QUESTIONS OF STYLE
for Hong
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NOTE ON ROMANIZATION AND REFERENCES

The pinyin system of romanization is used throughout, except in citations from sources using other systems. Chinese characters are provided for all Chinese names, terms, and titles throughout the text and in the bibliography.

References to works listed in the Bibliography, mentioning author, year, and page number, are provided in brackets in the main text. However, in the case of some of the journal materials I refer to, especially those that appear on unnumbered pages or in margins and those that have no identifiable author, I have chosen to put all available bibliographical information in footnotes. A list of all journals I consulted and the libraries where I consulted them is provided in the Bibliography.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A difference must be made between scholars and writers. Scholars often try to write, and writers, too, are interested in learning. Of these two, only the writer concerns us here. One can no more see the spirit of the individual in an abstruse scholar’s work than in an almanac. He is interested in facts. His personal opinion? No, he is Olympian, objective, impersonal. The writer, on the other hand, is a man whose personal feelings, likes and dislikes, opinions and prejudices drip from the point of his pen. After all is said and done, the force of literature is only the force and vitality of a group of individual spirits reacting to life and to their era.

Lin Yutang

This study aims to shed light on two noticeable characteristics of Chinese literary practice of the Republican era (1911–1949). They are the strong preference of authors for working in literary societies and their preference for publishing in literary journals. Whereas literary societies have a long history in Chinese culture, literary journals are a product of modern print culture. Nevertheless, as this study will show, the two phenomena are intimately related. Through studying these phenomena from various perspectives, I shall arrive at some broader conclusions about the continued presence of traditional literary conventions and values in modern Chinese literary practice. At the same time, I shall develop a number of approaches to these generally rarely studied phenomena, which are meant to contribute to general theories of literary practice and theories of reading. The ultimate question I intend to answer, if only partially and tentatively, is the following: How did the modern Chinese literary community establish and maintain distinctions, between itself and other communities, and amongst its members?

In this Introduction, I start by outlining some recent developments in the study of modern Chinese literature and the ongoing paradigm change to which I hope to contribute with this study. I then proceed to treat in some detail the theories and methods that have inspired my approach to my subject. The rest of the chapter provides an overview
of the long history of literary societies in Chinese literature, as well as a brief summary of the history of literary journals before the Republican period. Linked to these historical overviews are indications of the contents of each of the six main chapters of this study.

The changing paradigm of modern Chinese literary studies

The study of Chinese literature of the Republican era (1911–1949) has gone through great changes in the last two decades. The idea that New Literature, being the westernized vernacular writing introduced during the New Culture Movement of the late 1910s, is the only type of writing from this period worth studying has been thoroughly discredited. Some scholars, following in the footsteps of Perry Link (1981), have focused their efforts on restoring the reputation of what was once called 'mandarin ducks and butterflies' literature. Others, taking their lead from pioneering work by C.T. Hsia (1961) and Leo Ou-fan Lee (1973), have rediscovered New Literature writers who, often for political reasons, had long been neglected. At the same time, an ever clearer picture is also emerging of the literature of the preceding late Qing period and its achievements both in the fields of fiction and literary theory. In all cases, this innovative research by scholars working outside China has been made possible by the opening up of libraries and archives inside China, and by the relentless efforts of many Chinese scholars in cataloguing, describing and analysing the materials held in those collections.

1 A valuable recent addition to this field is Gimpel 2001, which will be discussed in more detail below.
2 Two cases that stand out are those of Zhou Zuoren, restored to his rightful canonical position in works by David Pollard (1973) and Susan Daruvala (2000), and the New Sensation school, resurrected by Leo Ou-fan Lee himself (1990; 1999).
3 Late Qing fiction is the topic of a book-length study by David Der-wei Wang (1997). Theory, especially fiction theory, is the topic of two important articles by Theodore Huters (1987; 1988).
4 There are many names that deserve mention here. At the very least, I should like to acknowledge the following: the work of Wei Shaochang 魏紹昌 (1980) on popular literature, as well as the more recent massive contribution to this field by Fan Boquan 范伯群 (2000); the work of Chen Pingyuan 陈平原 and Xia Xiaohong 夏曉紅 (Chen 1988; Chen & Xia 1989) on late Qing and early Republican literature; the work of Yang Yi 楊義 (1993) on fiction; and the work of Jia Zhifang 賈植芳 (1985;
The realization that much valuable literary writing of the period had been marginalized by a canon of mainly politically progressive writing has led both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars to question the programmatic nature of the literary views associated with that canon. In this context, the term 'May Fourth' often enters into the discussion. Originally a reference to a political demonstration movement that swept the country in May 1919, the events of that month are often presumed to have given rise to an ensuing 'May Fourth movement' that lasted, according to some, until 1925. In the field of literature, recent publications tend to assign an even longer lease of life to what is then referred to as the 'May Fourth period' or 'May Fourth literature'. Seen to represent a dominant trend or 'mainstream' of overly westernized critical realist fiction, the term 'May Fourth' has now become, in some scholars' views, a representation of a style that is culturally repressive, that actively discredited and marginalized other styles of writing, and that laid the foundation for the institutionalized repression of alternative styles under the post-1949 Communist regime.

These alternative styles have now become 'repressed modernities' (cf. Wang 1997) and 'May Fourth' has become a 'project' of 'appropriation of cultural capital' (cf. Doleželová-Velingrová, Kral & Sanders 2002), which needs to be critically, often negatively, rethought and re-assessed. The widespread acceptance of general cultural theories about the nature of power, especially colonial power, exemplified by the work of Michel Foucault and Edward Said, has no doubt further strengthened this trend. I view these iconoclastic studies of the 'May Fourth' tradition as very significant contributions to knowledge, but I do not feel that their re-evaluation of the canon constitutes a paradigmatic change in our field, since it does not change the basic assumption that 'May Fourth' literature was the main literary style of the Republican period. To explain my views on

1989) on literary societies. The impact on my own research of work by Fan Quan (1993) and, especially, Wang Xiaoming (1991) is discussed in more detail below.

For a lucid critique of the previously established canon of modern Chinese literature, see McDougall 1996.

For two diametrically opposed views on the length and interpretation of the 'May Fourth' movement, see Chow 1960 and Chen 1971.
this in more detail, I discuss below a pioneering article by Wang Xiaoming 王曉明, first published in 1991 in the overseas Chinese journal *Jintian* 今天(Today). Not only are Wang’s views representative of the scholarly trend referred to above, which he pre-empted in many ways, but his topic of study, literary societies and literary journals, is identical to the topic of this study. Both the method employed by Wang and the arguments put forward by him have had a profound impact on the ideas that I put forward in the rest of this book.

**Journals, societies and the 'May Fourth' literary tradition**

In his article entitled ‘A Journal and a “Society”: On the May Fourth Literary Tradition’, Wang Xiaoming casts new light on two of the most canonized literary entities of the Republican period: the journal *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (New Youth), cradle of the New Culture Movement and the 1917 ‘Literary Revolution’, and the literary organization known as the ‘Chinese Literary Association’ (*wenxue yanjiu hui* 文學研究會; see Chapter Two). Wang’s method is very similar to the one I have employed in this study: he focuses on sources and materials which are often considered ‘non-literary’ but which shed much light on literary views and practices. On the basis of these materials, he arrives at the conclusion that both the journal and the society, because of their programmatic approach towards literature, constructed a literary practice in which competition and aggression, rather than co-operation and tolerance, were the norm. Rather than peacefully coexisting in a fruitful and pluriform environment, which Wang considers the normal situation, literary groups were constantly fighting to control the entire literary scene and set the theoretical guidelines for the ‘mainstream’ of development.

One of Wang’s greatest contributions, and my greatest debt to his ideas, is his recognition that the particular style of the literary figures he studies is not just a textual, but also a social phenomenon. Thus, he forges a link between the prescriptive writing style (*wenti* 文體) of the contributors to *New Youth* and the equally prescriptive, party-like style of organization of the Literary Association. Near the end of his article, Wang states that it is time for modern Chinese literature to move away from the ‘shadow’ of the ‘May Fourth’ tradition.
INTRODUCTION

In my rejoinder to Wang’s article (Hockx 1999a), I questioned his re-evaluation of ‘May Fourth’ in the same way in which I questioned those of other scholars above. In my view, the mounting evidence of the presence of other groups and styles on the Republican-era literary scene indicates that the period is not in need of a re-evaluation, but first and foremost of a proper evaluation. Until this has been done, there can be no certainty that the ‘May Fourth’ tradition at any time represented the kind of dominant mainstream that later canonization processes made of it.

One of my main arguments in this study is that the New Literature must be seen as but one style of modern Chinese writing, coexisting and competing with other styles throughout the pre-War decades. Moreover, this style was much less of a unity than it imagined itself to be. As the following chapters will make clear, throughout the history of New Literature one can come across styles (writing styles, styles of meeting and organization, styles of publication) that are at least partially indebted to the ones New Literature is supposed to have rivalled, or suppressed. Indeed, the fact that the literary figures studied by Wang Xiaoming displayed such an aggressive attitude towards their rivals can in itself be seen as evidence of their less than established position. Aggression, after all, has always been the hallmark of the avant-garde, of those literary producers trying to enter the literary field, rather than dominate it.

It is time, in short, to remove the ‘May Fourth’ paradigm from the study of modern Chinese literature or, in Kirk Denton’s words, “to liberate modernity from its own discourses and reveal it in more historically complex ways” (Denton 1998:7). In recent years, other scholars have moved in similar directions. Lydia H. Liu’s work on ‘translingual practice’ (Liu 1995), for instance, has painted a highly complex picture of the effects of translation on literary and cultural discourses, based on meticulous scrutiny of recently emerged sources, especially journal sources. Leo Ou-fan Lee’s monograph *Shanghai Modern* (1999) has focused on specifically metropolitan literary styles of the 1930s, in which ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ elements happily

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7 Admittedly, Denton’s view does leave room for a continued usage of the ‘May Fourth’ concept, but he views it as one of two interacting discourses, whose dialectics he traces throughout his study.
coexisted. Charles Laughlin's study (2002) of reportage literature has shown that even in the presumably familiar area of leftist literature there are aesthetic issues, some of them deeply rooted in Chinese tradition, that neither a positive nor a negative evaluation of 'May Fourth realism' would or could ever consider. In the case of Bonnie S. McDougall's analysis (forthcoming) of love-letter writing, an entire genre of literature has been rediscovered, and again it is doubtful whether the old paradigm would ever have had room to accommodate it.

