. He has also tried to be fair in handing out praise and blame to various well-known scholars in the field. They are either praised or blamed (sometimes both) for

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their methodology or for the results of their studies of modern and contemporary Chinese literature and history. We must applaud this attempt at fairness in the midst of what Liu calls a "civil war." Nonetheless, although Liu's views are stimulating, some of them are also confusing or contradictory. And some of them simply cannot be supported. Many of Liu's views are shared by a fair number of people in the field today, and I offer my own discussion of them in the interest of stimulating dialogue and debate.

Liu's claim that "Scholars now must come to grips with their counterparts in China in a mutual exchange of opinion" ignores the fact that mutual exchanges have in fact been going on for a lot longer than since 1979. But many scholars in the United States were wary of accepting at face value the literary-political analyses published in the government-controlled press and journals of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Some of them were much more inclined to "come to grips with," even to trust and cooperate with, scholars from Taiwan and Hong Kong, not to mention Chinese scholars resident in the United States. Those Chinese scholars, such as C. T. Hsia, Leo Ou-fan Lee, Joseph S. M. Lau, William Tay, David Der-wei Wang, and others have always come to grips with their Chinese counterparts.

One weakness of Liu's article is its lack of a clear understanding of the history of Chinese literature studies in the United States since 1950. During that time, Chinese scholars always came to grips with the flow of information out of China, but many non-Chinese of leftist political persuasions, frankly pro-PRC and anti-GMD (Guomindang), paid scant attention to their Chinese counterparts in the United States.<sup>1</sup> My fellow student at Berkeley in the sixties, Michael Gotz, cited with approval by Liu, exhibited this attitude perfectly. He and many other non-Chinese scholars of modern Chinese literature, including myself, were far more likely to side with Jaroslav Prusek than with C. T. Hsia in their famous 1962-1963 polemic on the nature of modern Chinese literature. Two decades later, Hsia's *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* had been translated into Chinese, opening younger Chinese readers' eyes, both in the PRC and Taiwan, to a more balanced picture of modern Chinese literature than they had ever received in the government-dominated publications of their homelands. At the same time, some of Prusek's Marxist-inspired views had come to seem lamentable excesses on the part of an outstanding scholar, especially

when one notices that in several essays published in 1964 (see especially Prusek, 1980: 48-55, 90-93; compare with 199, 235), Prusek preferred particular works of modern Chinese literature on the basis of the same standards he had attacked Hsia for using.

There is truth in the frequently reiterated idea that "politics always permeates, in various forms, every cultural formation and institution." However, we must understand that politics in the United States and Europe are indeed different from politics in the People's Republic of China. Liu is not alone in his fears that some contemporary Chinese writers may attempt to remove literature from the quotidian pressures of ordinary politics. Such fears, however, are lacking in empathetic insight into the actual situation prevailing in the People's Republic today. They are premature in the extreme when applied to a situation where there are no ordinary politics in the Euramerican sense, where the state apparatus alone decides what is to be considered politically correct, and where it is in fact highly political to attempt to write in a "nonpolitical fashion" (see Lee, 1985).

One of the primary reasons for the *xungen pai* or "nativist" group's explicit exploration of cultural rather than political-institutional problems was precisely the overwhelming pressure of PRC-CCP political prior restraint on publication of frank exposés of current policies. As Su Xiaokang admitted after he escaped from China in the wake of the Tiananmen Massacre, they were attacking three thousand years in order to attack forty-five years. The quotidian pressures on Chinese writers' lives are decidedly not the same as the quotidian pressures felt by Western writers and intellectuals. Chinese writers have just begun to reestablish the professional autonomy of literature and literary criticism that we take for granted in Euramerican societies, an autonomy that is protected to the extent that neo-Marxist critics can and do call for a new social-political system they call socialism (Eagleton, 1983: 209-212) in their commercially successful books and journals.

We in the United States and Europe are protected by the full power of the state, even when we criticize the foundations of that state. The Chinese writers, working in a radically different historical context, are threatened by the full power of the state every time they publish anything that might be construed as a criticism of that state.<sup>2</sup> It is not yet time to worry about the possibility that Chinese writers may take contemporary Chinese fiction too far away from quotidian politics.

We ought rather to praise and support their efforts to liberate the realms of spiritual culture from the "engineers of the soul" who have done so much to devalue and distort the Chinese spirit in the past forty-nine years since the Yan'an Forum.

"Western critics . . . tend to neutralize their own political standpoint by assuming objective, nonpartisan, pluralistic, and liberal positions vis-à-vis the arbitrary, dogmatic, and authoritarian Chinese Marxist line." Liu writes this as though it were a damning criticism of as yet unnamed "Western critics." Does this term also include C. T. Hsia, Leo Ou-fan Lee, Joseph S. M. Lau, and so on? Are they Western critics? If not, then who are the Western critics being attacked? Who are the Western critics of modern Chinese literature who went up against Chinese Marxism-Maoism? In the field of modern Chinese literature studies before 1979, I can think of only a few.<sup>3</sup>

All of the non-Chinese critics cited in the article—Theodore Hutters, the late Marston Anderson—and some of the Chinese—for example, Rey Chow—are cited with approval. Only ethnic Chinese critics living in the United States are cited with disapproval or are found wanting in their methodology or judgments. However, they have never tried to "neutralize" anything except Communist *and* Nationalist party interference with Chinese literature. They have claimed to be no more and no less objective than the next person. To be objective does not necessarily mean to agree with someone else. They are certainly more objective and reliable in their views on modern Chinese literature than PRC critics from 1949 to 1979. They have indeed been partisan for a certain kind of literature based on certain aesthetic standards of excellence in literature; it is for this kind of partisanship that Liu both praises and condemns C. T. Hsia.

It is simply a statement of fact that they have indeed been pluralistic and liberal, and that the official Communist Party lines on literature from 1942 to the present have been arbitrary, dogmatic, and authoritarian. These are precisely the reasons why the younger PRC writers and critics of the 1980s, of whom Liu seems to approve, are fighting on the basis of their aesthetic standards of literary excellence (very similar, I might add to Hsia, Lee, and Lau's) for the "discursive power of representation" against the arbitrary, dogmatic, and authoritarian restraints imposed on them by the literary apparatus of the state. As a matter of historical fact (historicity seems to be one of Liu's professed

values), Hsia, Lee, and Lau have always argued against the "hegemony" of "Maoist discourse," and they did it when Maoist discourse not only ruled China but also had a powerful hold on the minds of many Western critics of modern Chinese literature.

