

---

Confronting Western Influence: Rethinking Chinese Literature of the New Period

Author(s): Wang Ning

Source: *New Literary History*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Papers from the Commonwealth Center for Literary and Cultural Change (Autumn, 1993), pp. 905-926

Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/469400>

Accessed: 14/10/2009 01:31

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=jhup>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



The Johns Hopkins University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *New Literary History*.

# Confronting Western Influence: Rethinking Chinese Literature of the New Period

Wang Ning

CHINESE LITERATURE in the New Period<sup>1</sup> is characterized by its complicated literary concepts and variety of schools, which differ from the literature of any other stage of Chinese history, except the May 4 Period,<sup>2</sup> when traditional literary ideas were strongly challenged by those imported from the West. Critics of the new generation have always found themselves lagging behind recent developments of Western critical theories. Scarcely had they made clear what the central technique of the New Critics' textual analysis was when structuralism was introduced. If they wanted a clear picture of the origin and evolution of structuralism, critics needed to understand the basic doctrine of Russian Formalism and Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics. The traditional Freudian psychoanalytic approach had not been made appropriate use of in critical practice when Lacanian text-centered critical practice appeared in some avant-garde literary magazines.<sup>3</sup> Today, just as some avant-garde critics are beginning to indulge in either Derridean or Foucauldian poststructuralist interpretation of Chinese literary texts,<sup>4</sup> the situation of Marxism, Postcolonialism and the New Historicism advanced by American critical circles has arisen. Contemporary critics are really confronted with such a puzzle and choice before they can advance in terms of both theoretical reconsideration and critical practice. It should be acknowledged that New Period literature was more diverse in style, more inclusive in ideas, and more open in assimilating foreign literature, especially those cultural and literary concepts practiced in the West, than any other period. Chinese literature is no longer a small tributary of the mainstream of world literature. It has come to the point of carrying on an equal dialogue with its Western partners.<sup>5</sup> At the present time, no scholar, either from the West or from the East, could undertake to write a book with *The Mainstream of Literature in the Twentieth Century* as its title

without including the development of contemporary Chinese literature. Nor could anyone neglect the great changes in New Period Chinese literature, both in terms of literary concept as well as in terms of style and discourse. How has such a situation arisen? To answer this question, I would argue that, apart from all the other possible reasons one can list, the flourishing and sophisticated new look of New Period literature is mainly due to the encounter, interaction, and interpenetration between Chinese literature and foreign literature. Or more specifically, the influence of Western trends of literary thought on present-day Chinese literature should be taken into particular account. Within this limited space I intend simply to offer my own reconsideration of Chinese literature in the New Period from a perspective of influence-reception-creative transmutation of certain Western trends of cultural and literary thought. Thus we can obtain a clear picture of how similar it is to Western literature in the same period, how different it is and, finally, at what point and to what extent an equal dialogue between East and West could possibly be carried on.

The trends of cultural and literary thought discussed in this essay more often than not arose at the turn of the century. I am not so ambitious as to depict an overall picture covering all the phenomena in New Period Chinese literature but, instead, will only deal with some of them which came about as a result of the influence of certain Western trends. Obviously, according to some critics and writers, New Period literature is still progressing, maybe without end.<sup>6</sup> But I would argue, rather, that if we intend to observe it in an objective way or from the eye of the "other," namely from the perspective of Western influence, and evaluate it in a down-to-earth manner, we must examine it as an event which has just passed—although it is still of great significance to the new orientation of present-day Chinese literature, which I would rather call Post–New Period, because in the very last decade, Chinese literature has already shown signs of differing from that of the years between 1978 and 1989.<sup>7</sup> But in my view, the Post–New Period is a period of speculation and preparation, after which great writers will rise, although some people might consider it a period of silence, a period of commercialization, and a period which has produced no great works. So the present essay will chiefly touch upon those cultural and literary trends which have indeed influenced Chinese literature and which have even caused the appearance of certain Chinese versions.

In my opinion, in the past ninety years, Chinese literature has twice been in full flourish. The first such moment is the period between the May 4 Movement and the 1930s, which had a strong impact on traditional Chinese cultural and literary ideas, importing

some novel trends and currents prevalent in the West then and training a group of great writers who had a command of both Western literature and Chinese literature. The achievements of May 4 literature actually paved the way for the steady development of modern Chinese literature.<sup>8</sup> The second of these moments is the New Period, during which the policy of openness to the outside world and foreign cultural and academic exchange enabled more and more Western trends of philosophy and other humanities to flood into China. This second flourishing of Chinese literature has helped train a large number of writers and critics who are adept at exploring new literary concepts and experimenting with new artistic devices and techniques. Only by grasping its characteristics can we adequately describe and evaluate the influence of Western trends of literary thought on contemporary Chinese literature in the broad context of world literature.

### Metamorphosed Chinese Versions of Freudianism

Anyone who lives in present-day China and who is well educated can see that the Freudian influence on contemporary Chinese literature is obvious. It is true that from the period of the May 4 Movement to the 1930s, Freudianism had indeed strongly influenced Chinese literature. Nearly all the major writers at the time reacted to it in varying degrees—either receiving it, or taking pains to spread it in China, or misusing it to an extreme, or adopting a calm attitude toward the violent lash of Freudianism, or trying to exploit its literary possibilities after some transformation.<sup>9</sup> Anyhow, its line of diffusion, development, and evolution in China was clearly discernible. But after 1949, due to some acknowledged reasons, both political and ideological, Freudianism suddenly was silent in China, and it was later severely criticized within a very narrow specialized field. This did not come to an end until the downfall of the “gang of four,” or more accurately, after 1978 when mainland China started to become more open to the outside world. Meanwhile, Freudianism had been favorably received in Hong Kong and Taiwan, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, Li Ang, one of the “controversial feminist novelists” in Taiwan, was rather frank in stating that when she studied in the United States, she read a lot of works by Freud and Sartre in an attempt to apply Freud’s theory to her own writings, focusing on his ideas of libido, of sublimation of instinctive desire, and of the oedipus complex.<sup>10</sup> To her, all these theoretical concepts deal with the most fundamental problems in

daily life. As a writer maintaining art for life's sake, she could not avoid dealing with such problems.