What all these studies have in common is that they seek to describe aesthetic processes of literary creation and reception from a rigidly historical perspective, on the basis of a thoroughly documented understanding of the practices of writing. They do not take any concept of literature, nor any kind of canon or mainstream, for granted. They are neither for 'May Fourth' nor against it, since these two perspectives are in the end equally reductive. They allow historical literary views and values to emerge from the discourses and practices analysed and described. My own emphasis on literary practice, on the activities of the people involved in literary production, rather than on analysis of the texts they produced, is even stronger than that of the afore-mentioned scholars. This is a result of the methods of study I have applied, most of which belong to the realm of the sociology of literature.

Methods of study: some remarks on the sociology of literature

The sociology of art and literature, according to Milton C. Albrecht, is an academic discipline which occupies itself with 'art as an institution' (Albrecht, Barnett & Griff 1970:1). Although there are many different schools within this discipline, they appear to have in common that they consider this institution to be, at least to some extent, autonomous, or, as Albrecht puts it:

[O]ne may conclude that the structure of art as an institution is in several respects distinct from that of the family and of economic and political institutions. Art needs to be recognized as a peculiarly 'mixed' system [...]. One may designate it as a 'social-cultural' institution, though this term has become so attenuated in meaning that it may no longer be useful. Perhaps [...] it may be called, more simply and positively, a 'cultural' institution. (7)
INTRODUCTION

There are, as far as I can see, two major areas of interest in relation to literature as a cultural institution, summed up in the next paragraph of Albrecht’s introduction:

Regardless of the name, art as an institutional structure must take account of the art product as object or as process of aesthetic experience, and as an essential link in an extensive network of social and cultural relations. (Ibid.)

When focusing on the art product, or in this case the literary product, the sociology of literature might take an interest in the techniques and systems involved in the printing and marketing of literary works, crossing over, in some cases, into the field of book history. When turning to the ‘network of social and cultural relations’, the sociology of literature displays a typically sociological interest in patterns of human behaviour and the systems that support them, including, for instance, literary prizes or patronage systems.

Sociological approaches to literature are different from most other approaches both in aim and in method. It is rarely the ultimate aim of these approaches to make any contribution to the analysis of the text as such, although, as in the case of this study, textual analysis or interpretation can be a part of the overall analytical project. The sociology of literature does not formulate literary ‘theory’, but rather considers such theories to be part of the object under investigation. Where method is concerned, the sociology of literature, like most social sciences, places some emphasis on the collection of empirical data and the application of statistical analysis, something I have done only to a small extent, especially in the Appendices.

I have not concerned myself with those branches of the sociology of literature that take the literary text as point of departure and use it to obtain information about social reality. In its simplest form, based on a hypothesis of direct reflection of reality in writing, this approach is reductive in a way most entertainingly described by Lucien Goldmann:

All the earlier works [...] were concerned and still are concerned, in this discipline, with the content of literary works and the relationship between that content and the collective consciousness, that is to say, the ways in which men think and behave in daily life. This being the standpoint adopted, they naturally arrive at the result that the relationships between these two contents are all the more numerous, and literary sociology is all the more efficacious, according as the
author of the writings studied has given proof of less creative imagination and has contented himself with relating his experiences while transposing them as little as possible. Furthermore, this type of study must, by its actual method, break up the unity of the work by directing its attention above all to whatever in the work is merely the reproduction of empirical reality and of daily life. In short, this sociology proves to be all the more fertile the more the works studied are mediocre. (Albrecht, Barnett & Griff 1970:584)

However, Goldmann's own attempts to find structural homologies with (rather than direct relations to) social reality in literary works that are the product of "the most powerful literary imagination" and possess "truly literary quality" (585) are equally unappealing to me, exactly because of their basic assumption that literary quality is an objective factor that need not be socially circumscribed. Throughout this study, I have tried not to allow myself any preconceptions about the nature of literary value, assuming that what I consider good literature is most likely not what a Republican-era Chinese reader would go for. This does not mean that I am bent on picturing Chinese culture as essentially 'different' or as an 'Other'. It means that, according to my observation, the literary practices of this particular time and place, especially the practices of literary societies and of journal publication, are practices not common in my own time and my own place. It therefore seemed reasonable to expect that the literary values of that time and place might be unfamiliar to me as well. By thus maintaining a certain distance from my topic, which is typical for the sociological approach, I was able to arrive at new hypotheses about the different styles of writing that existed in the Republican period and the aesthetic value they were thought to possess.

The sociological approach does not only require attempts to maintain distance from one's topic. It also requires one to be, initially, as broad-minded as possible about the question of what might and what might not belong to the institution of literature in a given place and time. After all, even if there appears to be almost total consensus within a given literary community that a certain set of works is more literary than another, this consensus is still arrived at by comparison. As soon as canons are handed down, the other types of writing that the canonical works were supposed to differ from are often forgotten, leading eventually to a distortion of the historical perspective. Here lies the root of my objections against the 'May Fourth' paradigm.
INTRODUCTION

While it is mistaken to consider only the traditional canon of New Literature as significant for the development of modern Chinese literature, it is equally mistaken, in my view, to define all other types of writing of the same period only in terms of their oppression by or opposition to the canon, or in terms of being an ‘alternative’ to that canon. What I want to show in this study, both through my method and through the topics I have selected, is a more complete picture of the interaction and competition between different styles before any canon was firmly established.

The model of interaction between different types of literary producers within a relatively autonomous network or community has been postulated by many sociologists of literature. It is evident in Albrecht’s writing, quoted above, and can be encountered in as early a study as Robert Escarpit’s Sociology of Literature, originally published in French in 1958, and first translated into English in 1971. Escarpit especially emphasized the economic aspects of literary production, and the role of the reader as consumer:

If we wish to understand writers in our time, we cannot forget that writing is a profession—or at least a lucrative activity—practiced within the framework of economic systems which exert undeniable influence on creativity. We cannot forget, if we wish to understand literature, that a book is a manufactured product, commercially distributed and thus subject to the laws of supply and demand. We must see that literature is, among other things, incontestably, the production segment of the book industry, as reading is its consumption segment. (Escarpit 1971:2)

Escarpit’s statement is a straightforward, almost obvious one, but it has great relevance to this study. The period in Chinese literature I investigate is, after all, a period in which literature does become more and more commercialized. Literary journals, especially, epitomize the professional approach to publication that goes with commercialization. Literary societies, however, represent a continuity with traditional, much less professionalized literary practices. It is the dominance of both these phenomena on the Chinese literary scene of the Republican period that makes this particular literary community such a fascinating research topic.

Apart from the book industry and elements of material production, sociologists of literature have also paid attention to the importance of those involved in symbolic production, i.e. the production of literary
value, not only of a specific work, but also of literature in general, as compared with other spheres of activity. Lin Yutang’s words, quoted at the beginning of this Introduction, are a perfect example of an act of symbolic production. They do not produce literature in the material sense (the quote is not from a literary text), but they produce a distinction that defines literature symbolically. The role of symbolic production is usefully defined by Howard S. Becker. Talking about the various activities involved in making a work of art, Becker says:

Another activity consists of creating and maintaining the rationale according to which all these other activities make sense and are worth doing. Rationales typically take the form, however naïve, of a kind of aesthetic argument, a philosophical justification, which identifies what is being made as art, as good art, and explains how art does something that needs to be done for people and society. Every social activity carries with it some such rationale, necessary for those moments when others not engaged in it ask what good it is anyway. Someone always asks such questions, if only the people engaged in the activity themselves. Subsidiary to this is the specific evaluation of individual works to determine whether they meet the standards contained in the more general justification for that class of work or whether, perhaps, the rationale requires revision. Only by this kind of critical review of what has been and is being done can participants in the making of art works decide what to do as they move on to the next work. (Becker 1982:4)

Becker’s book Art Worlds is an extremely comprehensive and methodologically inspiring work of cultural sociology. Drawing examples from various different art forms, Becker has described the activities and forms of co-operation of a wide range of people, all of whom contribute to the end product, be it a poem, a painting, or a piano concerto. Chapters of his study deal with topics such as ‘mobilizing resources’, ‘distributing art works’, ‘aesthetics, aestheticians, and critics’ and ‘editing’. Perhaps his most ingenious methodological step is that he defines the term ‘art world’ not in terms of any concept of art, but purely in relational terms:

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9 The terms ‘material production’ and ‘symbolic production’, which I also applied in my earlier work (Hockx 1999b), were introduced by the Dutch sociologist of literature C.J. van Rees. Cf. Van Rees & Dorleijn 1993 and Van Rees & Vermunt 1996.
Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art. Members of art worlds coordinate the activities by which work is produced by referring to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in frequently used artefacts. The same people often cooperate repeatedly, even routinely, in similar ways to produce similar works, so that we can think of an art world as an established network of cooperative links among participants. If the same people do not actually act together in every instance, their replacements are also familiar with and proficient in the use of those conventions, so that cooperation can proceed without difficulty. Conventions make collective activity simpler and less costly in time, energy, and other resources; but they do not make unconventional work impossible, only more costly and difficult. Change can and does occur whenever someone devises a way to gather the greater resources required or reconceptualizes the work so it does not require what is not available.

Works of art, from this point of view, are not the products of individual makers, ‘artists’ who possess a rare and special gift. They are, rather, joint products of all the people who cooperate via an art world’s characteristic conventions to bring works like that into existence. Artists are some sub-group of the world’s participants who, by common agreement, possess a special gift, therefore make a unique and indispensable contribution to the work, and thereby make it art. (Becker 1982:34–5)

From Becker’s ideas, and especially from his definition of art worlds, it is but a small step to the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, who himself has acknowledged the influence of Becker on his work. I have written about Bourdieu in the context of studying modern Chinese literature extensively elsewhere (cf. Hockx 1999b; 2002). Here it will suffice to recapitulate some of the concepts he introduced into the study of culture and how they relate to some of the terms I employ in this study.