According to Liu, "Western students of modern China tend to view modern Chinese literature as essentially a type of documentary evidence for their broader sociological and historical findings and conclusions." The reasons why this was so often the case in the past are given by Liu later in the article: "modern Chinese literature is suffused with such a heavy-handed didacticism, is so lacking in aesthetic refinement, and so unpalatable to the sophisticated taste of Western audiences, . . ." The third clause should read "Chinese and Western audiences." Liu does not accept these reasons, however. He accuses the Western scholars who make these statements of "orientalism," but these opinions are precisely those shared by the putatively avant-garde critics like Li Tuo and the unmentioned Huang Ziping, Wu Liang, Chen Depei, and so on that Liu supports, not to mention writers of less distinction such as Zhang Xianliang, Wang Anyi, and to some extent Wang Meng. Are they all "orientalists"? I think not, nor are non-Chinese scholars like Howard Goldblatt, Edward Gunn, Jeffrey Kinkley, Perry Link, and myself who have edited anthologies on post-Mao literature.<sup>4</sup> None of us are beyond making mistakes in our critical judgments of Chinese literature, but it is a travesty to quote Edward Said and accuse such people of "apathetic ignorance."

It does not reflect ignorance, but at least it is a serious oversight, that Liu has nothing to say about the excellent Chinese literature from Taiwan that has been written since the 1960s, anthologized in English translations organized by C. T. Hsia and Joseph S. M. Lau, written about by Hsia, Lau, Lee, and a few others, and largely ignored by all but a small minority of non-Chinese scholars of modern Chinese literature. Prior to 1985, one did indeed hear again and again the disparaging words that most of modern Chinese literature is suffused with a heavy-handed didacticism and is lacking in aesthetic refinement. One heard it not primarily from non-Chinese Western scholars, but mainly from Chinese scholars living in the West. One heard it because it was basically true, and those non-Chinese Western critics who took Chinese literature from 1949 to 1979 seriously as art did a disservice to the future of Chinese literature.<sup>5</sup> Those who took it as

documentary evidence of changes in PRC political lines did the sensible thing, despite the fact that some of them were fooled by the literature into painting a too rosy a picture of life in the PRC. They should have known better, but they were carried away by their own idealism and enthusiasm for socialism, that is, by their politics.

### C.T. HSIA, MODERNISM, COMPARISON, AND ALLEGORY

So many confusing statements are made about C. T. Hsia and his *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (hereafter referred to as *A History*) that I cannot deal with all of them, but will have to concentrate on the most important ones. Hsia's approach "is ultimately unsatisfactory" because his "evaluation of modern Chinese literature is based on a critical paradigm that is avowedly Eurocentric, formalist, and ahistorical" and represents "a modernist discourse adamantly opposed to modernization, industrialization, and technological progress" that "relentlessly privileges a symbolist, individualistic mode of writing"<sup>6</sup> C. T. Hsia has indeed argued that the proper work of a literary critic is the evaluation of good and bad writing, and in his *A History* he worked hard to separate psychologically complex, socially sophisticated, thematically convincing, and artistically innovative literary monuments from psychologically simplistic, socially formulaic, thematically tendentious, and artistically pedestrian literary documents. His judgments of good and bad fiction were based less on any formal paradigm, modernist or otherwise, than on informal factors, such as his deep knowledge and experience of the entire Chinese literary tradition, his understanding of European literature, his personal life experiences, and his perspicacity, wisdom, and uncommon common sense.

C. T. Hsia is certainly not "adamantly opposed to modernization, industrialization, and technological progress." And he never idealized the Chinese peasants' way of life or mode of thought as so many Chinese writers have. He has always maintained that truly exceptional writers should explore the moral dilemmas faced by individual human beings in any historical setting rather than tendentiously expound any pre-established ideology, however laudable it might be. His views on the responsibility of writers to their craft have always been in accord

with those recently expressed by Nadine Gordimer (1991: 59). She believes that no matter how much she supports the revolutionary goals of the African National Congress she must not suggest in her fiction that everything done by that organization is always correct and carried out without any dissent. This is because she believes that imaginative writers should not put their talent at the service of the revolution but rather at the service of literature. If writers who were members or supporters of the Chinese Communist Party in the 1930s and 1940s had had such an ideal of artistic integrity, they would probably have produced a more impressive body of work.

Hsia's approach "is ultimately unsatisfactory" for doing what? Here we come to a major problem with Liu's thesis: the goal of literary studies. I cannot say "literary criticism," "literary history," or "literary theory," because there is no distinction among them in the article; they are all tacitly conflated. Hsia's approach has been extremely satisfactory and immensely successful. As a literary critic, Hsia discovered for readers of his *A History* and for future scholars virtually all of the finest writers in China from 1917 to the late sixties. In his subsequent writings on Taiwanese fiction, he did and continues to do the same. The "canon" that he established does in fact contain most of the best writers whose works have stood the test of time and continue to be read in Chinese by voluntary readers, as literature must if it is to continue as a viable influence in a civilized society.<sup>7</sup> By bringing these works of Chinese fiction to the world's attention, Hsia accomplished the goal set forth recently by Edward Said when he writes that, "It is only through the scrutiny of these works *as literature, as style, as pleasure and illumination, that they can be brought in, so to speak, and kept in [the canon of world literature]*" (Said, 1992: 185, italics in original).

We should reject the idea that he set up a canon. He never banned any texts or imprisoned any writers and he never prevented China scholars from studying and writing books and articles about writers he considered artistically inferior. In any case, most of the writers and particular works he praised in one way or another have also been translated and studied by scholars throughout the world. The attempt to establish an anti-Hsiavian canon, whatever that might be, is bound to fail. Even Marston Anderson's book that Liu likes so much is still concerned primarily with writers that Liu considers to be part of the



Hsiavian canon. Almost every subsequent full-length study of a major writer mentioned in Hsia's *A History* begins with an acknowledgment to or a dialogue with Hsia. Other literary critics and historians should be fortunate enough to be so "unsatisfactory."

Hsia's book established "a veritable canon of a nonleftist Chinese tradition of satirical and humanitarian realism . . . in which the works of Shen Congwen, Zhang Ailing, and Qian Zhongshu figure most prominently." Despite having established a canon of realism, Hsia does not see "May Fourth realism in all its complexities—its significance to China's modernization project and its social and historical limitations." This is a serious misreading of Hsia. On page 499 of *A History*, Hsia writes as follows concerning the artistic limitations of modern Chinese fiction:

In the searching light of this remark [of D. H. Lawrence to "lose no time with ideals; serve the Holy Ghost; never serve mankind"], the generally mediocre level of modern Chinese literature is surely due to its preoccupation with ideals, its distracting and overinsistent concern with mankind [Hsia, 1971: 499].