If we read Li Ang's "Killing the Husband" (Sha fu), "Dark Night" (An ye) and some other stories from the perspective of psychoanalysis, we shall easily find many Freudian elements: in "Killing the Husband," Chen Jiangshui, characterized by a sexual mania, is the image of brutish nature and incest in the primitive age; his worship of a pig's head is the roundabout representation of totemic worship in a primitive age; and the abnormal psychology and evil deeds of A Wangguan and some other characters in the same story are the results of "repression" and "transference" as these were described by Freud. In "Killing the Husband," the heroine is made to suffer her husband's unceasing sexual attention, an opposite manifestation of sexual repression. As a result, the heroine does not repress her evil ideas deep in her unconscious and make them break through the censorship and sublimate them into an artistic image but forces herself to go to an evil extreme—killing her husband and cutting his body to pieces, thus transforming his "primitive" sexual mania back to primitiveness (death). From all the phenomena in the story, we can easily see its evident Freudian elements. But contrary to her own claims that she merely "uses" Freud's theory, Li Ang has actually made many revisions and transformations so as to make that theory fit her literary ideas and aesthetic ideal. It is true that such a writer as Li Ang, even if she has read a lot of Freud's work, would never be satisfied with Freudianism, for in Freud, the world is phallogentric and woman is something subsidiary. Women's behavior and their ways of thinking are submitted to so-called "penis-envy," which can never be endured by feminists. Therefore, she tries every means to reverse such a hierarchy. The heroine in "Killing the Husband" kills her husband, liberating the instinctive desire repressed in her unconscious: to attack the phallogentric world, awaken the female, and emancipate all women. Thus the story has finally realized the author's original expectation and become a "certainly controversial feminist story."

As a scholarly writer, Li Ang refers more or less directly to the Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts characterized by the connection between language and the unconscious and adopts a feminist approach to her characters. But writers like her who have a solid background in Western cultural and literary theory are rare, whereas large numbers of Chinese writers, both on the mainland as well as in Hong Kong and Taiwan, are more interested in Freud's ideas of libido and pansexualism. Thus, especially in the mid-1980s, there even appeared a phenomenon of sexual literature, with many writers

describing the repression and projection of characters' sexual desire and abnormal love affairs. To many ordinary Chinese readers, even to some intellectuals knowing little about him, Freud was nothing but a man obsessed by sexual psychology who must be responsible for the rampancy of sexual literature in present-day China. This is unfortunately a ridiculous misunderstanding. As a matter of fact, scholars usually describe Freud's theory in these two terms: psychoanalysis which appeals to a kind of scientific methodology, and Freudianism which appeals to a philosophical ontology; the former is a mobile concept covering all the ideas put forward by those theoreticians in different periods within the field, while the latter is an inclusive concept, not only including Freud's own theory of psychoanalysis but his other ideas and assumptions, as well as his disciples' interpretive works. When dealing with issues of literature and philosophy we usually use the latter, while in practical criticism, we would rather use the former term. But what writers really want to get from Freud is not the results of his scholarly research but insights which might well stimulate them to further think of human life and present it in a more profound way. So in this sense, Freudian ideas are more a kind of inspiration to them than a literary doctrine.

It is universally acknowledged that Freudianism greatly influenced such Western modernist writers as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, William Faulkner, Thomas Mann, Dylan Thomas, and others, in whose writings symbols of psychoanalytic significance appear now and then and the technique of stream of consciousness is so deeply delved into that the resultant experimentation with literary discourse and artistic device has indeed broken through the realist conventions and paved the way for a new literary canon.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, in observing some young Chinese writers' propensity for sexual psychoanalysis and sexual description in their writings, I assume that Freudianism is once again misused in present-day Chinese literary circles, and it is undoubtedly deformed and castrated. It is true that Freudianism has exercised a great influence on Chinese literature of the New Period. It is apparent in the writings of Zhang Jie, Wang Anyi, Zhang Xianliang, Zhang Xinxin, Mo Yan, Can Xue, Su Tong, Liu Suola, Liu Heng, Wang Shuo, Xu Xiaobin,<sup>12</sup> and some other young writers who became well known after the Cultural Revolution. It sometimes even finds embodiment in the writings of such a well-known novelist as Wang Meng, in some of whose novels and stories one can easily recognize descriptions of the unconscious and analyses of the abnormal psychology of the characters.<sup>13</sup> It is not surprising that some critics might well be worried about the penetration of Freudianism into present-day

Chinese literature. But for me, the great significance of Freudianism to New Period literature by no means lies in its tempting writers to sexual description, but rather in its discovery of a scientific method and theoretical basis on which writers are able to detect the unconscious mind, so as to raise the literature of stream of consciousness and psychoanalysis to a new and higher level. Inspired by certain Freudian assumptions, these Chinese writers are able to describe what is hidden deep in the characters' subconscious and unconscious, subjects which were seldom touched upon before. Moreover, as a critical approach, psychoanalysis is useful in our analyses of the literary texts influenced by psychoanalysis, thus enabling the critics to do what they could not do with the traditional sociohistorical critical approach. Here I would like to mention some representative texts which were written under the influence of Freudianism and which actually serve as different versions of Freudianism in New Period Chinese literature.

Zhang Xianliang's short novel "Half of a Man Is Woman" (Nanren de yiban shi nuren) vividly presents a picture of the three different ways of releasing libido—repression, regression, and sublimation—through the hero's sad and tragic experience in the course of life, thus expressing the author's discontent with the long-lasting repression of Chinese people both politically and physically. Mo Yan's "Happiness" (Huanle) illustrates at the same time two Freudian themes: the return to the womb and the struggle between the death instinct and the life instinct, with the former overcoming the latter at the end; and his stream of consciousness more or less delves into the level of the subconscious and unconscious. Can Xue, extremely good at depicting a world of nightmare and neurosis, touches upon two kinds of Freudian dream: the manifest dream and the latent one, thereby presenting us with an abnormal or even nightmare world, which particularly finds embodiment in her story "The Aged Floating Cloud" (Canglao de fuyun). Of course these three texts are rather controversial and were even severely criticized at one time, partly for their being written under the influence of Freudian assumptions and Sartrean existentialist ideas and partly for their extreme experimentation with language. The other two texts which deserve to be mentioned here are Liu Heng's "Fuxi Fuxi," from which the film "Judou" was adapted, and "An Investigation into a Neurotic" (Dui yige jingshenbing huanzhe de diaocha) by Xu Xiaobin, from which the film "The Arc Light" (Huguang) was adapted. The former delves into a sort of oedipus complex hidden