Bourdieu’s basic concept, the literary field, represents a relational understanding of literary practice, similar to what Becker calls the ‘art world’. Bourdieu defined the literary field as “a space of relations between positions”, rather than one of direct relations between agents. With the term ‘positions’, he captures, more fully than Becker, the fact that individual agents can be replaced by others in the performance of certain tasks. Being in a certain position in the literary field requires certain forms of action according to established conventions, but at the same time there is always room for carrying
out those actions in slightly different ways (the so-called 'position-takings'). My analysis of avant-garde behaviour, especially, has been influenced by this part of Bourdieu's theory. I view the avant-garde as a fairly stable position in the modern Chinese literary field, but one that has been 'taken' in many different ways by many different groups. My discovery of the importance, as a position-taking, of the concept of the 'unknown author', as described in Chapter Three, is especially indebted to this line of thinking.

The relationship between conventionality and cost effectiveness, outlined by Becker, was captured even more neatly by Bourdieu when he introduced the notion of *symbolic capital*. Through this notion, Bourdieu was able to illustrate that, in highly autonomous literary fields, authors' literary successes (in terms of recognition by critics and colleagues) can be in opposite proportion to their economic gains. Although the relationship between symbolic capital and other forms of capital differs for different literary fields, the idea that recognition by the literary community involves a quantifiable autonomous principle challenges scholars to try and define that principle. Again, this kind of approach forces scholars to take practice seriously and to ponder its consequences for literary value. Specifically, as Chapter Six will show, the practices of working in literary societies and publishing in literary journals fostered values such as high productivity and recognizability, which were less opposed to economic principles than the symbolic values Bourdieu defined for the case of modern French literature.

However, perhaps the most important of all of Bourdieu's concepts for this study has been that of *habitus*, the notoriously elusive 'feel for the field' which, unlike capital, cannot be quantified. All the chapters of this study present, in one way or another, descriptions of different attitudes towards literature that are the result of 'socialization': through upbringing, education, work and living environment, and of course through occupying a position in the literary field. In a period when Chinese society, especially urban society, was undergoing great changes in many aspects of life, cultural habits differed considerably from one another, and often clashed. This study shows some of these differences and clashes, both in literary texts and in the behaviour of literary figures. Rather than using the term *habitus*, however, I have chosen to use the term *style* for its rich set of meanings and connotations that reflects very
well the rich set of materials that I have employed. The next section deals with some traditional definitions of style and introduces the slightly idiosyncratic manner in which I have used the term.

Questions of style

Style is an elusive concept, which is perhaps most often defined in terms of language. Stylistics, the study of language style, has developed a sophisticated vocabulary for the description of features that distinguish from each other different types of language use or different speakers or writers employing the same type. This approach to style, as well as this vocabulary, is applied in Edward Gunn’s pioneering study (1991) of twentieth-century Chinese literary styles. Gunn’s study provides a highly detailed outline of changes in the grammar and structure of modern written Chinese throughout the century and deals in depth with the original applications of these patterns by creative stylists, i.e. literary writers.

My perspective in this study is different from Gunn’s in that I have approached style from a perspective of social differentiation. I find support for this not only in my method of study described above, but also in traditional Chinese terms for style (wenti 文體) and ‘normative form’ (ti 體), which one comes across regularly in Republican-era discourse and which carry a clear social connotation. The concept of style that I develop in this study thus refers to a conglomeration of not only language, form and content, but also lifestyle, style of organization (for instance in societies) and style of publication (for instance in journals). I believe that these conglomerations were instantly recognizable to members of the Republican-era literary community and lay at the basis of processes of distinction. I consider this concept of style more applicable in this case than any concept that tries to separate textual and non-textual elements of style. Gunn, in fact, acknowledges the existence of social aspects of style in his chapter entitled ‘Formal conventions of style: a social history’. In that chapter, he links the situation in pre-1917 Chinese literature to the discourse of tiyong 體用 (‘[Chinese] essence and [Western] application’) that pervaded all realms of society at the time:
On the eve of the New Culture Movement, then, a broad plurality of styles existed in China. The justification for most of them could be inferred largely by recourse to their notions of serving the cause of tiyong. But just as their proponents shared no definition of the elusive notion of ti, so they diverged in principles of composition. And so there was no rallying point, conceptually or practically, among educated Chinese. As far as it goes, such a statement portrays a perfectly acceptable situation aesthetically, where plurality suggests a fecund condition for creativity. Nor does it appear that general readership in China was discontent with such a plurality. Choice of styles did, however, reflect a set of institutions, as well as personal tastes and social ideals. And, within these institutions, any political analysis of the times would indicate that the educated elite felt disenfranchised by the results of the Republican Revolution. Activist intellectuals oriented toward exercising their foreign education by practicing it on Chinese society in particular felt profound frustration with government authorities and their practices. They found a rallying point in Hu Shi’s proposal to adopt vernacular baihua as the medium of educated discourse and as the style of a new literature to promote its popularity. (Gunn 1991:37–8)

In the rest of his chapter, Gunn outlines a fairly linear process of stylistic development of New Literature, passing through a number of stages when intellectuals identified with new ‘rallying points’, often in the wake of political movements, and further refined or changed the vernacular baihua 白話. In doing so, Gunn mainly follows the traditional pattern of development of the established New Literature canon, and the ‘May Fourth’ paradigm. As will be shown later in this chapter, however, he does continue to allow for some plurality, especially in his discussion of the Republican-era readers’ perspective on literature. Nevertheless, it is my intention to show in this study that the pre-1917 situation outlined by Gunn in fact continued to exist in the 1920s and 1930s. There continued to be a plurality of ideals, tastes, and institutions, which the canon has underrepresented, but which the study of literary societies and literary journals can resurrect. It is time, therefore, to turn to the main topics of this study.

**Literary societies**

In the introduction to his dictionary of modern Chinese literary societies, Fan Quan 範泉 argues that his book is more than just a
reference work, claiming it to be “an alternative way of writing modern Chinese literary history” (Fan Quan 1993:1). The unique scope of Fan’s work, which includes information on hundreds of societies regardless of their size, ideology or canonical status and makes no attempt at identifying any mainstream or constructing any chronological narrative, can in itself be taken as a statement of epistemological principle. The most amazing thing about literary societies of the Republican era is, indeed, that they existed in such great numbers and that collective literary activity was so common across the board.

The overwhelming preference of modern Chinese authors for working within literary societies has been duly noted by many scholars, but never studied in any detail. The emphasis of research related to literary societies has always been on analysis of the specific view of literature that each literary society supposedly represented, as well as on the relationship between those views and the literary works created by members of the society. Instead of studying the reasons behind the preference for collective organization and the actual functioning of literary societies as institutions, most scholars have preferred to isolate perceived textual and ideological affinities between members. In doing so, the fundamental difference between literary societies (shetuan 社團) and literary schools (liupai 流派) has been obscured. Whereas both concepts refer to groups of individuals sharing a certain literary ideology, literary societies, unlike literary schools, also exist as institutions. If there was such a strong need among modern Chinese writers to organize themselves in such institutions, it is worthwhile to view these institutions not merely as elements of context, with little impact on literary production as such, but as entities that helped to structure literary styles and identities. In the following sections, I provide some historical background to the study of Chinese literary societies.

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9 The planned publication of a volume of essays on literary societies of this period, edited by Kirk Denton and myself, will hopefully ameliorate this situation. The project is described on the following website: http://www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/deall/denton.2/publications/research/litsoe.htm

10 A very comprehensive recent example of this approach is Chen Anhu 1997.
When thinking about literary societies as institutions, one need not necessarily imagine anything particularly grand or well organized. Although some societies had a large membership and held regular meetings, others existed only in name. It is, however, exactly this existence in name which interests me here. Literary societies are more than just loose groups or schools first and foremost because of the fact that they do have a name. When members of a society, in their writing, choose to ascribe certain opinions or actions to that society, rather than to themselves as individuals, the society can be seen to function as an institution. This means that when it comes to finding concrete evidence for the existence of a certain literary society, usages of the name of the society in various contexts become important indicators. In collecting information about literary societies, I have, in the first instance, looked at texts that comply with the following conditions:

a) the name of the society (or a term clearly referring to it, such as *ben hui* 本會 or *ben she* 本社 (‘this society’)) is mentioned;

b) a connection is made between the name and an action or actions described in the text (the society is functioning as a collective agent);

c) the text is not clearly presented as an outsider’s view or post hoc discussion of the society (as in criticism, reminiscences, literary histories, or academic articles).

In most cases, these sources are texts that are either signed by the society or presented as official announcements. It is those texts that inform us of the existence of a named collective and enable us to study it as a phenomenon belonging to the literary world of the time. Those texts also show us the self-image of a society, since, even though one can hardly assume that each of them was written with the consent of all members, they do show us when and where a society’s leading figures considered it justifiable to speak on behalf of all members. My findings suggest that decisions about using the name of a collective in order to carry out or describe certain actions were usually not made arbitrarily, and that, in general, the distinction between individual and collective agency was a meaningful one for the people involved. One of the reasons for this is probably that literary societies had had a long history in Chinese culture before the Republican era. Before looking at some
modern examples, therefore, it is necessary to take a brief look at the past.

**Literary societies in traditional China**

As is well known, among Chinese literati the writing and appreciation of literary texts, especially of poetry, was not only a highly valued form of art, but also a useful social (often even political) skill and an essential element of proper education. It is logical, therefore, that such writing and appreciation would be practised, at least to some extent, not in seclusion but in the company of others. In later chapters of this study, this social element of literary production will be repeatedly emphasized and provided with aesthetic significance. Here, however, it suffices to establish the apparent need of Chinese literati to work with others. According to Chen Baoliang 陳寶良, whose book-length study of societies in Chinese culture is the source of most of the information provided in this section, this need became especially strong during the Ming dynasty:

The literary gentlemen (*dushu shizi* 讀書士子) of the Ming period were very afraid of studying alone without friends, and eager to find companions to study with, therefore the trend to form study clubs was extremely widespread at the time. Moreover, some literati and officials (*wenren shidafu* 文人士大夫) also enjoyed having company and forming groups when making leisurely outings (*youyou linxia* 優遊林下) or when chanting about wind and moon (*yinfeng nongyue* 吟風弄月). (Chen 1996:279–80)

The Ming period, especially the late Ming, is traditionally seen as the heyday of society-building and factionalism, but various types of literary societies and gatherings had been in existence many centuries earlier. Traditionally, the history of literary societies in China is traced back to the late Han and the group assembled by Cao Cao 曹操 in the town of Yexia 鄱下 (cf. Dong 1992; Chen 1996:268). Chen Baoliang (305) states that the first more or less literary group to use the character *she* 社 in its name was the White Lotus Society (*bailian she* 白蓮社) of the Jin dynasty, in which some literary figures, notably Tao Qian 陶潛 and Xie Lingyun 謝靈雲, are said to have participated. Other scholars (Ter Haar 1992:3; Zürcher 1972:219), however, have not commented on any literary activities in relation to
this group and are even in disagreement as to whether or not this group ever existed at all.