He then goes on to take into full consideration its social and historical background and to praise modern Chinese writers highly for their courage in the face of a difficult historical situation, praise that he reiterated and amplified in this preface to the Chinese translation of *A History* (Liu, 1979):

*In view of the cultural milieu of the modern Chinese writer, this was perhaps as it should be: until social justice, scientific and technological competence, and a measure of national strength were achieved, he had little choice but to serve his ideals.* [So much for his being "adamantly opposed to modernization, industrialization, and technological progress."] In fact, his ideals came to him in the insidious shape of the Holy Ghost. Not merely in the literary context, the success of Communism was mainly due to its dazzling ability to identify itself with these ideals. It can be said categorically that, with two or three exceptions, no modern Chinese writer possessed enough compelling genius and imagination to carve his own path in defiance of the *Zeitgeist*; but the writers of talent and integrity, while espousing those ideals, also serve in their fashion, often reluctantly and in spite of themselves, the Holy Ghost. The work of these writers does not evince great imaginative power or technical brilliance; the intrusive presence of utilitarian ideals pre-

cluded the disinterested search for excellence; but *it does have the quality of honesty, disturbing and illuminating enough in its depiction of the contemporary Chinese scene to deserve the attention of posterity* [p. 499, emphasis added].

On pages 506-507 of *A History*, Hsia singles out Zhang Ailing, Zhang Tianyi, Qian Zhongshu, and Shen Congwen as the truly exceptional Chinese writers of the period because "they have created worlds stamped with their distinctive personality and moral passion." If there is a Hsiavian canon, they are it. He goes on to write that "the rest of the good writers . . . seem to have contemplated China in much the same fashion. . . . They are all satiric humanitarian realists." Hsia does not mean this as a compliment to their artistry, but as a limitation of it, a limitation conditioned by their historical situation; he has already complimented their courage and honesty in the face of political corruption and danger. In other words, these writers are good, but they are not great; they deserve to be read for what they tell us about the early twentieth-century Chinese predicament, but they will not be read by future generations of voluntary readers.

But Liu is objecting to more than C. T. Hsia's supposed Eurocentric, formalistic, and ahistorical methodology and standards of excellence. Two other things are also troubling to Liu. First is the comparison of the whole of modern Chinese mainland fiction from 1917 to 1970 (the second edition of *A History* was published in 1971) with the "master texts" of Western fiction of that same period. And second is Hsia's overall conclusion that, with the exception of a handful of writers, modern Chinese mainland fiction is simply not as good as Euroamerican fiction of the same period or of the century before in Europe.<sup>8</sup> The former is regarded as a mistaken methodology, whereas the latter is deemed an unfair conclusion.

Although C. T. Hsia never uses the term "master text," it is obvious from his argument that he believes the truly exceptional writers of the period to have created some masterpieces of world literature. But Liu rejects Hsia's category of best Chinese mainland writers or texts from 1917 to 1970 as a misguided attempt to impose a canon on the field. In so doing, he concedes something Hsia and many others would not: that the West has all the master texts. This implicit idea hardly seems fair, even when applied to Chinese mainland fiction of this period, but

becomes even more unjust when applied to Chinese fiction written in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and overseas from the mid-sixties to the present.

Unfortunately for the argument against Eurocentric methodologies, the books that Liu approves of—Marston Anderson's *The Limits of Realism*, Rey Chow's *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, and Theodore Hutters' *Reading the Modern Chinese Short Story*—all reflect approaches to modern Chinese fiction based on Eurocentric poststructuralist, neo-Marxist, neo-Freudian, and feminist methodologies. Not one of them is based on any Chinese critic or group of critics' assessment of Chinese fiction. They are primarily attempts, as Liu writes, "to recuperate the formal achievements of modern Chinese literature" by following (quoting Hutters) "a close reading informed by a concern for methodology," "keep[ing] the notion of difference between Chinese and Western literatures as a central analytical concept" and thus (Liu again) "avoiding the pitfalls of Western-centered formalist approaches." Actually, this use of "difference" might be mistaken for the Western habit of regarding China "as an external Other" that Liu objects to in the last line of the article. Everything depends on which difference one focuses on, the difference in artistic quality, thematic intention, cultural background, historical context, and so on.

The essays in *Reading the Modern Chinese Short Story* are all written by scholars possessing extensive knowledge of Chinese history and culture, which they bring to bear on their subjects, but their studies are nevertheless dominated by Western literary theories and critical practices current in the United States in 1982. The bibliographies mention, among others, Erich Auerbach, M. M. Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Wayne Booth, Northrop Frye, E. D. Hirsch, Wolfgang Iser, Frederic Jameson, Hans Robert Jauss, Jacques Lacan, Georg Lukács, Susan Sontag, René Wellek, but no prominent Chinese critics living and working in China are cited.

Many recent Chinese mainland scholars and critics such as Li Tuo (mentioned favorably by Liu), Huang Ziping, Zhang Xudong, and other Chinese students studying in the United States regularly use Chinese neologisms for the terms invented by the Westerners mentioned above, as do younger Chinese scholars from Taiwan who majored in Western or comparative literature such as Wang Dewei, Zhang Hanliang, and so on. In comparative literary studies, the scholar/

critic is always faced with the dilemma of trying to navigate a narrow passage between the Scylla of absolute cultural relativism that renders *all* standards of evaluation meaningless and the Charybdis of overly self-centered formalism that renders *any particular* methodology too limited.

In the last line of the article, Liu calls for "a certain cultural and political affiliation and involvement." C. T. Hsia, with his extensive knowledge of modern Chinese *and* Western fiction illustrated just such cultural and political affiliation and involvement when he compared modern Chinese fiction with modern Western fiction. He admitted modern Chinese fiction into the house of world literature.<sup>9</sup> But the result of his comparison was his opinion that

a literature is to be judged not by its intentions but by its actual performance: its intelligence and wisdom, its sensibility and style. And by this test the majority of modern Chinese writers . . . are seen to suffer from a moral obtuseness, a lack of style and ambition, a conformity of vision and opinion, . . . . When one thinks of the great Western novelists of the century, one immediately visualizes for each an imaginary world of sharply defined scenery and people, a world burdened with its specific passions and moral problems. By virtue of its creator's integrity and genius, each world is qualitatively different from any of the others [Hsia, 1971: 506-507].

Liu and the writers he praises seem to want to prove either one or both of two things. First, that in a historical sense, with cultural relativist regard for Chinese history, modern Chinese mainland fiction from 1917 to 1970 (or only "the revolutionary era" for Anderson) is just as good as Western fiction. Second, that questions of literary and intellectual quality are not proper issues of literary study; to raise them is to be blatantly elitist (Chow, 1991: 45). It is simply unfair to compare. It is unfair to ask: which is better, Chinese novel X or Western (or African for that matter) novel Y? Why? Because the Western novels are "master texts" and the Chinese novels are not.