deep in the Chinese peasantry's collective unconsciousness and presents in a metamorphic way a popular Freudian theme: the oedipus complex, in this case depicting a kind of oedipal love between a young aunt and her nephew who is almost her age. And the latter explicitly refers to the name of Freud, his theory of the unconscious, and a Freudian clinical observation of a girl's abnormal psychology. All the texts mentioned above have provided us with typical versions of Freudianism in New Period Chinese literature. But it is a pity that most of the stories which were influenced by Freudianism chiefly draw upon his pansexualism—which must be responsible for their deliberate misunderstanding, deformation, and castration of Freud's psychoanalysis—rather than upon Freud himself or his theory proper.

The other significance of Freud's influence on Chinese literature of the New Period lies in the following two areas: the reconsideration and rewriting of the history of modern Chinese literature and the teaching of the literature of this period both for undergraduate students and graduate students. Here I would like to mention two books: *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature* (Zhongguo xiandai wenxue sanshinian) written by Qian Liqun and others, and *Western Trends of Literary Thought and 20th Century Chinese Literature* (Xifang wenyi sichao yu ershishiji Zhongguo wenxue) edited by Yue Daiyun and Wang Ning.<sup>14</sup> In the first book there is a section dealing with the New Sensationalist writers who rose and fell in the 1930s and who were completely neglected in all textbooks on the history of modern Chinese literature simply because they intentionally received Freud's influence and produced in their texts some versions of Freudianism. And the second book is an attempt to rethink and rewrite twentieth-century Chinese literature from a new perspective with the impact of Western trends of literary thought as its frame of reference. In this collection of essays there is a long scholarly article written by myself dealing with the topic "Freudianism and Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature" in a comprehensive way. Although we are happy to notice the fact that the canon of modern Chinese literature has been changed because of our reconsideration, there is still a long way to go if we really want to accomplish the project of rewriting a history of modern Chinese literature.<sup>15</sup>

Upon reading my description of Freudian influence on Chinese literature, people might raise the question: in discussing the Chinese writers' reception of Freudianism, why should I use the term *version* instead of *manifestation*? I would like to answer this question briefly before turning to the next section. Any cultural trend or concept, when spread and disseminated in a foreign nation, cannot but be



restricted to the established native cultural conventions and institutions and subjected to the filtration of the established national cultural tradition, the subjective translation of the disseminator, and the creative reception of the reader. Only through a kind of cultural filtration can it reach the level of cultural assimilation. It obviously cannot avoid such factors as the misunderstanding and misreading of the original: the former is passive and results in misinterpretation; the latter, however, is usually active and aims at intentionally misreading and reconstructing the foreign cultural trends and concepts with the established national cultural concepts as the frame of reference and achieving a kind of innovation as the ultimate goal. The Chinese writers' misreading (also misunderstanding) of Freudianism is mainly based on their own emotional experience and receptive horizon, so they have naturally created some versions of Freudianism characteristic of Sinicism or Orientalism. But on the whole, it is a good thing that the appearance of these Freudian versions has changed the method of teaching and the established literary canon for the university.

In the 1990s, along with the end of the New Period and due to various political, social, economic, historical, cultural, and even aesthetic factors, the "Freud fad" has subsided. As for whether or not it will rise again, we are not sure, partly because this "fad" is now no longer new to Chinese people, and partly because on the soil of the Chinese nation, any Western trend of literary thought is hard to pin down: it will either be sublated or metamorphosed after being transmuted and finally become part of Chinese literature.

### The Impact of Irrationalism and Writers' Creative Reception

In speaking of the irrationalist impact on Chinese literature of the New Period, I will simply refer to the influence of such important Western thinkers as Schopenhauer, Bergson, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre, for they obviously represent a new trend in Western intellectual circles since Kant, an irrationalist trend in contrast to Hegel's philosophical thought. Undoubtedly, the last three thinkers mentioned above, along with Freud, have played important roles in the intellectual life of Chinese writers of the New Period. As a matter of fact, in the early twentieth century, the work of Schopenhauer and Bergson once exerted a profound influence on the worldview and aesthetic ideas of Wang Guowei, one of China's chief

thinkers and literary theorists at the turn of the century, through whom a number of writers of about the May 4 Period were more or less affected. But as was their fate in Western academic circles, Schopenhauer and Bergson have had much less influence on contemporary Chinese literature and intellectual life, partly because their works are too difficult to understand, and partly because they have little significance for present-day debate on cultural and theoretic issues so that they do not interest the broad intellectual audience, especially university students who are much more concerned about what the most recent Western cultural and academic trends mean to them. Thus, in this section, I focus on the relationship between New Period Chinese literature and Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre, for these thinkers have all stimulated writers, critics, and scholars to reflect on their way of life and to rethink and even transvalue the established institutions and various conventions.

Nietzsche is one of the most important Western thinkers whose influence on twentieth-century Chinese literature has lasted almost throughout this century. In the New Period, just as Nietzsche was rediscovered and reinterpreted in Western academic circles and the study of literature and critical theory became increasingly important, the "Nietzsche fad" in China over the last few years is of certain relevance. The reception of Nietzsche in twentieth-century China has almost undergone the same experience as that of Freud. In the period of the May 4 Movement, the revolutionary or left wing writers, holding high the banner of the New Literature and attacking traditional Chinese culture forcefully challenged the old and outworn value concepts with Nietzsche's philosophy as a powerful weapon in an attempt to "transvalue everything." His famous saying that "God is dead" especially once stimulated the revolutionary intellectuals to struggle against the Confucian doctrine which had long been regarded as "God's creed." Even such major writers and critics at the time as Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Mao Dun and Zhou Zuoren were indebted in varying degrees to Nietzsche. Later, when Marxism was introduced in China and a number of writers turned "left," the position of Nietzsche in the circles of Chinese culture and literature was quickly shaken and finally collapsed.<sup>16</sup> During the period of 1949 to 1976, Nietzsche's philosophy, especially the idea of the superman, was criticized so violently, simply because it was viewed as a typical irrationalist and reactionary trend anticipating the rise of Hitler's fascism, that some writers more or less suffered just for their once being influenced by his doctrine. No scholar dared to point out Nietzsche's positive effect on Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Mao Dun and other revolutionary writers, for it would have brought