From the Song dynasty onwards, according to Chen Baoliang (1996:269), a split between two types of collectives began to occur. On the one hand, Chen argues, there were the study clubs (wenshe 文社 or wenhui 文會), established by literati jointly preparing for the imperial examinations, a large part of which of course involved the reading and writing of literary works. These groups were of a serious and at least partly utilitarian nature, and would often lie at the basis of later political alliances, as in the case of the famous Revival Society (Fu she 複社), more about which later. On the other hand, there were the informal literati gatherings during which literary works, normally poems, were produced while enjoying good food, wine and scenery. Chen (ibid.) refers to these as shishe 詩社, a term probably most aptly translated as ‘poetry party’. Other terms describing the same phenomenon are wenyan 文宴 (literary banquet) and yaji 雅集 (elegant gathering). Chen fittingly describes such gatherings as “collective expressions of the refined [literary] life” (fengya shenghuo de jiti biaoxian 風雅生活的集體表現) (ibid.). In contrast to the study clubs, the main aim of these meetings was relaxation and leisure (xiaoxian 消閑). Although poetry parties were extremely popular, some more morally inclined Neo-Confucian scholars would view the phenomenon negatively and as a result of this, according to Chen (268), some of the less flattering stereotypes about ‘ill-behaved literati’ (wenren wuxing 文人無行) find their origin in this period. As we shall see, such stereotypes continued to influence the perception of literary identities during the Republican period.

Chen’s distinction between wenshe and shishe is helpful from a conceptual perspective, but in actual practice, as Chen himself admits (ibid.), the distinction between the two was often far from clear. Atwell, in his study of the Revival Society, does not make the distinction at all, and refers to any and all groups formed by “educated men” to “discuss literature, philosophy, history, and other topics of mutual interest” (Atwell 1975:333) as wenshe. Wang Tzi-cheng, in her extremely well-researched article on the Moon Spring Chanting Competition, more about which below, has sketched an entire tradition of collective literati activity in which political aspirations, the examination system, aesthetic enjoyment and social
enterainment were thoroughly intertwined (Wang Cicheng 2002). Discussing literati activity in the nineteenth century, Polacheck, too, emphasizes the multiple identity of the Xuannan Poetry Club "as a literati faction", "as a bureaucratic patronage clique" and "as a brotherhood of aesthete-connaisseurs" (Polacheck 1992:37–50). It is therefore perhaps better to say that Chen's distinction between shishe and wenshe represents two ideal types and it is as such that I am maintaining the distinction here, since it corresponds closely to a similar, in my view more clear-cut distinction that we shall see emerging in the Republican period.

The distinction also raises an issue of terminology and translation. In the case of the wenshe, referring to fairly well-organized collectives meeting on a regular basis, translating she as 'club' or 'society' is justified. The shishe, however, were often one-off poetry parties or competitions, for which, in some cases, the contributors did not even have to meet. This was, for instance, the case with the famous Moon Spring Chanting Competition (yuequan yinshe 月泉吟社), sometimes cited as the first real literary 'society' in Chinese history. As Chen (278–9) points out, the Moon Spring was in fact a single competition with 2,735 competitors, many of them Song loyalists, from various parts of southern China. The competition was organized by Wu Qingweng 吳 清翁 (Wu Wei 吳 渭), who established the she, consisting of himself and only a few friends, for the single purpose of holding the competition. The participants in the competition never in fact met, but sent in collections of their works that were subsequently appraised by Wu's small group. Works by the 280 prize-winners were published in a joint collection named after the she, together with a preface and an overview of the rules of the competition. This collection was subsequently handed down through various collectanea."

Despite the fact that the Moon Spring Chanting Competition was a one-off event, it did play an important role in forging a sense of collective belonging among the Song loyalists. As Wang Tzi-cheng shows, based on a close reading of the poems and related documents, the competition was meant, and considered, to be much more than

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11 The edition I consulted is vol. 1786 of the Congshu jicheng (Comprehensive Collectanea) collection (Wang Yunwu 1936).
just a literary event, although some very good poetry was produced for the occasion. Equally important was its role as a substitute for the imperial examinations, in which the loyalists, for obvious reasons, would not participate (Wang Cicheng 2002:106–7). Moreover, the contents of at least some of the poems were written, and are commonly read, as an expression of the political ideals of the loyalists.

As in the Moon Spring case, what made poetry parties and competitions influential was the fact that the poems submitted for or produced at the occasion would be printed and distributed in books named after the party or competition. Such publications could create or strengthen the outside perception of a group identity linked with the name of the she. In such cases, English terms such as ‘society’ or ‘club’ become available again for the translation of the term she within the context of literary activities. As Atwell (1975:337–8) points out, a similar process was at work with the wenshe or study clubs, many of which would help their members by collaborating with bookstores to publish collections of their writings. These collections, generally known as she-kao [shegao 社稿], are said to have aided the authors by bringing their names and writing styles to the attention of future examiners.

On the other hand, Atwell’s comments on the Moon Spring Chanting Competition, which he calls “the most important” of early Yuan “groups”, which “flourished in the late thirteenth century” (335), also demonstrate that such group identities can easily be exaggerated and lead to an incorrect perception of the activities of a ‘society’, for in

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12 Chen (294, 296) also refers to the later practice of some Qing-dynasty poetry parties to leave behind a painting of the gathering, as a kind of memento. These paintings were known as shetu 舉圖. As we shall see below, in modern times this tradition was continued with the aid of photography.

13 The etymology of she goes back to long before the time that it came to mean ‘society’ or ‘gathering’. The original meaning of she is a religious one: it was used to refer to certain local deities, to certain events involving sacrifices to those deities, or to the place (altar, temple) where those sacrifices were made. Another early usage of she is as an administrative unit, with 25 families constituting one she (cf. Chen 1996:1–4). For the extensive usage of both she and hui in Buddhist traditions, see Ter Haar 1995 and Gemet 1995 (259 passim).

14 For more about the relationship between wenshe and bookstores (shufang 書坊), see Xie Guozhen 1967 (145–7).
The informal nature of at least some of the *shishe* makes it difficult to speak with any certainty of the ‘membership’ of a ‘society’ in Ming times. For all practical purposes, members would have been those who participated in the gathering. If more than one gathering was held under the same name or involved the same participants, speaking of membership becomes more plausible. This was the case with the Eight West Lake Meetings (*xihu ba she* 西湖八社) held in 1562 at eight different scenic spots in Hangzhou. Each individual meeting was named after the scenic spot where it was held, but the meetings were held at regular intervals and involved the same participants who, moreover, all agreed to abide by the same ‘meeting rules’ (*sheyue* 社約) (Chen 1996:281). Sources suggest that, apart from such famous large gatherings and competitions, *shishe* were even more common, and probably more tightly organized, at the local or clan level. In the case of the afore-mentioned Moon Spring Chanting Competition, some prize-winners in the competition were identified as members of other *she*, in this case referring to local societies or groups that were obviously more than one-off events (279). Dorothy Ko (1994:237) even goes so far as to identify “male poetry clubs” as “one of three principles of social organization”, on a par with kinship organization and neighbourhood organization.15

Matters are relatively simpler with the equivalent term *hui* 會, which, originally, means ‘to get together’ or ‘a get-together’, but which, according to Chen, was used in the meaning of ‘collective’ (*tuanti* 團體) as early as the Northern Dynasties period. Chen concludes (6) that, although *she* is wider in meaning than *hui*, when both terms refer to collective groups or organizations, their meanings are similar and overlapping. Below, I shall translate *she* as ‘society’ and *hui* as ‘association’ merely for the sake of making a lexical

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15 Ko makes this observation in the context of her discussion of the all-female Banana Garden group (*jiaoyuan she* 藤園社) of the early Qing. It is worth noting that Ko, too, carefully avoids the term ‘society’, preferring to speak of ‘the Banana Garden poets’, or sometimes resorting to the term ‘club’. Her discussion contains little information about the reasons for the founding of the *she* and its actual practice as an institution. Although in one case Ko refers to an individual not being ‘an official member’ of the club, it remains unclear what being an official member involved.
CHAPTER ONE

distinction. As far as the Republican period is concerned, I am convinced, like Chen, that she and hui are basically the same.16

Societies in the late Ming and in the Qing

The Revival Society, subject of an English-language article by Atwell (1975) and discussed at length in Chinese by Xie Guozhen 謝國楨 (1967:145–86), was the largest and most famous of all late Ming societies. Founded in 1629 by Zhang Pu 張溥 (1602–1641) and others, it was designed from the beginning to be a very large wenshe. In practice, it was a conglomerate of numerous smaller study clubs, or, as Xie Guozhen (161) puts it:

[T]he organization of the Revival Society was more or less as follows: within the one large society there were many smaller organizations. In external matters, the name ‘Revival Society’ was used; internally each minded its own business.17

During the early years of its existence, the society held three meetings, gathering literati from all over the country, but mainly from southern regions.14 The most famous of these meetings was the last one, held at Tiger Hill (huqiu 虎丘) near Suzhou in 1633 (Atwell, 341; Xie, 16419), and attended by thousands of people (Xie, 164–510). The original aims of the society were idealistic. The leaders meant to promote scholarship and establish solid standards of education and training for the imperial examinations, standards which they saw as having existed in the past and being in need of revival (fugu 復古),

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16 Two Republican-period authors, Xiao Qian 蕭乾 and Shi Zhecun 施HashSet, when interviewed by me in 1995 and 1998 respectively, both said that they considered the two terms to have the same meaning. Shi Zhecun added that, for him, she was a traditional Chinese term, whereas hui was a modern translation of the English word ‘association’.
17 Atwell (343) also quotes these lines and adds that “external matters” refers to politics, with the internal affairs being “education, scholarly research, etc.”.
18 For the regional distribution of the membership, see Atwell (343).
19 Xie gives 1632 as the date of the meeting, but immediately thereafter quotes from the Records of the Revival Society stating that the meeting was held in a guiyou 祕酉 year, i.e. 1633. Atwell (361) concludes that “the date is in dispute”. It seems more likely that Xie made a small error.
20 Atwell (341), quoting the same source as Xie, gives “more than a thousand people”.
hence the name ‘Revival Society’. Many members put much effort into training students, including students from humble backgrounds, through their local study clubs. A kind of ‘quality control’ was exercised by the society’s headquarters (sheju 社局), which judged the applications from scholars wanting to join, a procedure which naturally invited accusations of factionalism (cf. Xie, 167).