Why does Liu concede all the "master texts" to the West? Why is it unfair to compare *Midnight* (one of Prusek's favorites) with *An American Tragedy*, or *Fortress Besieged* (one of Hsia's favorites) with *Madame Bovary*? Is it really possible to avoid comparison altogether? Is it even advisable? I think not. Comparison is in any case unavoidable. Wayne Booth writes,

Every appraisal of a narrative is implicitly a comparison between the always complex experience we have had in its presence and what we have known before. . . . It is always the result of a direct sense that something now before us has yielded an experience that we find *comparatively* desirable, admirable, lovable or, on the other hand, comparatively repugnant, contemptible or hateful" [Booth, 1988: 70-73].

Comparison is, furthermore, an aesthetic and intellectual pleasure. "One of the great pleasures for those who read and study literature," Edward Said reminds us, "is the discovery of longstanding norms in which all cultures known to me concur: such things as style and performance, the existence of good as well as lesser writers, and the exercise of preference" (Said, 1992: 188). Such comparison and such exercise of preference are what C. T. Hsia masterfully accomplished in his *A History*.

Like Prusek before him, Liu does not like C. T. Hsia's interpretation of some particular stories. Liu criticizes Hsia for "find[ing] fault with modern Chinese literature on primarily allegorical grounds," but the discussion that follows represents an inflation of the term allegory such that any interpretation of a work of literature, or, in fact, any understanding of any word or sentence would be an allegory. Such an approach is logically useless. If everything is allegory, then allegory means nothing, and we have to think of another term in order to discuss the important distinctions necessary for any meaningful discussion of literature.

In *The Limits of Realism*, Marston Anderson is not bothered by this problem of allegorical reading. For example, his discussion of Mao Dun's short story "Creation" is basically an application of the supposed Hsiavian allegorical method. The thoughts and actions of the two protagonists, a husband and a wife, are taken by Anderson as an allegory of "Chinese intellectuals during the May Fourth movement" (the husband) and "the project of nation building" (the wife) that engrossed them. Anderson introduces his compelling allegorical analysis with the phrase "intended as a metaphor for . . .," but it is an allegorical analysis nevertheless, as are very many of his analyses, and not just by stretching the term allegory to meaningless proportions (Anderson, 1990: 180-182). In C. T. Hsia's *A History*, an introductory survey of fifty years of Chinese fiction, he has only the following to

say about this story: "The heroine of 'Creation' feels compelled to leave her husband and mentor because she has advanced beyond his noncommittal intellectual dilettantism to a positive socialist position" (Hsia, 1971: 161). By means of his longer allegorical treatment in a detailed study, Anderson gives us a more thorough understanding of this story, which, nevertheless, in no way contradicts Hsia's brief mention of it. The real difference between Hsia and Anderson, as between Hsia and Prusek before, is that Anderson evinces much more sympathy for the "positive socialist position" Hsia disapproves of.

Liu takes issue with Hsia's critical strategy of "extracting hidden 'subversive' political meanings" from Yang Shuo's novel *A Thousand Miles of Lovely Land*.<sup>10</sup> Such a tendentious and simplistic work of fiction was undoubtedly intended to be political allegory: a call for Chinese youth (Goodness) to sacrifice their lives fighting the United States (Evil) in the Korean war.<sup>11</sup> It certainly is not a work of critical realism regarding the nature of that war in which so many Chinese lives were wasted by "human wave tactics" in order to achieve a stalemate and call it a great victory. Realistic depictions of the horrors of war without the usual jingoism and patriotic gore appeared in Chinese fiction only in the post-Mao era when "critical realism" came back in vogue after having been, as Anderson demonstrates in his final chapter, "expelled from China" for thirty years.

Hsia's brilliance as a critic is shown in just that part of his critique of *Lovely Land* that Liu dislikes most. He is able to discover, not "the latent bourgeois allegory of private fantasies," but the single grain of genuine human feeling amidst the patriotic posturing of the novel. He reads the text "resistantly" *avant la lettre* and sees the bourgeois fantasy of domestic and individual happiness that made up even Yang Shuo's idea of what a patriotic hero would think that he was fighting for in the Korean war. This bourgeois fantasy is not an allegory discovered or made up by Hsia. It is an integral element of the text put in by Yang Shuo in his attempt to depict a character imagining a future worth fighting for. Many dedicated Communist writers of the "first seventeen years" who suffered such lapses into ordinary human feelings as this also suffered through persecution during the Cultural Revolution for thinking that *the* revolution was intended to usher in an age of domestic and individual happiness in China.

The struggle for such happiness, however, continued and continues in China today both in real life and in fiction, and the government-controlled literary bureaucracy still stands against the majority of the people in this struggle, still calls on writers to write patriotic nonsense. But now few of them respond, and once again, ironically, Liu most likes the writers who do not respond to the government's call to betray both their art and the truth of their individual visions of China. Liu seems to prefer the avant-garde writers and critics who are more aesthetically interesting, demonstrating, perhaps, that Liu is really a closet modernist after all.

### LITERARY HISTORY AND HISTORICISM

In Liu's discussion of Leo Ou-fan Lee's 1973 book *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers* (hereafter referred to as *The Romantic Generation*), he grants much greater value to Lee's methodology than to Hsia's. Despite this generosity, many parts of Liu's discussion remain problematic. Lee and two other scholars, Benjamin Schwartz and Lin Yü-sheng, are accused of "historicism," "totalistic cultural determinism," and never "coming to grips with the cultural and historical limitations of their transhistorical concepts." It is unclear whether they are included in the ranks of "liberal humanist" ideologues who practice the "ideological mystification of the superiority of Western capitalism."

Several other scholars and their works are arrayed against Schwartz and Lin. They include Arif Dirlik and Maurice Meisner, whose recent co-edited book, *Marxism and the Chinese Experience*, is cited with approval. As one European reviewer (Saich, 1991) pointed out, the book is "essentially a plea to take socialism in China seriously" and "much of the critique of writing about China seems to be addressed to fellow Americans who refuse to take socialism seriously." The contributors, many of whom were strong supporters of the Cultural Revolution in the sixties and seventies, now seem to believe that contemporary American academics are following the Beijing party line in their criticisms of that period of Chinese history. Their ideals and their concern for the Chinese masses are no doubt genuine, but

their arguments are far less convincing than those of Schwartz, Lin, and Lee. A more thorough reading of Paul Cohen's also cited 1984 book *Discovering History in China* would reveal that the persistent orientalist prejudice in modern Asian studies is primarily a thing of the past. Liu, and Rey Chow too, are beating a dead horse.

Schwartz and Lin may well be dedicated in varying degrees to a "liberal humanist ideology." Judging from the language in which this is represented as some sort of reprehensible moral failing and the supporting cast of accusers, this charge must mean that they are not Marxists, neo-Marxists, or socialists, hardly sufficient grounds on which to invalidate their scholarship.