shame on both writers and critics alike. Zhu Guangqian, one of Nietzsche's disciples and the most famous aestheticist in China, could not but avoid mentioning this great master of his in his well-known *A History of Western Aesthetics* (Xifang meixue shi), a fact for which he expressed regret before his death in 1986: "Ordinary readers must think that I was an idealist disciple of Croce, but I now begin to realize that I was in effect a disciple of Nietzsche. For what was uppermost in my mind was not the intuitionism in Croce's *Principle of Aesthetics*, but rather the Dionysian spirit and the Apollonian spirit in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. Then why did I . . . seldom mention the names of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche ever since I came back from abroad in 1933? It is because I had some scruples and thus became timid and even dishonest."<sup>17</sup> Obviously, Zhu, in the open and tolerant conditions of the 1980s, was attempting to reconsider Nietzsche, his early master, in a theoretical way and to add one chapter about him in his revised edition of his book on Western aesthetics, but it was too late for him to complete the project. Zhu's subtle and ambivalent psychology actually represents what many of China's intellectuals of his generation were thinking and suffering mentally and spiritually. Such a rejection and criticism, on the contrary, serves as one of the reasons for the rise of the "Nietzsche fad" in the 1980s. Almost all Nietzsche's major works, including the three versions of a collection of his poems, have been published in Chinese and have sold very well, especially among university students and other young intellectuals. A song in the film *The Red Sorghum* (Hong gaoliang) was extremely popular in China largely because it eulogizes a sort of Dionysian spirit which has long been lacking in Chinese culture. The other reason for Nietzsche's resurgent popularity might be that his wild and romantic life, his poetic writing style, his uninhibited language and his profound and insightful speculations have been found to be close to the Chinese aesthetic quality characterized by intuitive expression and thus more attractive to young intellectuals, especially to university students.<sup>18</sup> Some young critics, following Nietzsche's example and shouting aloud the slogan "transvalue all values," have launched violent attacks on the traditional authority and the established current idol;<sup>19</sup> and quite a few students, in writing their dissertations, have tried to reflect on and transvalue the established results of past research.<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that in the present era when various trends of cultural and literary thought are developing in a pluralistic orientation, what has been well received in China is not Nietzsche's philosophy of the superman, but his challenging idea of "transvaluing everything" and his fighting spirit of critique, which has probably

inspired the present-day experiments made by the avant-garde poets.<sup>21</sup> So we can say that Nietzsche has once again been introduced into China's literary circles chiefly as a writer rather than as a philosopher or a thinker.<sup>22</sup>

As for the "Heidegger fad" in China, it may be a surprise to Western scholars that Martin Heidegger was once admired by some Chinese writers and critics although his works are almost Greek to them. But at present, interest in him is largely confined to philosophical and critical circles as his significance to present-day Chinese literature only lies in a limited number of young scholars and critics who have both a wide knowledge of Western culture and a solid theoretical foundation. After the publication of the Chinese translation of his *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time) in 1988, the so-called "Heidegger fad" was expected at one time to succeed the so-called "Nietzsche fad," "Freud fad," and "Sartre fad." But his works are after all too difficult and abstract for ordinary writers and critics to understand, so they had to give up their attempt to study this master although many of his ideas are of vital importance to the current Chinese debate on modernism and postmodernism. But along with the further study of Sartrean existentialism and the increasing interest in such critical theories as phenomenology, hermeneutics, the aesthetics of reception, reader-response criticism, and deconstruction, the metamorphosed Heidegger's thinking as understood and interpreted by Chinese critics might well become popularized. But even so, the "Heidegger fad" will by no means arise like the above three trends, for to a large extent it lacks the intermediary of the writers, who could otherwise make it known to the broad reading public.

Apparently, Sartre's existentialist philosophy is also very abstract and difficult for Chinese writers, but it has a close connection with social reality, political ideology, and literary creation and has thus prevailed for quite a long time in present-day Chinese literature. There are some reasons to account for this. First, as a modern trend of Western philosophy and culture, existentialism entered into China's intellectual and literary scene as early as in the 1930s, with its two predecessors Nietzsche and Kierkegaard exerting profound influence on Lu Xun's literary ideas. And even before that, Zhang Shuiqi had also developed Nietzschean existentialist thinking in his writings in the late 1920s. In the mid-1930s, Feng Zhi, a poet and translator of German literature, was more or less affected by early existentialist thought. Then, in the mid-1940s, those who were not only inspired by existentialism but offered their unique understanding of it in their literary writings were such scholarly writers as

Wang Zengqi and Qian Zhongshu. But what Chinese people needed most at the time was not abstract existentialist ideas, which were obviously in a state of marginality, but something more realistic to help them solve their own problems. So it is natural that the existentialist trend was in a state of being "marginal." The early reception must have laid a foundation for the later popularization of Sartrean existentialism in China. Second, Sartre had significant personal contact with China. As early as 1955, he was invited to visit Beijing with his life-long companion Simone de Beauvoir and to participate in the grand celebration of the sixth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China at the Tian An Men Rostrum.<sup>23</sup> They both sympathized with China's socialist revolution and publicly praised its remarkable achievements. Although his thinking was later severely attacked within China's philosophical circles, he still stood by the side of the Chinese Communist Party on many issues concerning crucial international political affairs.<sup>24</sup> Due to this and some other factors, Sartre was introduced favorably immediately after the Cultural Revolution to the Chinese audience as a "progressive writer," a "revolutionary sympathizer," and a "rebel of the Western world." His philosophical thinking, popularized and interpreted by both his advocates as well as his critics, has thus been received by the broad reading public. Third, because Sartre was a creative writer himself, he is easier understood by Chinese writers than any other irrationalist thinker, so his influence on present-day Chinese literature is wider and stronger.<sup>25</sup> In this respect, the playwrights Gao Xingjian and Wei Minglun deserve to be mentioned. The former was a French major in college, who could not only read Sartre's plays in the original but also tried to reconstruct them in his own creative way; and the latter appeals to the idea of absurdity dealing with ordinary men's incompatibility with society. The same is true of the so-called Fifth Generation (Diwudai) of film directors, whose films apparently transcend those preceding them both in content as well as in narrative technique and language. After 1977, Sartre was primarily introduced as a creative writer in China. He reveals in his writings such problems as human alienation and the modern individual's incompatibility with society, which fit in easily with the subject matter of the "scar literature" (Shanghen wenxue) prevailing then.<sup>26</sup> So it is not curious that existentialism has been popular in China. Last but not least: from the converse psychology of the Chinese reader, because Sartrean philosophy was several times criticized it has become better known in China. In addition, the publication of the Chinese version of his important work *L'Être et le Néant* (Being and Nothingness) has helped the reader to further