As the society’s reputation and influence grew, it did indeed become more and more factionalist. Various means were employed to ensure its members’ success in the examinations (cf. Atwell, 350; Xie, 165–6), thereby securing increasing influence of the society in national politics, where it took up the position of the by then banned Donglin Party (donglin dang 東林黨, originally donglin jiangxue hui 東林講學會, cf. Xie, 167–8; Chen, 43–4; Atwell, 339 passim).

The Revival Society kept a meticulous record of its membership, which was published together with its shegao. As Atwell (342) points out, the regular publishing of the membership list was “a move undoubtedly designed to advertise its power and prestige”. Atwell emphasizes the ‘group consciousness’ of the society, which distinguished it from the Donglin Movement. Members of the group had to swear to abide by the ‘group oath’ (mengci 盟詞). The oath itself stated that those who violated it would be admonished or, in the worst cases, expelled. Atwell (ibid.) also notices other novelties with regard to the structure of the society:

> The organisational structure of the Fu She also contained some interesting innovations. What might be termed the group’s ‘national office’ was located in T’ai Ts’ang with Chang P’u at its head. From there he directed a sizable staff in activities such as fund raising, the recruitment of new members, and the publication of the she-kao which he edited. Situated below Chang in the Fu She hierarchy were representatives for each prefecture and county in which the members resided. Although it is not clear how these representatives were chosen or what their exact duties were, they appear to have had the responsibility of maintaining group discipline, suggesting other scholars for membership, and recommending essays for publication in the she-kao. They also furnished a link between the leadership and the

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21 The oath is quoted by Atwell (1975:342), who has left out the last line. The full Chinese text can be found in Meishi shi 1908 (1:8) and, in a punctuated version, in Xie (163).
rank and file, thus creating a rather sophisticated network for group communication.

It is not clear from either Atwell's or Xie's account what exactly took place during the large meetings of the Revival Society. Although it is almost certain that literary activities and debates will have been a part of those meetings, my general impression of the Revival Society is that its literary activities, such as the publication of the *shegao*, where focused on those literary genres, such as the eight-legged essay, that were part of the training for the examinations. This essentially distinguishes the Revival Society from the modern literary societies that we shall come across below.

After the Qing dynasty came to power, the number of formally organized literary groups, study groups and associations declined sharply. This is usually attributed to the new regime's strict laws against all kinds of organized collectives, designed to control the Han elite, as well as to prevent a repeat of the situation under the late Ming, for the fall of the Ming dynasty was commonly attributed to factionalism. Chen (292) also points at a second reason for the fall in numbers of societies during the Qing: literati themselves had become wary of the phenomenon, also as a result of the fall of the Ming, and for a long period of time it was considered 'not done' for proper gentlemen to join a collective.

This mixture of government control and self-control had considerably less impact, I presume, on the organization of poetry parties and the forming of informal groups that would meet more or less regularly to enjoy food, wine, and writing, some of which are briefly referred to by Chen (295–6). Moreover, there is some reason to doubt the validity of Chen's arguments for his second reason. When discussing the late Qing period, Chen remarks that from the Daoguang reign (1821–1850) onwards, the Qing government, troubled by both internal and external crises, stopped enforcing the ban on forming societies, and that "as a result" (297), literary societies mushroomed. Moreover, many of these new societies had some sort of political orientation and emulated the famous societies from the late Ming. This suggests that Han literati were eager to revive the tradition of forming literary groups as soon as the law
allowed them to, so that the argument that they would consider such behaviour to be in bad taste loses much of its persuasiveness.\(^{22}\)

Of the various new societies that emerged during the nineteenth century, especially in the Hangzhou area, one is particularly worthy of mention, again because it introduces an aspect of the practice of literary societies that remained in existence during the Republican period. The Wrought Iron Poetry Society (*tiehua yinshe 鐵華吟社*), founded in Hangzhou in 1878 and active until 1885, would hold regular meetings around the West Lake. Every time it held a meeting, it would hang up a sign with the name of the society, revealing to all passers-by the identity of the group that was meeting. Chen (297) remarks that this was the first time ever that a literary gathering would make use of such a sign. During the Republican period, the practice became more common, and constituted one of the ways in which societies made themselves recognizable and concrete as institutions of literary and social life.

Also during this period, and again according to Chen (298–9), it became common practice for study groups and associations to occupy and own their own premises, sometimes with surrounding land that provided income. These *huiguan* 館 became more and more institutionalized and self-sufficient, and often functioned as examination training schools.\(^{23}\) Although this practice is remote from that of the literary societies that will become the main object of investigation in the next chapters, it is noteworthy because modern literary societies and associations, too, could have a more long-term physical existence in space, in the form of a proper room or even a proper building, or strive to gain such an existence.

In the above sections, I have addressed five aspects of the meaning of the terms *she* and *hui* in the context of traditional literary production. Both terms could be used to refer either to one of those

\(^{22}\) Polachek, who places the re-emergence of “ideologically self-confident literati grouping” in the last years (“roughly 1814–1820”) of the Jiaqing reign, speaks of literati overcoming “the awe that had inhibited independent, idealistic collective political action by members of their class during the heyday of Ch‘ing rule” (Polachek 1992:39). I take this to mean that Polachek, too, is of the opinion that repression, rather than a change in taste, had kept literati from organizing themselves during the earlier centuries of the Qing dynasty.

\(^{23}\) The role of *huiguan* and other native place organizations in late Qing and Republican urban society is studied in depth in Goodman 1995.
aspects separately, to a combination of two or three of them, or to all five at the same time. The five aspects are:

a) a social event (or series of events) during which literature is written and discussed;

b) a group of people involved in the event(s) and/or subscribing to the rules of the event(s);

c) a publication resulting from the event(s), or from some other collective effort;

d) the location of the event(s);

e) a more or less organized group of people subscribing to a concrete oath, manifesto, or programme.

In Chapter Two, I describe how literary societies developed new working practices during the early twentieth century, focusing especially on the professional example set by the Southern Society (Nan she 南社). The rest of Chapter Two consists of a detailed case study of one of the earliest and largest modern societies: the ‘Chinese Literary Association’ (wenxue yanjiu hui 文學研究會), which was mainly active in the early 1920s. In Chapter Three, I describe various other forms of societies that one comes across in the Republican period, focusing especially on some relatively unknown, but in my view significant groups on the 1930s Shanghai scene. Together, the first two chapters demonstrate the continued importance of collective activity in modern Chinese literary practice. No matter how revolutionary the changes in writing in those decades may have been, the social element of literary production showed some remarkable continuities with the tradition described above.

The materials used in Chapters Two and Three to identify the collective existence of Republican-era literary societies were predominantly taken from literary journals. In fact, as is evident from the organizational principles of Fan Quan’s dictionary of literary societies mentioned above (Fan Quan 1993:8), it is virtually impossible to prove the existence of a literary society if this society did not publish literary works or literary journals under its collective name.
The first Chinese literary journals

Literary societies, traditionally, were heavily involved in publishing matters and even, like many of the wenshe, in bringing out periodical publications. With the introduction of modern printing techniques in Shanghai in the late nineteenth century, however, unprecedented opportunities were created for generating periodical publications with enhanced frequency and against lower costs, distributed in part through a subscription system. Within the space of a few decades, journals and newspapers were to dominate the reading market, including the literary market.

The first ever literary periodical to be published in China is considered to be *Yinghuan suoji* (Scattered Notes From Around the Universe), published by the Shenbaoguan in Shanghai from 1872 to 1875.24 The content of the periodical has been described by Rudolf Wagner as follows:

The *Yinghuan suoji* is not very far away from English-language journals at the time. A glance on journals such as *Blackwoods*, the *Edinburgh Journal*, or the *Westminster Magazine* shows a similar preference for a very broad range of topics and of genres that would include poetry, travelogue, essay, and letter, with many of the texts written in slight ironical distance. (Wagner 1998:19–20)

Another notable fact concerning the first Chinese literary journal is that it also serialized the first Chinese translation of a Western novel by a Chinese translator,26 under the title *Xinxi xianzan* (Idle Talk at Morning and Night). This text is referred to both by Wagner (16) and Fan Boqun (2000, 2:522), and has been identified by Patrick Hanan (Han Nan 2001) as a partial translation of Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Night and Morning*, originally published in London in 1841.