The charge of historicism and totalistic cultural determinism is more interesting, even though Liu is insufficiently specific in his use of these terms. From the time it was invented in Germany in the late eighteenth century to this date, the conception of historicism has gone through many transformations. It would be too much to review them all here. Suffice it to say that used in an approving sense the term has generally meant that all things human are subject to change and have to be studied historically in order to be understood; as Lu Xun's madman said about his readings in Chinese history, "everything has to be researched (*yanjiu*), before it can be understood" (Lu Xun, 1981: 424). In a pejorative sense, such as that given it by Karl Popper, historicism usually means "a theory of history that holds that the course of events is determined by unchangeable laws of cyclic patterns" (Webster's, 1984: 665).<sup>12</sup> Judeo-Christian eschatology and Marxist economic determinism is frequently cited examples. Belief in such forms of historicism is generally felt to confer "cognitive privilege" (Leszek Kolakowski's term) on the believers; they know what is necessary, imperative, inevitable, and correct in the future development of human history.

Benjamin Schwartz's *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* and in Lin Yü-sheng's *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Anti-traditionalism in the May Fourth Era* are certainly not historicist or determinist in the pejorative sense.<sup>13</sup> In his first chapter, Schwartz carefully considers and admits the many possible limitations that might exist in his analysis of Yan Fu's thought. He admits that the currently held ideas of both "the West" and "the non-West" are highly



problematic and he highlights the "necessity of immersing ourselves as deeply as possible in the specificities of both worlds simultaneously" (Schwartz, 1964: 2). He admits that Chinese culture is "a complex of many contending and even contradictory tendencies," and that Yan Fu "is not the voice of China incarnate" (Schwartz, 1964: 4, 3). The book is above all a study of Yan Fu's concern with two questions that remain at the heart of Chinese intellectual and political debate today: how can China achieve wealth and power? What is the role of traditional Chinese culture in furthering or hindering that achievement? The concentration throughout is on Yan Fu's reading of the classics of Western liberalism in terms of his understanding of China's problems. It was Yan Fu, not Schwartz, who raised the question of Chinese culture and its adequacy or inadequacy for accomplishing particular national objectives. Neither Yan Fu nor Schwartz were in any sense narrowly deterministic. Neither of them claim the "cognitive privilege" of understanding the future.

After Yan Fu and the generation following him brought Chinese traditional culture into the debate about China's future, the May Fourth generation felt that traditional culture to be extremely problematic. Lin Yü-sheng's book is a study of the way in which doubts about the suitability of traditional Chinese culture developed into a totalistic iconoclasm, a belief "that the social-cultural-political order of the past must be treated as a whole [and] that it must be rejected as a whole" (Lin, 1979: x). It is not Lin Yü-sheng who is totalistic, it is Lu Xun, Chen Duxiu, and Hu Shi that Lin's investigation demonstrates to have become totalistic due to their involvement in "a profound crisis of cultural identity" (Lin, 1979: 6). Lin pays careful attention to the actual historical situation in China during each stage of the process he is investigating, and, as Schwartz advised, he immerses himself as deeply as possible in the specificities of traditional and modern Chinese thought. He nowhere argues the inevitability or the historical necessity of the social, cultural, and intellectual developments he analyzes, and although he does argue for a "pluralist and substantive approach to the specificities of the cultural problems" raised in his book (Lin, 1979: 160), he does not predict the future.

Leo Lee's *Romantic Generation* is an example of the first basic meaning of historicism, but it is attacked as an example of the second

meaning. *Romantic Generation* is a detailed historical and psychological study of a group of modern Chinese writers active early in this century who may accurately be characterized as having a romantic attitude toward both life and literature. Its main thesis is not terribly startling, but it is worked out in fascinating detail: "The trend of subjective sentiment in modern Chinese literature is partially of Chinese origin; the inspiration for its modern quality, however, is derived from the West" (Lee, 1973: 275). It is not a study of the entire history of modern Chinese literature up to 1973. Just as Marston Anderson's study concentrates on a select group of modern Chinese writers of the 1920s and 1930s who may accurately be characterized as having a realistic attitude toward both life and literature, Lee concentrates on the Chinese writers' concepts of romanticism.

Liu finds the romanticist conceptualization insufficient to account for "the leftist mainstream of realism championed by Lu Xun and Mao Dun," but even Anderson's study attempts to demonstrate that the realist conceptualization was insufficient to carry out the "new imperative" Chinese writers "acknowledged" when they "call[ed] for mass fiction and socialist realism" (Anderson, 1990: 202). Anderson's praise for Wu Zuxiang's "powerful" depiction of a peasant protagonist's "lyrical immersion in the crowd" (Anderson, 1990: 199) further demonstrates the romantic longing of the leftist realist writer to abandon his individual self and be mystically merged with the masses.<sup>14</sup> As Lee wrote, "It seems that despite their theoretical espousal of realism or naturalism the Chinese writers were motivated by an emotional ethos more akin to romanticism" (Lee, 1973: 277). Anyone who reads the post-1979 fiction of Zhang Jie, Wang Anyi, Dai Houying, and many others will have to admit that "romanticism" as much as "realism" is, for better or worse, still a genuine predisposition of many Chinese mainland writers.<sup>15</sup>

If Leo Lee's study is historicism in the pejorative sense, then Marston Anderson's is too, and even more so. Unlike Anderson, Lee does not use terms like "a new imperative" in an equivocal manner,<sup>16</sup> implying that some particular form of modern Chinese literature was historically necessary for that literature to carry out its historical mission. Nor does Lee present any analyses of the type in which Anderson ascribes "historical reality" only to Sha Ting's young peas-

ant protagonist's "dream of going to Yan'an" but not to "the more conventionally realistic details of village life" depicted in "the largest part" of Sha Ting's story (Anderson, 1990: 192-193). Nor does Lee uncritically hail the "destruction of the old order" through crowd violence that Anderson sees as linking the leftist realist writer's peasant protagonists to "a larger historical and ethical context." History for Anderson is the coming revolution and he writes of the "historical and ethical context" in such a way that one feels him to believe in the historical necessity of the revolution. Lee, Schwartz, and Lin, on the other hand, do not presume to know what was historically imperative or necessary in the modern Chinese past. They do, however, hope for the development of democracy in contemporary China.

#### *LIU ZAIFU AND THE CHINESE "AVANT-GARDE"*

I agree with Liu Kang's view that Liu Zaifu is a literary philosopher whom we ought to pay some attention to. There is something curiously ivory-towerish and idealistic, however, in Liu Zaifu's assertion that contemporary humanity has "already left the immediate daily process of labor behind" them. This is hardly true for the vast majority of humanity, including most of the 1.1 billion Chinese. Nonetheless, his ideas on "reading as a return of humanity" and "literature as part of a profound cultural reflection upon Chinese tradition," though neither new nor original, do form part of the current assault on Maoist reductionism.