understand him as a thinker rather than merely as a writer.<sup>27</sup> Sartre's influence on New Period Chinese literature can be seen chiefly in its ideology and the themes of its writings. Some works (for instance, those of Lu Xinhua and some other "scar writers") try to appeal to a return to humanity by representing people's sufferings during the "ten years catastrophe" of the Cultural Revolution; others (Dai Houying's *Ah, Man* [Ren a, ren] and Chen Rong's *Yang Yueyue and the Study of Sartre* [Yang Yueyue he sate yanjiu]) intentionally use the ideas of Sartrean existentialism to explore the relationship between individuals, and between the individual and society; still others (Liu Suola's "You Have No Other Choice" [Ni bie wu xuanze]) propagate the Sartrean idea of "free choice" from a character's zigzagged experience in the course of human life. Also, some writings (many of Gu Cheng's and Daozi's poems and Can Xue's stories) present contemporary people's senses of loss and isolation and incompatibility with society. Apart from all this, Sartre's ideas of "free choice" and "littérature engagée" have strongly influenced the literary ideas of quite a few writers and critics, who to a large extent subscribe to the existentialist notion that writers ought to be socially responsible and intervene in contemporary social events; that they should defend their liberty of literary creation and criticism when such a right is threatened. Such influence evidently finds embodiment in the theoretical works of Liu Mingjiu, Liu Zaifu, Xie Mian, Sun Shaozhen, Gao Ertai, and Xu Jingya.<sup>28</sup> But compared to the influence of his philosophical thinking, Sartre's influence on Chinese writers' artistic technique is of minor significance, not only because his writing technique is more or less close to the realistic tradition rather than avant-garde innovation, but also because he himself, as an author, intervenes so much in his writings that such intervention has actually obscured their artistic appeal.

### Modernism, Postmodernism, and Avant-Garde Fiction

It is true that throughout the New Period and even up till now, the issues of modernism and postmodernism have always interested Chinese writers, critics, and scholars of literature and art. Discussions and debates are carried on every now and then although there is often much misunderstanding and misinterpretation of these three terms. According to the contemporary research by Western scholars, modernism, postmodernism, and the avant-garde are three different concepts,<sup>29</sup> of course, with the latter more apparent. I will not give

my own definitions of them in the present essay since I have already offered my own understanding and construction of the concept of postmodernism on many occasions.<sup>30</sup> What I would like to note here is, first, that the spread and reception of modernism as a literary current in China is by no means a contemporary event. It has undergone a zigzagged course in the history of twentieth-century Chinese literature. Early in the period of the May 4 Movement, modernism was introduced in China. Almost all the major writers more or less involved themselves in the modernist movement of the 1920s and 1930s, when such a literary phenomenon was in the prime of life in the West. But owing to various political, social, economic, cultural, and literary factors, the Chinese-type “modernism” failed to form a dominant current in the literature of that period. To my mind, there may be four reasons for the failure of modernism in China: (1) the traditional Chinese literary conviction in “art for life’s sake” was absolutely opposite to the modernist “art for art’s sake”; (2) Chinese literature lacked an appropriate soil in which modernism might settle down and grow, so it could only be responded to among some scholarly writers and failed to attract ordinary readers’ attention; (3) due to the forcefulness of the leftist literature in the 1930s, modernism was only of minor interest to the audience then; (4) there were no such acknowledged leading figures as James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf in the Chinese “modernist” movement, nor could the “modernist” writers match such realists as Lu Xun and Mao Dun and such a romantic as Guo Moruo. During the period of 1949 to 1977, modernism could hardly develop in China, for it was almost forbidden and strongly criticized. Some modern writers who once involved themselves in the “modernist” movement tried their best to negate these historical facts. Almost in no textbooks entitled *A History of Modern Chinese Literature* can one find descriptions of the reception of modernism in Chinese literature. Since 1978, modernism, which was already a historical event in the West, has had a greater influence on most of the writers who rose after the downfall of the “gang of four.” Chinese literature in this period can be considered really flourishing and promising. It has been reaching out to the rest of the world. And dialogues between East and West have been carried on through the efforts of writers and literary scholars. Even such well-known writers as Wang Meng, Liu Xinwu, Zhang Jie, Zhang Xianliang, Gao Xingjian, and Wei Minglun have never denied being influenced by Western modernism. Also, quite a few writers who try their best to create something new and surpass those who have already established their fame in an earlier stage are often called “modernists” or “avant-

gardists." I think such a "modernist" concept used to describe some phenomena in New Period Chinese literature is probably too inclusive,<sup>31</sup> for it even includes those who are obviously influenced by or openly draw upon Western postmodernism. Naturally, there are many modernisms and postmodernisms, and their different versions can no doubt appear in different cultures and literatures. For instance, in Japan, discussing postmodernism often means dealing with the *avant-garde*; in India, to talk about postmodernism is actually to refer to something modern. But in present-day China, to the scholars of modernism and postmodernism, it is clear that, since 1985, there has appeared a group of young writers who are thought of as "postmodern" writers because they are ostensibly different from "modernists" both in literary ideas as well as in narrative style. Among them are Liu Suola, Xu Xin, Yu Hua, Ge Fei, Su Tong, Wang Shuo, Sun Ganlu, Mo Yan, Ma Yuan, Can Xue, Hong Feng, Lü Xin, and Ye Zhaoyan. They are, according to some of them, influenced by such Western postmodernists as Barthelme, Barth, Heller, Mailer, Salinger, Borges, García Márquez, Robbe-Grillet, Calvino, and Beckett, rather than by such modernists as Kafka, Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, and Faulkner. In order to differentiate these writers from the Western postmodernists, I would call them "avant-gardists" (Xianfengpai), for this term is now a mobile concept frequently used to describe those Oriental writers who work against literary conventions. To me, it seems useful for us to compare and explore the relations between Western postmodernism and this "postmodern" or "avant-garde" tendency in New Period Chinese literature.