Apart from its similarity to contemporary English journals, the editing of this first Chinese literary journal and its follow-up journal,
the *Siming suoji* 四漠琐記 (Scattered Notes from the Four Corners of the Earth), also foreshadowed later journal publishing practices. Wagner writes:

> [T]he *Siming suoji* was another step in the persistent attempt [by the Shenbaoguan] to find a formula for a commercial cultural periodical in China. It inscribes itself in the developing strategies of the Shenbaoguan and reflects its priorities. It was able to attract at any given moment enough writers and editors of talent to stay afloat; it seems as if [it] very much depended on the particular editor and his friends what kind of materials would be found for publication. Any shift in the core group managing the journal was followed by a shift in the group of authors. This very much foreshadows a certain cliquishness of the literary periodicals in later times. (21-2)

After these pioneering efforts by the Shenbaoguan, the further development of literary journals had to wait until after the turn of the century, when the distribution in China of Liang Qichao’s Japan-based fiction journal *Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說 (New Fiction) in 1902 caused a rapid response from publishers in Shanghai, starting with *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo* 繡像小說 (Illustrated Fiction), published by the Commercial Press from 1903 to 1906. In a recent study, Denise Gimpel (2001:176–212), has provided a richly detailed description of this ‘new field of activity’. Her work provides both a characterization of the major journals of the period 1902–1914 and an analysis of the shared concerns and personal ties that connected the individuals operating within that field, which was exclusively located in Shanghai. Near the end of her chapter, Gimpel concludes:

> The field of literary production in Shanghai at the beginning of the 1910s was not well developed. There was some diversification in the sense that a number of journals existed side by side, but the idea of competition among journals, of different groups of players vying for the audience’s attention, does not present itself to the observer. […] The market for *xiaoshuo* journals had just established itself. It was to diversify and become far more complex after 1914. […] However, despite the variety of their interests and activities, contributors to […] the majority of […] *xiaoshuo* journals were still connected by a fine web of common aspirations for the future of their country and by a desire to write about their impressions and attitudes. (211–12)
INTRODUCTION

From the mid-1910s onwards, the journal rapidly became the primary medium for the distribution of literary texts, a position it maintained until at least the end of the Republican period. Virtually every single known literary work of the first half of the twentieth century was first published in a literary journal or newspaper supplement and only later, if ever, published in book form. This fact in itself requires scholars of modern Chinese literature to rethink some of the most common concepts and methods of literary analysis. My own answer to the question of whether a literary journal should be read and interpreted with methods different from those for literary books is given in Chapter Four, which focuses on journals from the mid- and late 1910s, especially *Meiyu* 眉語 (Eyebrow Talk), *Youxi zazhi* 遊戲雜誌 (The Pastime) and *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (New Youth). Apart from discussing questions of method, Chapter Four also illustrates the post-1914 diversification of literary journals referred to by Gimpel. Different from Gimpel, however, my intention with respect to these readings is to bring out differences in literary styles and registers, rather than common aspirations.

*Literary journals and literary practice*

It is of course predictable that the combined reading, in Chapter Four, of two journals considered popular fiction publications and of one journal (*New Youth*) long established as the vanguard of the anything but popular New Culture Movement, yields an image of difference and variety. It is my argument, however, that such readings do not misrepresent literary practice of the Republican period as it presented itself to the contemporary reader. This reader’s perspective is rarely taken into account, but very accurately formulated in the following lines from Edward Gunn’s *Rewriting Chinese*:

[I]t is well known in the social history of literature that many Chinese readers have shown themselves to be remarkably adaptive to a wide range of styles and generally quite indifferent to preferring one over another. (Gunn 1991:14)

27 It arguably still holds this position nowadays, as it is still extremely common for Chinese writers to publish even long novels first in journals before they are published in book form.
Although I find it debatable if this point is really all that ‘well known’, the example provided by Gunn in a footnote to this passage clearly indicates the validity of his statement:

Consider the popularity of Xu Zhenya’s *Yu li hun* (Jade pear spirit; 1912 [1914]), written in euphuistic four-six style, in contrast to Zhang Henshui’s *Tixiao yinyuan* (Fate in tears and laughter; 1930), composed in a conservative vernacular, or Ba Jin’s *Jia* (Family; 1931–32), offering a highly Europeanized vernacular. (302, n. 10)

As pointed out at the beginning of this Introduction, my aim in this study is to confirm and further develop approaches to the literature of this period that circumvent the debate about canon construction in favour of a more complete picture. Moreover, it is my argument that joint analysis of disparate or even conflicting styles is justified by the nature of the materials that I have worked with. When reading literary journals of this period, the most profound impression one gets is that the content of virtually all of these publications is more complex than is commonly assumed. These journals contain, within themselves, a variety of styles that often easily transgresses the boundaries between traditional literature, popular literature, and New Literature. Similarly, attempts to distinguish these styles from one another do not just take place between rivalling groups and publications but also within them.

In Chapter Five, for example, it is shown how Liu Bannong 劉半農, famous for his ‘conversion’ from the Shanghai-based popular style to the Beijing-based new style in the late 1910s, spent much time and effort trying to forge a creative fusion between those styles. In the field of poetry, especially, Liu pioneered attempts to arrive at a conglomeration of language, form and content that, though eventually discredited by fellow Beijing reformers for being too old-fashioned, would continue to represent a serious alternative to canonical New Poetry in the decades to come.

The analysis in Chapter Five also demonstrates that, in debates over language, form and content of literature, other elements, such as personal background, behaviour or membership of a particular group, were equally taken into consideration. It is this mixture of the personal, the societal and the textual, harking back to the classical concept of *ti* 體 or ‘normative form’, which I argue to be essential to the reconstruction of literary styles of the Republican period. The idea that, in modern Chinese literature, especially in reading practices
and critical habits, author and subject must be seen as two complimentary and equivalent parts of the same aesthetic experience, will emerge as the central thesis of this study.

This thesis is articulated in detail in Chapter Six, where I take a close look at how the practices of abusive criticism (ma 罵) and ad hominem criticism (ma ren 罵人), pervasively present throughout the Republican period, expressed a similar continuity with the traditional view that, ultimately, text and author are one (wen ru qi ren 文如其人). In an additional case study, I resurrect a colourful and influential member of the 1930s Shanghai literary scene, Zeng Jinke 曾今可 and his journal Xin shidai 新時代 (The New Era), which was one of the longest running and most successful New Literature journals of its time. The debate that Zeng unleashed about the ‘liberation’ of the age-old poetic genre of the song lyric (ci 歌) exemplifies how, in the minds of Zeng’s supposedly enlightened opponents, such as Mao Dun 毛盾 and Lu Xun 魯迅, elements of writing style and lifestyle merged seamlessly into an overall concept of literary style. The fact that recent innovative studies of 1930s Shanghai culture still choose to ignore Zeng and his circle and their literary practices testifies to the tenacity of certain assumptions about what can and what cannot constitute modern Chinese literature. At the same time, the fact that Zeng’s views were far from suppressed by his later canonized critics once again proves the constant vitality of more traditionalist views throughout the Republican period, even within the New Literature itself.

In Chapter Seven, the last chapter of this study, the argument turns to the positioning of the literary community as a whole within the social and political context of the times, as epitomized in Lin Yutang’s lines quoted at the beginning of this Introduction. In a straightforward application of one of Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts, I demonstrate how the arrival of censors on the Shanghai literary scene of the 1930s causes the literary community to close ranks and demonstrate its ability to ‘refract’ these political forces, bringing them as much as possible in line with the principles of the relatively autonomous literary field. In this chapter, too, relatively rarely known journal materials are used to document the response to censorship legislation of the Shanghai publishing world. The chapter ends with a contextual reading of a story by Xiao Hong 蕭紅, illustrating the aesthetic aspects of the leftist view of literature, which,
I argue, can equally be described as a refraction of political values through aesthetic ones.

In the Conclusion, I sum up the main historiographical and methodological implications of my research and cast a short glance at the state of Chinese literature at the start of the twenty-first century. As the era of print culture draws to a close, many of the styles described in this study are making a remarkable come-back, and undergoing further development, with the help of new, interactive technologies. It appears that the questions of style raised in the following pages will continue to require new answers.
CHAPTER TWO

CREATION BY (DIS)ASSOCIATION: LITERARY SOCIETIES ENTERING THE MODERN AGE

This chapter deals with two of the earliest and largest literary societies of modern China, the Southern Society and the Literary Association. I consider these societies to be representative of two different styles of organization that were to influence many later literary collectives.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, some of the connotations of the terms she and hui, as defined in Chapter One, began to change. Speaking more generally about all societies and associations, not just literary ones, Chen Baoliang notes a significant change taking place during the late Qing, which he attributes to “the consecutive rises of the bourgeois reform movement and the revolutionary movement” (Chen 1996:13). Chen is less than clear about what exactly was so new about the “new-style societies” (xinshi shetuan 新式社團) that he perceives to be the major breakthrough of this period, speaking of certain types of organizations that “did not change in name, but changed in essence”, and others that were completely new, as all of a sudden there seemed to be an organization for every type of activity. What Chen seems to be hinting at is the fact that many organizations became more or less politicized in this period, and that the fact that the Han élite was organizing itself in various ways laid the social foundation for the 1911 Revolution.

As far as literary activities are concerned, I would argue that professionalization and specialization were more significant trends than politicization in this tumultuous period, when various new types of education and new career paths presented themselves to a literate élite previously largely focused on the imperial examinations and careers in the civil service. The main way in which professionalization was reflected in literary circles was through the involvement of literary societies with the publishing industry. This was not a novelty in itself. Xie Guozhen (1967:145) has pointed out the close relationship between many Ming dynasty wenshe offices and the bookshops (shufang 書坊) marketing the books compiled or written...
by members of the *wenshe*. There are three elements, however, that distinguish the new situation emerging in the late nineteenth century from earlier ones. First of all, the nature of publishing itself was changing rapidly, and involvement of literati groups in publishing now entailed not only being responsible for book publications, but also for editing (parts of) newspapers and other periodical publications. Secondly, literati gradually became more directly involved in the publishing industry, as many of them were now employed by publishing houses or newspaper offices. Finally, the direct links between writing, education and politics, that were so acutely observable in the activities of, for instance, the Revival Society, were beginning to disappear, as literary activities and publications began to assume a more autonomous, more specialized character.

In modern times, literary societies became increasingly less event-oriented and more and more oriented towards managing periodical publications and series of books that would provide its members with a publication outlet and sustain the collective image of the group within cultural circles. The link between specific literary events and publications of literary works was severed, as the literary journal, especially, became a kind of ‘virtual meeting place’ through which members of literary societies kept in touch with each other, and communicated with an outside readership. The interest of general readers of literature in subscribing to or buying literary society organs also increased the commercial element involved, and necessitated a stricter regulation of a society’s (financial) affairs. However, the social function of society gatherings remained largely intact. There continued to be many societies whose activities included regular meetings at restaurants or teahouses, during which literature was discussed, read, and sometimes even written. The element of production, however, figured less prominently than in traditional literary events. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this trend was set by an organization that pioneered many of the modern Chinese publishing and literary practices that are treated in this study: the Southern Society (*nan she* 南社; 1909–1922).
The Southern Society

The Southern Society was officially founded in 1909 by Chen Chaonan (Qubing 去病; 1874–1933), Gao Tianmei 高天梅 (Xu 旭; 1877–1925) and Liu Yazi 柳亞子 (1887–1958). Ideas about its establishment, however, had been fermenting among its founders for at least a number of years before that date.1 It was a typical late Qing society, in Chen Baoliang’s terms discussed above, in the sense that it had a clear political orientation (the majority of its members were also members of the Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmeng hui 同盟會), the name ‘Southern Society’ was chosen to register their opposition to the Northern (Manchu) government) and that it modelled itself upon late Ming societies, more specifically on the Revival Society, to the extent that it held its founding meeting on Tiger Hill.2 In other ways, however, as I shall demonstrate below, the Southern Society was more typically a professional literary organization.