Liu Kang's preference for what he calls avant-garde writers and critics resembles once again the views of C. T. Hsia and Leo Lee. Li Tuo prefers the term "experimental fiction" (*shiyán xiǎoshuō*) to "avante-garde" (*qiánwēi*), and I think he is correct because such a term is not weighted with Western historical implications. (For a summary of his recent comments, see Yu Xiaoxing, 1990 and Li Tuo, 1991.) These writers and critics are "privileged" both because of the aesthetic nature of their writing and their historical situation as fighters against "Maospeak." I would add that the thematic messages of their stories are also more complex and sophisticated than anything written from 1949 to the early 1980s and, in many cases, equally good if not better

than much that was written from 1917 to 1949. Only the writers and works praised by Hsia and Lee are as good as or better than some of the writers chosen by Liu. What makes both the earlier and later writers preferable is, in Hsia's words, the quality of their "intelligence and wisdom, [their] sensibility and style."

Liu lumps avant-garde writers too closely together as a group and makes some premature generalizations about them. There is a great deal of difference among the styles of Yu Hua, Ma Yuan, Can Xue, Ge Fei, Su Tong, Bei Dao, and Gu Cheng.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes their experimental fiction and poetry is "self-referential" and "self-reflexive" and sometimes it is not. Some writers in some works use "defamiliarization" techniques (Liu must know this is "Eurocentric, formalist" metalanguage) and some do not. "Alienation and disillusionment" come through just as powerfully in the works of Liu Heng and somewhat less powerfully in those of Li Xiao without such formal devices. All of these writers are quite different and we need more detailed studies of their works before we can safely make such generalizations.

According to Liu, despite "their enthusiasm for the new aesthetic sensibilities, critics have yet to come to grips with a number of difficulties." He is worried about three things. That the new language may become "reified and commodified in a society with an increasingly consumerist orientation." That the new Chinese "modernist aesthetics or anti-aesthetics" (which is it, anyway?) represents an "elitist tendency" that "favors a cultural superiority." And that "the subversive new language can be readily incorporated into the equally subversive and rebellious Maoist discourse." All three of these worries—about the dangers of commodification, elitism, and co-option—are chimerical.

Chinese writers, like writers everywhere, live in hope that their works, products of the imagination that are already reified, made into real things, books and magazine articles, will be commodified, that is to say in plain English: sold to a reading public. They even go so far as to authorize people with an insufficient grasp of the English language (and the Chinese, too, sometimes) to translate their works and sell them abroad. The foreign exchange earned in that manner goes a long way in China, and, although the translation may be an inferior product, the money makes it possible for the writers to continue in

their chosen craft and perhaps someday produce masterpieces of Chinese fiction. There is absolutely nothing to fear from this. Quite the contrary. The future of Chinese literature depends on its further commodification in an increasingly free market environment, a cultural environment that is free in the first instance of political interference by the party and the government.

The charge of "elitism" is a curious cliché in American academic circles these days. One reads it frequently in the works of neo-Marxist, neo-Freudian, or postmodernist cultural critics. They are forever hurling this epithet at people whose views on art and literature they do not agree with, implying that those people's views, unlike their own, are somehow cut off from and inaccessible to the broad masses, or that those people have no concern for the plight of the world's poor and disadvantaged. How can such books as Frederic Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (subtitled "Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act"), Rey Chow's *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, or even Raymond Williams' less sophisticated *Marxism and Literature*, with their intricate, subtle, and involved discussions of expressive causality, "ideologemes," strategies of containment, "fetishization" of love, objects introjected in subjectivity, narrative suturing in film, dialectics, and materialized or materializing forms (the list could go on for pages), be described as anything but "elitist"? Is it simply because they claim, like reformist intellectuals in China and politicians everywhere, to speak for the people?

All Western academics, regardless of their political beliefs, are in daily contact with ideas and terminologies that might be construed as elitist if that term means inaccessible to most nonacademics. As an economic class, all Western academics also rank far higher than either the rapidly diminishing working class or the rapidly increasing service class in their societies, not even to mention the peasantry of China and the rest of the Third World. Does that make us all elitist or not? Some small fraction of our number may actually be called on to hold appointed office or give advice to government. Those people might then accurately be regarded, in the language of social science, as participating, however briefly, in "the circulation of elites" in their societies. Even in such cases, the generalized "elitist" used as a term of opprobrium might not rightly apply. Some of these people, acting

as cultural attachés or agricultural advisors in European embassies in China for example, might do a great deal to aid the cause both of persecuted intellectuals and impoverished peasants. In the same way, all successful Chinese writers, like all Chinese college graduates, form an elite of sorts in their country, but they are not necessarily destined to become elitist in the sense Liu seems to imply. There is much more to fear from the well-nigh hereditary political elite whose policies, adopted against the advice of the best-educated professionals, so often end up inflicting great harm on all classes in Chinese society.

Serious modern Chinese fiction from 1917 to the present has always been read by a minority of the population, and the more artistically sophisticated it becomes in the future, the less likely it will be to reach a majority of Chinese readers. Only martial arts, butterfly or romance fiction, and the occasional political exposé, has ever done that. The audience for nonpopular Chinese fiction in the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and throughout the diaspora is still large enough, however, to support and sustain the efforts of innovative Chinese writers. Never mind their so-called "elitist tendency." Rather, hope that the government leaves them alone long enough and they have sufficient talent, intelligence, and drive to produce works of artistic beauty and intellectual interest. All the writers mentioned above have only just begun their creative lives. The Chinese government's literary bureaucracy does enough harm accusing them of elitism, modernism, nihilism, and all manner of nonsense with the coercive support of a political system in which they are powerless to respond in kind. We need not join in that chorus of stale accusations.

The idea that Maoist discourse is any longer "subversive and rebellious" strikes me as quaintly out of touch with political reality in China. In the period after the Tiananmen Massacre of June 1989, there has indeed been a resurgence of Maoist discourse in the party-controlled press. Such discourse is now almost universally recognized as the conservative and self-serving utterance of a rapidly aging ruling caste who themselves are hopelessly divided about what to do next, but who intend to hold on to power to the bitter end. There is also a resurgent nostalgia for Mao among the rural population in China, but this phenomenon is more a reflection of dissatisfaction with the present difficult situation and the leadership believed to be responsible

for it than a serious rebirth of genuine Maoist discourse. The idea that the language of Yu Hua, Ma Yuan, Can Xue, Ge Fei, Su Tong, and others might be "readily incorporated into" Maoist discourse boggles the imagination. If it were ever possible for the language and ideology of, say, Yu Hua's novella *Shishi ru yan* (*Affairs of the World Are Like Smoke*) (Yu, 1991), with its ninety-year-old Dracula-like fortune teller who lives off the blood of his five sons and rapes teenage virgins in order to prolong his vigor, its ghost wedding and other ghostly visitations, its incest between grandmother and grandson, and its filicide, to be "readily incorporated" into Maoist discourse, it certainly would be amazing. At the very least, Maoist discourse would never be the same again. I see no cause to worry about such an unlikely eventuality.