It is true that, as some of these young writers have admitted,<sup>32</sup> they read a lot of works by Borges, Robbe-Grillet, and García Márquez but did not see them as postmodernists at the time. They think it quite natural that they are inspired by these writers since every newly rising writer tries to transcend his or her predecessors. As a result, the most important thing to them about narration is not what meaning a story is to convey but how to tell a story well no matter how far it departs from life and social reality. That is to say, form is superior to content and the attitude toward narration is more important than the significance of a story. Ge Fei, one of the typical representatives of this group, even says that he has the right to use whatever device he wants to if only he can tell a story well.<sup>33</sup> Evidently, such a literary idea is absolutely opposite to the long Chinese literary tradition, even to the doctrine of the so-called "modernists" preceding them. It is thus not surprising that, because of their nonrealistic tendency, they are not understood by the



majority of the reading public in present-day China but are attractive to some “avant-garde” critics, especially those from universities and research institutes who are both familiar with the Western critical theories in the twentieth century and now impressed by Foucauldian and Derridean poststructuralist ideas and the deconstructive approach to literary texts. So they are quite willing to apply these critical theories to their own experimental academic criticism.

In the limited space of this essay, I would like to illustrate some of the main points of this “postmodern” tendency by comparing these young writers’ texts with those of Western postmodernists. According to my preliminary observation and examination, the present-day Chinese “postmodern” texts have the following six characteristics if we read and interpret them from the perspective of postmodernity.<sup>34</sup>

(1) *The loss of the self and involvement with the counterculture*, which finds particular embodiment in Wang Shuo’s novel *Playing with One’s Heart-Beating* (Wan de jiushi xintiao) and story “Half Is Brine, Half Is Flame” (Yiban shi haishui, yiban shi huoyan) and Liu Heng’s novel *Ode to Leisure* (Xiaoyao song). In these texts, we can find characters and actions similar to those described in the texts of the American beat generation.

(2) *Running counter to the established linguistic conventions*, which is most evident in Mo Yan’s “The Red Sorghum” (Hong gaoliang) and “Happiness” (Huanle) and Yu Hua’s story “As If Times Were Smoke” (Shishi ru yan). In these texts and some others, traditional grammatical rules of the Chinese language are completely broken.

(3) *Binary oppositions and deconstruction of meaning*, which is vividly represented in such texts as Liu Suola’s “You Have No Other Choice” (Ni bie wu xuanze) and Xu Xin’s “Nonthematic Variation” (Wu zhuti bianzou) and some of Ge Fei’s and Sun Ganlu’s stories. The narrative strategy of these avant-gardists is first to set up several binary oppositions and then, in the course of their narration, to deconstruct them with the power of their narrative discourse. The complete and organic plot is thus replaced by fragments.

(4) *Return to the primitive and nostalgia*, which aims at creating a new history by drawing upon ancient anecdotes and past events and which finds embodiment in many of Ge Fei’s and Su Tong’s stories. In these texts, the authors’ self-consciousness is rather apparent and their narrative tone is rather distanced and indifferent.

(5) *Blurring the demarcation between elitist and popular literature*, which is particularly represented in Su Tong’s and Wang Shuo’s texts. Especially in the latter’s eye, writing is for nothing but money. In present-day Chinese society, what is perhaps being talked about most among young people is the so-called “Wang Shuo Phenomenon”

(Wang Shuo xianxiang), because in his writings the elitist or “modernist” literature preceding him is totally mocked and even proves ineffective in the face of current commercialization.

(6) *Parody and ironic description of violence and death and all the other serious events*, which is intended to imitate past literary texts in an ironic way so as to “have a new and different significance.”<sup>35</sup> We can find many examples in Ge Fei’s and Yu Hua’s stories, with Ge’s “Harmonium” (Fengqin) as a typical example.

Apart from the avant-garde literary texts of postmodern tendency, there are three other versions of postmodernism in New Period and Post–New Period Chinese literature: “new realist fiction,” which appeals to the “immediacy of experience” with a sort of distanced and totally objective narration; popular literature such as nonfiction writings, biographical writings by or on famous politicians and artists, journalism, and even “committed literature,” in which many features of “a consumer society” and serious literature are strongly challenged; and the avant-garde academic criticism of Foucauldian, Lacanian, and Derridean poststructuralist orientation, which is engaged in another theoretical debate on postmodernism. Due to limited space, I will deal with them in another essay.

Clearly, the above six aspects are still too few to cover the characteristics of the postmodern tendencies of New Period Chinese avant-garde literature, but they at least show that Chinese fiction since 1985 has been influenced by Western postmodernism. Such a postmodern tendency was formed, either through the writers’ own receptive minds, through their misunderstanding or misreading of their Western masters, or through creative transmutation. It is true that some critics have tried to overlook or even negate the significance of the experiments made by these avantgardists.<sup>36</sup> But in my view, such a tendency as the “postmodern” one in New Period Chinese literature is not curious at all. On the one hand, this tendency is a direct consequence of the effect that Western postmodernists have had on Chinese writers. But on the other hand, there is also these writers’ own originality, based on the desire to create something new for the reader as well as on the attempt to surpass Chinese writers of modernist tendency. Due to these two factors, and perhaps some others, a metamorphosis of postmodernism has occurred in New Period Chinese literature. It is not a wonder at all. In the final analysis, such a literary phenomenon will not degrade contemporary Chinese literary creation. It will, instead, help to form one of the pluralistic orientations in present-day Chinese literature and has actually paved the way for another period: the Post–New Period. At present, Chinese type postmodernism cannot dominate contemporary literary creation although the critical circles are now expecting

it to do so. What I want to point out, however, is this: it is perhaps on the very point of postmodernism that we have been carrying on a real dialogue with international literary scholarship.<sup>37</sup>