The standard source for the study of the Southern Society has always been a long commemorative essay written in 1938 by Liu Yazi, by far the most active member of the society, entitled ‘Wo yu Nan she de guanxi’ (My Involvement with the Southern Society) (Liu Yazi 1940:1–183). Below, I have mainly relied on this at times subjective but nevertheless richly documented account. In recent years, moreover, a steady stream of publications about the Southern Society and its members has come out, as a result of the founding of the International Association for Nan She Studies, chaired by Liu Yazi’s son Liu Wuji (Liu Wu-chi) 柳無忌, himself a former member of the society. The Association has published both a journal and a series of books. One particularly impressive contribution to their series has been the publication of an extremely well-researched chronology of the society (Yang & Wang 1995), containing countless references to and lengthy citations from relevant primary source materials. I found the chronology especially useful when trying to find out more about the causes for a famous split in

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1 Liu Yazi (1940:2–5) traces the origins of the society back to the year 1907. Yang & Wang (1995) start their chronology in 1902. Chen (300) goes even further and claims that its seeds lie in Chen Chaonan’s activities of the late 1890s.

2 For more examples of ways in which the Southern Society identified itself with the Revival Society, see Schneider 1976 (63, 76).
the society in 1917, which Liu Yazi largely glosses over in his account.³

Like the Revival Society, the Southern Society recruited members from all over China but especially from the South, and organized events during which members could get together. The nature of these meetings, however, was more along the lines of traditional poetry parties and much less indebted to the Revival Society example. The Southern Society strove to hold an ‘elegant gathering’ every spring and every autumn. Only eighteen meetings were held during its thirteen-year life-span,⁴ due mainly to the fact that the society was largely dormant after internal conflicts erupted in 1917. The typical content of a gathering followed the example of countless traditional shishe: eating, drinking and talking, presumably about literature. During the very first gathering, recounted in some detail by Liu Yazi, drinking and getting drunk was the main activity, apart from one heated discussion about various styles of classical poetry. Liu Yazi ironically comments that the founding meeting was very ‘revolutionary’ because the founders were almost all members of the Revolutionary Alliance (15), but wisely avoids attributing any further political significance to the gathering. At the later gatherings in Shanghai, the programme was usually more austere, consisting of having lunch, having a group portrait taken, holding conversations over tea (chahua 茶話), dealing with official matters (elections, revisions to the ordinances) and having dinner.

At least as important for the identity of the organization as these meetings, however, was the series of publications that was planned

³ Another useful source, which also contains much biographical information on members and selections of members’ poetry, is Zheng Yimei 1981. The Southern Society is also treated by Chen Baoliang, but only very briefly (299–301). All twenty-two issues of the society’s organ have been reproduced and collected in eight volumes, published in 1996 under the title Nanshe congke 南社叢刻 (The Southern Society Printed Collection). The reproduction does not include, however, pictures and copyright pages that were part of the original publications, two of which (nos. 8 and 13) I have seen in the Fung Ping Shan Library. An extensive selection of poetry and prose by members of the Southern Society is Hu Puan’s 胡朴安 three-volume Nan she congxuan 南社叢卷 (Selections from the Southern Society), originally published in 1924 and reprinted as Vol. 27 in Shen Yunlong 1966–1973. In English-language scholarship, the Southern Society has been summarily characterized by Rankin (1971:122), and treated in some depth by Schneider (1976).

⁴ Counting only the official numbered meetings and discounting both occasional gatherings (linshi yaji 臨時雅集) and meetings of regional branch societies.
CREATION BY (DIS)ASSOCIATION

by its founders from the very beginning. When the first elegant gathering of the society was held in Suzhou in 1909, attended by seventeen members (sheyou 社友) and two invited guests, the members elected the officers of the new society. Characteristically, the most important officers were not the secretary and treasurer (although these posts were also created), but the editors of the society’s prose, poetry and song lyric collections (wenxuan bianjiyuan 文選編輯員, shixuan bianjiyuan 詩選編輯員, cixuan bianjiyuan 詞選編輯員). These ‘collections’ were in fact sections in each issue of the organ of the society, entitled Nan she congkan 南社叢刊 (The Southern Society Collection; later Nan she congke 南社叢刻), but often simply referred to as The Southern Society. Although The Southern Society originally appeared two times a year, in summer and winter, i.e. three months or so after each gathering, there is no indication of a direct relationship between the publications and the gatherings. From the twelfth gathering (spring 1915) onwards, the organ did contain reports and pictures of gatherings, but by that time the organ was already appearing irregularly, varying from once a month to once a year. In all, twenty-two volumes of The Southern Society were published, the last one in 1923.

Unlike the traditional shishe custom, as long as one was a registered member of the Southern Society, it was not necessary to be present at a gathering to be a contributor to the publication. The entire process of publishing the society organ, officially led by the three editors, but most of the time done single-handedly by Liu Yazi, took place independently. This is reminiscent of Zhang Pu’s editing the shegao of the Revival Society from his central office. The difference is that the contents of The Southern Society, which Liu Yazi occasionally also refers to as a shegao, bore no relationship to any system of education or training. Although part of the content, especially in the early years, was inspired by political ideology, The Southern Society was, I believe, predominantly meant to be a literary publication and generally perceived as such. Especially after 1911, the activities and publications of the society were very much a part of the Shanghai literary arena.

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5 Already around the time of the founding of the Southern Society, one of the founders, Gao Xu, had stated in a newspaper announcement that the society admired the famous example set by the Revival Society, but disagreed with the latter society’s obsession with the examination system (Yang & Liu 1980:16).
The primary importance of the society organ to the functioning of the society is clear from the ordinances (tiaoli 條例) it adopted at its third gathering, in 1910. Half of the ordinances are related to publishing matters. The gatherings are mentioned only in the tenth of the twelve ordinances, and are presented solely as a way for members to stay in touch, the cost of which would not be paid from regular society funds, but from additional fundraising among the membership.

THIRD REVISED ORDINANCES OF THE SOUTHERN SOCIETY

1. Those whose moral fibre (pinxing 品行) and textual scholarship (wenxue 文學) are excellent, and who have been introduced by an existing member, can become members of the society.

2. Upon becoming a member a membership fee of three yuan is due.

3. Those wishing to become members will be sent a membership application form by the secretary of our society. This must be filled out in full and sent back, preferably accompanied by one’s writings and a photograph.

4. Society members must continuously send manuscripts to the society, to await publication. The published manuscripts shall be called The Southern Society Collection.

5. The society’s writings (shegao) will appear in two collections a year, published on the first day of the first month of summer and the first month of winter. Manuscripts will be collected and printed (fuyin 付印) during the two months preceding publication.

6. The society will nominate three editors, a treasurer, a secretary, and two general officers (shuwu 庶務).

7. The society’s writings will contain one hundred pages, divided into sections for poetry, prose and song lyrics. The poetry and prose sections will be forty pages, the song lyrics section twenty pages.

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Liu Yazi comments that this is the earliest version of the ordinances still extant. The original ordinances and the revised ordinances adopted at the second meeting have been lost.
8. Responsibility for matters related to the selection [of manuscripts for publication] will be shared among the editors.

9. After the publication of the society’s writings, society members will each receive one copy; other copies will be sold.

10. When society members are scattered, it is always a pity that one does not get to see others. Therefore two elegant gatherings shall be held on pleasant days in spring and autumn (chunqiu jiari 春秋佳日). Date and venue will be announced one month in advance by the secretary.

11. The officers will be replaced once a year, through elections by all members during the elegant gatherings. Reappointments are allowed.

12. The costs of the elegant gatherings will be covered by additional fundraising.

13. The ordinances will be revised every half year during the elegant gathering.

(Liu Yazi 1940:26–7)

The adoption of these ordinances was, at least in Liu Yazi’s own version of the story, a kind of ‘coup’ that he carried out against his two co-founders, due to whose inexperience, according to Liu, the first two issues of The Southern Society were edited and printed in a very unprofessional manner. It is no coincidence that Liu Yazi carried out his coup in Shanghai, and that almost all new officers elected at the third meeting were employees of newspaper houses (baoguan 報館) in Shanghai. For Chinese literati interested in textual work, after the abolition of the imperial examinations, the booming publishing industry offered a whole range of attractive career opportunities. It also played no small role in the promotion of the Republican Revolution in the years leading up to the events of 1911 (cf. Rankin 1971:96–125). During the first decades of the twentieth century, this industry was located almost exclusively in Shanghai. The professional and practical attitude of the more literary-minded members of this community, the ‘journalist-littérateurs’, is reflected

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7 The term ‘journalist-littérateur’ was coined by Leo Ou-fan Lee (1973:3–7).
in the text of the ordinances, especially in ordinance no. 7, which expresses a sense of the need for variety to make a literary publication attractive. (Liu Yazi's dissatisfaction with the earlier issues of the society organ had been that its contents were dominated by poetry.) This also indicates, in my opinion, that after the adoption of these ordinances the publishing of *The Southern Society* was seen as an at least partially commercial enterprise, which did not just serve the membership, but also catered to the needs of the paying readership.

At later meetings, the ordinances were further refined. At the fifth gathering, for instance, a provision was made for the establishment of branch societies (originally called *zhishe* 支社, later *jiaotongbu* 交通部) by groups of members residing outside the Shanghai area. At the same meeting, an additional annual membership fee of one *yuan* was introduced. At the eighth gathering it was stipulated that from then on new members must be introduced by three existing members instead of one, which was probably an attempt to limit the quantity and maintain the quality of the membership. (We shall come across the same mechanism in the case of the Literary Association below.) The schedule for the editing and publishing of *The Southern Society* was refined, using the months of the solar calendar, which China had officially adopted after the 1911 Revolution. According to the new schedule, manuscripts would be collected in February and August, copied out in March and September, sent to the printer in April and October, and published in June and December. Finally, the title of the 'general officers' was changed from the old-fashioned *shuwu* to the more modern-sounding *ganshi* 幹事, illustrating some of the changes in language accompanying the professionalization of practice.