### "METHOD" FETISHISM

In a discussion of the impact of science on modern conceptions of rationality, the philosopher of science Hilary Putnam discusses what he calls "method" fetishism: the philosophic belief that "science proceeds by following a distinctive method" and that "by using that method one can reliably discover truths." Upon further reflection, contemporary philosophers of science have come to believe that "it is not possible to draw a sharp line between the *content* of science and the *method* of science." It turns out that the method fetishists wrongly assumed "that rationality is inseparable," but we can separate rationality "into two parts: a *formal* part, which can be schematized mathematically and programmed on a computer, and an *informal* part which cannot be so schematized and which depends on the actual changing beliefs of scientists." Thus this part of Putnam's argument concludes: "The hope for a formal method, capable of being isolated from actual human judgments about the content of science (that is, about the nature of the world), and from human values seems to have evaporated" (Putnam, 1981: 198, 191-192; emphases in the original).

Liu finds C. T. Hsia "ultimately unsatisfactory" because he used supposedly outmoded aesthetic standards to measure the worth of modern Chinese fiction. Like Prusek thirty years ago, Liu pleads for a historical understanding of the "significance to China's moderniza-

tion project and its social and historical limitations" of the literature Hsia finds to be lacking in "intelligence, wisdom, sensibility, and style." Liu also exhibits the same contradiction as Prusek did by the tacit acceptance of Hsiavian standards embodied in his preference for the more aestheticized literature of the contemporary Chinese (PRC) avant-garde. Thus paradoxically Liu argues both for *and* against taking the texts of modern Chinese literature (1) as data for history and (2) as aesthetic works of literary artistry. Although Liu views Leo Ou-fan Lee's book as an advance when compared to positivist orientalist historians, he is still ultimately dissatisfied, because in seeking a historical understanding of the early development of modern Chinese literature, Lee emphasized the influence of romanticism over that of realism. By emphasizing realism over romanticism, albeit a realism too limited to make "the revolution" in the operative realm of action, and by applying a barrage of more recent Eurocentered theories of both history *and* aesthetics, only the most recent practitioners of neo-Marxist, neo-Freudian, poststructuralist, and postmodernist methodologies have finally achieved the right balance between aesthetics and history. Only they can satisfactorily explain everything in modern Chinese literary history and at the same time avoid the sins of totalism and determinism.

Liu seems to believe that there is some formal *method* that will discover all the important truths of modern Chinese literary history. The use of such a method will make obsolete the informal, albeit highly informed, judgments of the C. T. Hsias and the Leo Lees of our field. With such a method, we will finally have a satisfactory understanding of, I suppose, everything about modern Chinese literature and its history. This persistent belief is really a form of scientism and is just as untenable as that discredited dogma.

After maintaining all the way through that the latest theories are the best by tacitly employing them in his argument ("neutralizing" them as a given), Liu's concluding section would seem to be a contradictory yet welcome plea for theoretical pluralism in which he asks a number of questions about the value of theory. I wish to end also with a few comments on the relation of theory to literature.

Literature is not science.<sup>18</sup> Literature is not a form of cumulative knowledge in which the older understanding or conception of some-



thing becomes obsolete once the new conception replaces it. Literature is art. Literature is repetitive. Literature is always involved with archetypal human situations in the family and in society. Literature is always concerned with abiding moral problems and value conflicts that arise between and within individual human beings in their living experience of the universal human emotions of love and hate, the universal human conflicts between self and other, humanity and nature, and the universal human predicament of good and evil. Literature is primary. Theory is secondary. Theory is the servant of literature. We always learn more about ourselves and others as individual human beings from literature than from theory. Theories are fine as long as we recognize that literature is finer. If we study Western theory, we will learn a great deal about what Western academics think. But only if we read modern and contemporary Chinese literature itself will we know what modern and contemporary Chinese people are. Short of living in China, the only way of genuinely taking the Chinese experience into consideration is to read Chinese literature first and foremost.

Literature is not politics, although it exists in a political milieu that may be more or less conducive to its production and distribution. It is not through imaginative literature that societies divide their goods and services, decide the rights and duties of their citizens, establish their laws and constitutions, or administer their rewards and punishments.<sup>19</sup> Literature does not create the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the wise and the foolish, or the powerful and the weak. Literature is art. As art situated in some particular time and place, in some particular culture, literature may help create or reflect (usually both) the cultural and political climate of the times. That is, literature may or may not make deliberate or obvious statements about aspects of life in society that may or may not touch on what is rightly regarded as the realm of politics. This does not make literature into politics, nor does it even make it primarily political. In this century, literature has been conflated with politics by many governments or political factions that wished to control literature in their own interests. When it was so conflated, the results were usually disastrous both for literature and for the writers who created it. We must regard this as evidence of political interference with or control of literature, not as proof of the ultimately political nature of literature itself.

Generally speaking, in the last two hundred years of world history, the more political liberty there has been in any given society, the more freedom writers have had to make or not to make any political comments in their imaginative writings. Twentieth-century Chinese literary history saw a large number of politically committed writers voluntarily subordinate their craft to their credo. They voluntarily supported an ideology that, when it finally emerged as a political power and established a state apparatus, immediately took away their freedom to write or publish anything they wanted to. From 1942 until 1979, that state regarded literature as nothing but politics, and only one increasingly narrow species of politics at that. Wave after wave of writers who tried to reassert their discursive power to represent the world as they saw it rather than as they were supposed to see it, were labeled politically subversive and punished accordingly. During that time, many Western scholars and critics of Chinese literature in the United States and Europe were quite supportive of the Maoist socialist experiment. Not so many were bothered by the suppression of intellectuals and writers. Suppression or reeducation of the intellectuals was seen as a necessary price to pay for the economic salvation of the peasants. Many committed Marxist socialists looked to China as a more successful form of socialism than the Stalinist-tainted Soviet Union.

From 1979 to June 1989, Chinese writers enjoyed the longest period of comparative freedom from the destructive influence of politics since 1937, but at this writing (March 1992), PRC literature has once again been subjected to hard-line authoritarian political restraints.<sup>20</sup> Given the track record of their intellectual predecessors, there is no reason to think that the neo-Marxist theories of politics and society currently fashionable in American graduate schools necessarily constitute the most useful guides to the study of modern and contemporary Chinese literature. The liberal, humanist critics of that literature are far more likely to continue to offer more accurate appraisals of both its aesthetic excellence and its ideological relevance to "the Chinese experience."