### Concluding Observations: Toward a Post-New Period

From the above bird's-eye view of New Period Chinese literature, especially from the point of view of influence and reception study, one can easily learn something about the present situation of Chinese literature, how it began to assimilate foreign literature, how it is now approaching world literature. Some people, then, might well ask the following: Since Chinese literature has its own grand tradition and its great writers and writings, how has it influenced other literatures, for instance, the literature of the Western countries? To answer this question is not so difficult. First, the language is extremely difficult for Western people to learn, and sometimes even difficult for sinologists. Few scholars are willing to undertake such a tedious and burdensome job as to translate Chinese literary works into their own languages. So it is not so convenient for the reading public to know Chinese literature, let alone its influence on other literatures. Second, due to the long-standing Eurocentrism and later Westcentrism in the circles of international comparative literature studies and literary theory, few Western scholars have concentrated on the comparative study of Chinese influences on Western literature, while many of the Chinese comparatists are not good at foreign languages and lack some necessary opportunities, which makes it almost impossible for them to do this kind of job. Third, translators and Chinese scholars studying foreign literatures are responsible, for most of them, including myself, have taken great pains to translate foreign literature into Chinese, which is easier than vice versa, and to introduce Western trends of cultural and literary thought to the Chinese reader, which is of course an absolutely necessary enterprise although it is far from completed at present. Due to these factors and perhaps some others, the results in the study of Chinese influence on Western literature are not satisfactory at all. I am sure, however, that as a consequence of the increasing cultural and academic exchange between Chinese and Western scholars and writers, such a gap as the Chinese influence on Western literature will be filled up in the near future.

Now the New Period of Chinese literature has finally come to an end, although this issue is still rather moot and problematic to many Chinese critics. Chinese literature has entered a new stage: that of a literature of the Post–New Period, which is both continuous and discontinuous with the New Period, just as postmodernism is both continuous and discontinuous with modernism in the West. (This periodization is obviously inspired by Fredric Jameson’s definition of postmodernism as it is very popular in China’s academic circles.) It has come after the end of the New Period temporally, but in reality, it is a challenge against and reaction to the cultural concept and literary code of the New Period. For instance, the literature of the New Period is still artistically oriented, but that of the Post–New Period seems more and more commercialized. The literature of the New Period still aims at enlightening people to have a deeper understanding of human life and the world, but that of the Post–New Period attempts to ironize the past tradition and even parody the established literary canon. The writers of the New Period are largely concerned about hot political issues, whereas those of the Post–New Period are much more interested in their own realities. And the writers of the New Period are on the whole serious about their literary creation, but many of the writers of the Post–New Period often write for money and even play with literature. For example, Wang Shuo, a typical representative of this period, openly declares that his work is nothing but a “writing of some (Chinese) characters.” Su Tong, one of the eminent avantgardists in the New Period, is trying to find an intermediary between writing for literature itself and writing for the market. They are succeeding very well by appealing to film directors and television producers. Therefore, many of the serious Chinese writers and critics are very much worried about the future of Chinese literature at the turn of the century. But I still doubt that it is too early to describe what is happening now and make a judgment.

PEKING UNIVERSITY

#### NOTES

I am very grateful to Professors Douwe Fokkema and Mario Valdés, who either carefully read my manuscript at the University of Utrecht or kindly invited me to read it at the University of Toronto. I am particularly grateful to Professor Ralph Cohen, Editor of *New Literary History*, whose many insightful comments and suggestions made it possible for me to revise the essay into its present form. And Mr. Shawn Winsor’s help has also been appreciated.

1 The term *New Period* (Xinshiqi) is a political one. It started with the downfall of the "gang of four" (the four former high-ranking leaders of the Communist Party of China: Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen, and Yao Wenyuan) in October, 1976. But during the years between 1976 and 1978, when Hua Guofeng was Chairman of the CPC, no open-door policy existed and no economic reform was allowed. It was in December, 1978, that Deng Xiaoping actually became the top leader of China and the country widely opened its door to the outside world. So Chinese literature in this period is usually called "New Period literature."

2 According to the traditional periodization, modern Chinese literature started with the May 4 Movement, which was launched in 1919 chiefly by students of Peking University and then quickly swept all the major cities throughout China to protest the authority's signing a treaty with the Japanese government.

3 Since 1978, many Western academic and literary works have flooded into China, making a strong impact on China's academic and literary studies. A number of publishing houses, such as Peking University Press, Huaxia Press, China Social Sciences Publishing House, and Sanlian Publishing House, have published book series introducing the various Western trends of cultural and literary thought that arose at the turn of the century.

4 One can easily find critical essays using a deconstructive approach in such avant-garde Chinese magazines as *Purple Mountain* (Zhongshan), *Beijing Literature* (Beijing wenzue), *Shanghai Literature* (Shanghai wenzue), *Contemporary Cinema* (Dangdai dianying), *Flowery City* (Huacheng), and so on.

5 For instance, such academic dialogues between Chinese and American scholars as the Bilateral Symposium between Chinese and American Comparatists have already been carried on twice, the first time in 1983 in China and the second in America in 1987.

6 For instance, in the articles published in such eminent Chinese journals as *Literature and Art*, *Monthly Gazette* (Wenyibao) and *Literary Review* (Wenzue pinglun), one often finds the term *New Period* used to describe contemporary literature. But a symposium was held at Peking University in October, 1992, at which such issues as the "new realism" and the "Post-New Period literature" and its relations with Western post-modernism were discussed.

7 Apart from some political reasons, the "economic fad" and prevailing commercializing tendency in literature and art have also played dominant roles in this period, which is characterized by the rise of popular literature and the fall of serious literature and avant-garde literature.

8 See *Western Trends of Literary Thought and 20th Century Chinese Literature* (Xifang wenyisichao yu ershishiji Zhongguo wenzue), ed. Yue Daiyun and Wang Ning (Beijing, 1990), especially the first part dealing with the literature between 1919 and 1949.

9 For a comprehensive and detailed account of Freud's influence on modern Chinese literature and different writers' attitudes toward the impact of Freudianism, see Wang Ning, "The Reception of Freudianism in Modern Chinese Literature: Part I (1920-1949)," *China Information*, 5, no. 4 (Spring 1991), 58-71.