In any case, there is no single theory or method that can tell us everything we want to know about that literature. Even if we discard the New Critics' theory of the aesthetic object, practical criticism cannot possibly dispense with their method of close reading. If we are

opposed to canon formation, we still cannot assign every work of Chinese fiction since 1917 to our students, not even to our graduate students. We have to choose some works and reject others, and when we do, we bring into play all of our formal and informal standards of judgment and relevance. To paraphrase the Hilary Putnam passage quoted above, the hope for a formal method that will satisfactorily discover all the relevant truths about the history of modern Chinese literature, and that is capable of being isolated both from informal human judgments about what exactly is a relevant truth in this field (that is about the nature of the literature itself) and from human values seems to have evaporated. If we abandon the bootless search for the one final method, the one brilliant all-illuminating theoretical paradigm, we might be able to return to what Henry Louis Gates, Jr. calls "the private pleasures that brought us to the subject in the first place"—reading and enjoying our favorite authors and being "trans-fixed by those passages that seem to read us" (Gates, 1992: 194). And we might then recuperate the deeper meaning of literature as an art form combining the beauty of language and the brilliance of thought in the production of which writers reach out to embrace and communicate everything that has ever united us all as human beings.

## NOTES

1. For a fascinating insider's view of U.S. China studies in the sixties and seventies, see Mirsky (1991), a review of Steven W. Mosher's biased yet profoundly disturbing book *China Misperceived: American Illusions and Chinese Reality* (New York: A New Republic Book / Basic Books, 1991). See also Mirsky and Thomson (1991) for an exchange of letters between Mirsky and James C. Thomson, Jr. on American China scholars. For a discussion of one China watcher who got it right, but was rarely heeded by U.S. scholars before 1979, see Leys (1990), a review of Laszlo Ladany, *The Communist Party of China and Marxism, 1921-1985: A Self Portrait* (Hoover Institution Press, 1990). Both the Mosher and Ladany books ought to be must reading in any class on "orientalism" and the American study of modern China.

2. The October 1991 attacks on ex-Minister of Culture Wang Meng's story "Hard Gruel" (*Jianying de xizhou*) is an excellent case in point.

3. Cyril Birch, for example, whose views on Lao She's post-1949 works were strongly resisted by several of his non-Chinese graduate students at Berkeley in the sixties, and Merle Goldman come readily to mind.

4. Another measure of Liu's confusion is that he praises recent anthologies of Chinese fiction in translation edited by Jeanne Tai and myself precisely because they are not so lacking in aesthetic refinement as previous Chinese fiction since 1945, or even since 1979; thus admitting the validity of the statements argued against here. Jeanne Tai's anthology was prepared with the

help of Li Tuo and mine with the help of Joseph S. M. Lau, Li Tuo, David Der-wei Wang, and Wong Wai-leung using standards of literary excellence nearly identical with C. T. Hsia's.

5. Now one hears it not only from them, but from the very critics, like Li Tuo, that Liu cites with approval.

6. Liu's article is replete with the jargon current in American university departments of comparative literature. Alison Lurie has pointed out that "many new intellectual disciplines, like elementary-school cliques, tend to adopt as fast as possible their own special version of pig Latin in order to build morale and confuse outsiders." And John M. Ellis has discussed being "rebellious, iconoclastic, and nonconformist" that deconstructionists (a vanishing breed perhaps since the "fall of de Man") seem to derive from the ritualistic repetition of a litany of neologisms. The equation of obscurity with profundity as well as the vacuity of many fashionable neologisms are dealt with by both Ellis and Lurie (Lurie, 1989: 50; Ellis, 1989: 137-152).

7. For some contemporary PRC readers' preferences, see Link (1985).

8. In Hsia (1983), he argues with another group of non-Chinese Western critics about the comparative merits of traditional Chinese and European fiction. He has very high praise for *Middlemarch*, certainly not a modernist text.

9. I grant the point that Hsia's world literature did not include other non-Western literatures. Neither did just about everybody else's in the American academy at the time. At least, as Liu demonstrates, Hsia did put modern Chinese fiction on the American academic map for the first time in a major way.

10. This is exactly the critical strategy employed by Rey Chow in *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, a work Liu cites with approval.

11. Tsai (1979: 355) has this brief note on *A Thousand Miles of Lovely Land* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1957; *Sanqianli jiangshan*, Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1959): "Based upon the author's personal experiences in the Korean War, this novel deals with an Anti-Korea Corps organized by Chinese railway workers in 1950. Together with the Korean people, the corps wages an unrelenting struggle to maintain a key transport line that leads to victory." Rotterová Ching-Yü (1988: 194-195) offers the following brief critique of Yang Shuo's short novel *Red Rock Mountain* (*Hongshi shan*, Dongbei: Xinhua shudian, n.p., 1949):

By virtue of its date of publication, *Red Rock Mountain* narrowly evades being listed as post-liberation literature, but it is not spared the crippling effect of a prescribed theme developed into an action-packed story of 90 pages, the first 25 of which are more than sufficient reading for anyone to predict the fate of the characters and anticipate the happy ending. [Rotterová, 1988: 194-195].

Pre- or post-"liberation", the quality of Yang Shuo's writing seems not to have changed much over time.

12. For an introductory essay on historicism with extensive bibliography, see Wiener (1973: 456-463).

13. I wish to thank Josephine Chiu-Duke for sharing with me her ideas on Schwartz and Lin's books from a paper written in Alexander Woodside's UBC seminar on Chinese intellectual history.

14. This phenomenon was treated in detail long ago by C. T. Hsia (1968: 55-100).

15. There is considerable question as to Lu Xun's "realism." He is not presented as a realist in Lee (1987), nor Fokkema (1977). Mao Dun is also considered very much a political allegorist in Chen (1986). On some post-1979 romantics, see Duke (1985: 182-207). As Gunn (1980) demonstrates, the genuine antiromantics of modern Chinese fiction before 1949 were Qian Zhongshu and Zhang Ailing.

16. It is equivocal in a work of scholarship to use free indirect discourse in such a manner that your reader does not know whether you are presenting your own opinion or that of the person you are writing about. Anderson's use of "a new imperative" without quotation marks in a study of leftist writers of the 1930s implies, but does not state clearly, that he believes along with those writers that a new literature was imperative in order to fulfill some preordained historical mission of literature.

17. Not to mention Ah Cheng, Mo Yan, Han Shaogong, Liu Heng, Shi Tiesheng, Ye Zhaoyan, Wang Zengqi, Zhaxidawa, Liao Yiwu, Yang Lian, Jiang He, Yan Li, and many other innovative PRC writers.

18. I mean imaginative literature, especially fiction and poetry.

19. Except, of course, for the rewards and punishments that may accrue to some writers for subordinating their independent vision to the demands of a political power structure. Many Chinese writers have been so rewarded and hundreds more have been punished since 1942 when the party considered their works to be good or bad politics.

20. The operative word here is "comparative." For a chronological list of Deng Xiaoping's literary purges, see Barmé and Minford (1988: 341-353). As Edward Gunn demonstrated (1980), Chinese writers were freer to create under the Japanese occupation than subsequently under the People's Republic.

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