10 Li Ang frankly told me this during our talk in Hong Kong in 1987, where we both participated in the "International Conference on Modernism and Contemporary Chinese Literature."

11 See especially Frederick John Hoffman, *Freudianism and the Literary Mind* (Baton Rouge, La., 1957). The Chinese translation was done by Wang Ning et al. and published by Sanlian Publishing House in 1987.

12 In order that Chinese writers might know something about the various theoretical and cultural currents in the twentieth century, The Writers Press (Zuojia chubanshe) published a series of books entitled "Writers' References," in which collected essays

by Freud on literature and art and some others were included. Meanwhile, one could easily buy the Chinese editions of all Freud's major works published by other presses, including his *An Autobiographical Study*, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Totem and Taboo*, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *The Ego and the Id*, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, and so on.

13 For instance, in Wang Meng's novel *A Movable Toy* (Huodong bianrenxin) published in 1987 as a special issue of *Contemporary* (Dangdai), descriptions of the characters' subconscious and unconscious psychology are rather apparent.

14 The two books are both recognized by the official institutions: *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Literature* (Shanghai, 1986) is used as a textbook in many of China's universities; and *Western Trends of Literary Thought and 20th Century Chinese Literature* was completed as an important research project funded by the State Educational Commission and is now used in some universities as a reference book for teachers and graduate students.

15 In the years between 1987 and 1989, there arose in Shanghai a group of young literary scholars who tried to find a way to rewrite the history of modern Chinese literature. They chiefly published their essays in such journals as *Shanghai Literature* and *Shanghai Literary Criticism* (Shanghai wenlun).

16 See Yue Daiyun, "Nietzsche and Modern Chinese Literature" (Nicai yu Zhongguo xiandaiwenxue), reprinted in *Comparative Literature and Modern Chinese Literature* (Bijiaowenxue yu Zhongguo xiandaiwenxue) (Beijing, 1987).

17 See *Collected Works of Zhu Guangqian* (Zhu Guangqian quanji) (Heifei, 1987), II, 210.

18 From my own experience in teaching and supervising graduate students' theses, many of my students are very interested in Nietzsche's writing style. In the years between 1987 and 1990, a book series published by Shandong Literature and Art Press appeared entitled "Poeticized Philosophy" (Shihua zhexue) whose authors largely follow Nietzsche's style and quote him.

19 A typical example here is Liu Xiaobo's doctoral dissertation and some of his other books and articles, in which he openly expresses his admiration for this Western thinker and poet-like philosopher.

20 In Peking University and the Graduate School under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, quite a few students or graduate students in the fields of modern Chinese literature and philosophy are keen on this kind of research.

21 Following Nietzsche's example, some avant-garde poets shout the slogan "Down with Baidao" (who used to be an eminent poet and now lives abroad) and publish their collection of poems with their own money.

22 It is true that Nietzsche's influence in China is much stronger in the field of literature than in that of philosophy, as is the case with Freud and Sartre.

23 Before the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), if a foreign guest, especially from a Western country, was allowed to be present at the Tian An Men Rostrum on China's National Day (October 1), it would be indeed a very great honor for him or her.

24 Concerning such controversial issues as the American invasion of Vietnam and the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, Sartre took a stand similar to that of the Chinese government.

25 Almost all the major literary writings of Sartre, apart from his philosophical works, have been translated into Chinese. Perhaps the most influential book is *A Study of Sartre* (Sate yanjiu), ed. Liu Mingjiu (Beijing, 1981), which includes some of his short stories and essays and summaries of his major novels.

26 "Scar literature" arose in the years between 1977 and 1980, in an attempt to reveal to the audience people's sufferings during the Cultural Revolution. It is named

after a short story written by Lu Xinhua. Perhaps it was in Sartre's works that some of the later "scar writers" found their theoretical support, because after the Cultural Revolution, writers found there were lots of things to write about, especially ordinary people's sufferings.

27 Partly because of his fame, partly because of the readers' interest and curiosity, the Chinese edition of this book was printed in 50,000 copies and almost all of them have been sold out.

28 One can easily find evidence in *A Study of Sartre*, Gao Ertai, *Beauty is Symbolic of Freedom* (Mei shi ziyou de xiangzheng) (Beijing, 1987), and some of Xie Mian's and Sun Shaozhen's essays published in the journal *Poetry* (Shikan) on the rise of a new aesthetic principle in 1983.

29 In this respect, see particularly Matei Calinescu, *Faces of Modernity: Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch* (Bloomington, Ind., 1977).

30 See Wang Ning, "Reception and Metamorphosis: Postmodernity in Contemporary Chinese Avant-Garde Fiction," *Social Sciences in China*, 14, no. 1 (Spring 1993), 5-13, and many of my other articles written in Chinese.

31 For instance, according to Yuan Kejia, one of the most influential scholars in introducing modernism to Chinese literary circles in the 1980s, modernism is a school including all the literary currents which challenged traditional realist principles, such as symbolism, futurism, expressionism, surrealism, the absurd, existentialism, the beat generation, black humor, and so on. His main ideas all appear in his collected essays *On Modernism and English and American Poetry* (Xiandaipai lun, yingmei shi'lun) (Beijing, 1985). Actually, most of the young writers in the 1980s were more or less indebted to his misleading introduction at the beginning of the 1980s.

32 Such as Yu Hua and Gei Fei, who admitted rather frankly that they were influenced by Western postmodernism in the workshop sponsored by the Institute of Comparative Literature of Peking University on 11 July 1990.

33 Ge Fei said this at the same workshop. For some reason, his ideas do not appear in any literary magazines.

34 In order to differentiate Chinese "postmodernism" from that in the West, I simply use postmodernity as an interpretive code to analyze some Chinese texts. See my "Reception and Metamorphosis."

35 See Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London, 1989), p. 94.

36 Because the literary ideas of these avantgardists are obviously opposed to traditional Chinese literary concepts, China's official institution does not encourage the type of experimentation with novel techniques and devices they practice.

37 One of the exciting signs is the volume *Postmodernism*, ed. Douwe Fokkema and Hans Bertens for *The Comparative History of Literature in European Languages* (John Benjamins, forthcoming), which will include one chapter on the critical and creative reception of postmodernism in China, thereby breaking through the limitation of Eurocentrism.