Most of the meetings of the Southern Society were held in Shanghai and more and more journalist-litterateurs became members of the organization. Updated membership lists, containing information about the name, style, address and place of origin of each member were regularly published and distributed among the membership, in a manner reminiscent of the Revival Society. By the time of its demise, the Southern Society counted more than 1,000 members. Many of the editors of and contributors to the leading cultural publications of the 1910s were members of the Southern Society and attended its gatherings. This does not mean, however, that the Southern Society was functioning as a network dominating
the publishing scene in Shanghai at the time. When looking at the lists of names of participants in each gathering, it is revealed that the hard core of the membership, i.e. those who attended most of the gatherings, consisted of not more than ten to twenty people. At every gathering, held almost invariably in Shanghai’s Yuyuan from 1910 onwards, new members would be present, but many of them never attended more than one time. These one-time attendants included such literary celebrities as Bao Tianxiao and Zhou Shoujuan. The appearance of such famous names on the Southern Society membership list does not mean that they were actively involved in the society in any way. Nevertheless, even if we accept that the membership number of over 1,000 is highly inflated, it is still noteworthy that, as late as 1918, more than 300 members took part in a postal vote to elect the new manager (zhuren) of the society.

The post of ‘manager’ of the society was created at the tenth gathering in March 1914, as the result of another ‘coup’ by Liu Yazi. Still dissatisfied with the way the editorial system worked, and eager to gain more control over the whole process of publishing the society organ, Liu had suggested at an earlier gathering that there should be only one editor instead of three. When the membership declined this proposal, Liu withdrew from the society for more than a year, during which its activities promptly dwindled. Various attempts to get Liu to return to the organization were undertaken, and eventually successful, when Liu’s demand to be not only the sole editor, but also the sole elected officer, was met, and he was in effect given total control of the running of the society.

Because this substantial organizational change could not be captured in a small number of revisions to the ordinances, the same meeting of March 1914 adopted a whole new set of ordinances. The text of the new ordinances further illustrates changes in language and in the formulation of semi-legal texts like this, as well as a change in

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8 Indirect evidence of this assumption is the fact that neither the Southern Society nor Liu Yazi is mentioned even once in Joan Judge’s 1996 study of the Shibao (The Eastern Times), the influential newspaper for which Bao Tianxiao worked in the same period.

9 I do not know whether ordinances or by-laws of literary societies did in fact have any legal status, or whether such societies were required to go through any kind of registration process with local authorities.
membership policy, as restrictions on membership previously introduced were once again lifted. For instance, rather than stipulating that those of excellent moral and literary qualities could become members, the new ordinances, in a much more legally exact formulation, allowed membership to all those who agreed with the aims of the organization, and who were introduced by one existing member. The aims of the organization were formulated in the first ordinance, employing some new vocabulary, and one old term (wenxue) with a new meaning: “The aims (zongzhi 宗旨) of this society are to study (yanjiu 研究) literature (wenxue 文學) and to promote (tichang 提倡) moral courage (qijie 氣節)” (Liu Yazi 1940:71).

The new ordinances were relatively less specific about publication matters, presumably because these were unconditionally entrusted to the new manager, i.e. Liu Yazi. A very detailed ordinance was added, however, concerning the way in which the manager should be elected. Contrary to what had been the custom of the society, voting would no longer be the sole right of those attending the gatherings. Instead, there would be postal votes taking place annually, in which all members could participate. The results of these elections were to be made public during the gatherings, but as is clear from the materials collected by Wang & Yang (1995), they were also published in newspaper announcements, which would list the names of all those who voted and for whom they voted. A final, and again legally commendable, addition to the ordinances was a concluding clause about how to solve matters for which the ordinances did not provide. Less commendable, however, was the fact that it was left to the manager to ‘consider’ revising the ordinances in such cases (Liu Wuji 1983:63).

These new ordinances, which on the one hand vested all power solely in Liu Yazi while on the other hand allowed for the membership to expand almost limitlessly, naturally invited trouble.

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10 One change in publication policy that apparently took place was that The Southern Society was published in an even more commercial manner, and was no longer distributed freely to members. On the copyright page of no. 13 (March 1915), it is stated that members receive a 50 per cent discount on the price of a single issue. The same page also lists four Shanghai publishing houses (including the Zhonghua shuju) as distributing offices of the publication. For more about distributors and distributing offices, see Chapter Three.
Initially, however, the society did experience a significant revival as a result of Liu Yazi's energetic approach. After having been appointed as manager, Liu edited and published four issues of *The Southern Society* in five months. Throughout 1915 and 1916, the elegant gatherings were very well attended and even a number of occasional gatherings were held. In 1917, however, problems erupted as members of the society got caught up in a vehement debate about poetry, fought out especially in the pages of *Minguo ribao* 民國日報 (The Republican Daily News), the pro-Guomindang newspaper for which Liu and a number of other key members of the society worked. Emotions rose high and, in July, Liu Yazi eventually expelled the main opponent of his views on poetry, Zhu Yuanchu 朱元釗 (1894–1921), from the society, by means of an announcement he published on behalf of the Southern Society in the *Republican Daily*. This move was attacked by many members, but most vehemently by Cheng Shewo 成舍我 (1898–1991), who accused Liu of dictatorial behaviour and ended up severing his ties with the *Republican Daily* and cancelling his membership in the Southern Society (only to be expelled by Liu Yazi anyway). The entire episode, as I mentioned above, has been extensively documented by Yang & Wang, who have collected all the newspaper articles and announcements published by all parties to the debate. The use of announcements (*qishi* 启事) in newspapers by public figures feeling the need to respond publicly to some accusation, or to state publicly their reasons for making a certain decision, is especially noteworthy in this context, since this is a practice that continued in later decades.

Although Liu Yazi was re-elected, with a massive majority, in October of the same year, the society was in disarray, and its legitimacy was challenged by a 'rogue' Guangdong branch society that had turned against Liu and the main branch. After Liu stepped down as manager in late 1918, two more gatherings were organized, one in 1919 and one in 1922, and two more issues of *The Southern Society* were published, in 1919 and 1923. Liu Yazi mentions in his account that, during these final years, there was hardly any money left to publish *The Southern Society*, which would indicate that the years of inactivity had drastically reduced the collection of membership dues. In 1923, Liu Yazi, by then converted to writing in the vernacular style (*yutwen* 言語文), founded the New Southern Society, which included both members from the old Southern Society.
and from New Literature circles. In response, other members of the old Southern Society founded the Southern Society Hunan Gatherings (南社湘集), whose publications were all in the classical style (文言文). The societies existed simultaneously for a year or two, both counting a membership of around two hundred, with some old Southern Society members in fact joining both organizations. Another major revival occurred in 1935, when the Southern Society Commemorative Association (南社紀念會) was founded. A number of other memorial activities were carried out in the second half of the 1930s, including a gathering in February 1936 that attracted 157 people. Various memorial texts and documents were published in the Hangzhou-based journal Yuefeng 越風 (Styles of Yue). These memorial activities are likely to have been instrumental in consolidating the later image of the Southern Society as an organization that was revolutionary both in the political and in the literary sense. An advertisement for two Southern Society poetry collections on the back cover of Liu Yazi’s Records of the Southern Society from 1940 carried the perfect slogan to confirm this identity. It describes the society as “forerunner of the Literary Revolution, pioneer of Revolutionary Literature” (文學革命的先導，革命文學的前驅).

The Southern Society was a very large and very complicated collective, which pioneered a number of literary styles and practices that were consequently adopted by later literary groups and organizations. Looking at the Southern Society from the perspective of the later Republican period, what is most striking is that it combined a number of elements of organizational style that would later become almost mutually exclusive. First of all, the Southern Society was a large, nation-wide cultural association with a number of branch organizations, with clear rules for operations and membership, and with a strong public presence that extended beyond the literary sphere. It was a group that cultural figures wanted to join, even those who lived far away from Shanghai and would never be able to meet

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11 The relationship between Styles of Yue and the Southern Society is analysed at length in a yet unpublished essay by Susan Daruvala (2001), who kindly gave me permission to consult and refer to her work in progress.
other members face to face. Secondly, it was also a group of like-minded literary figures involved in editing a joint literary-sphere publication to which only members could contribute, with one particularly active person (Liu Yazi) as its key figure, without whom little would be accomplished. Thirdly, it was perceived by many as a political organization, as most of its early members were involved in the Revolutionary Alliance, and some later fulfilled high functions in the Republican government and in the Nationalist Party. Even in later years, the revolutionary image of the Southern Society was likely one of the main reasons why the society continued to attract new members, and it is certainly the main reason why it has continued to receive much scholarly attention. Finally, the Southern Society also continued to hold leisurely social gatherings in parks and restaurants, continuing the traditional literati style.

As Link (1981:164–70) has shown, the Southern Society was one of the very few ‘writers’ societies’ on the literary scene of the 1910s. Other groups of writers were much more loosely organized, if they were organized at all, and “gathered around major publishing organs and under the patronage of leading figures” (164). Link emphasizes the lack of antagonism between these various groups: “Perhaps they had little to disagree about; they managed to share manuscripts, banquets, and fun” (ibid.). For all members of this rather congenial literary arena, the most important medium for the distribution of texts was the literary journal. The journal literature of the 1910s is

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A rather impressive example, mentioned by Liu Yazi (1940:43), of this political aspect is the fact that of the seventeen provincial representatives that elected Sun Yat-sen president after the 1911 Revolution, four were active members of the Southern Society. Rankin (1971:122), in contrast, disagrees and calls it “significant” that the Southern Society was not a political organization, in the sense that it was “characteristic of many radical intellectuals not to remain politically active for extended periods”. Schneider (1976) agrees and emphasizes the fact that organizations like the Southern Society, because of their conservative attitude in matters of culture, ended up alienating themselves from progressive political trends. Daruvala (2001) takes the opposite view and argues that the various changes and splits that the society underwent were closely related to Nationalist party policies and faction struggles. My point here is not to establish how many of the society’s members continued to be politically active (some of them undoubtedly did), but to argue that the society had a reputation also as a revolutionary organization. It is clear from my analysis in this chapter that I agree with both Rankin and Schneider that the Southern Society was not predominantly a political organization. However, this continues to be a matter of interpretation and much more research is needed to be able to evaluate properly the political functions of the Southern Society.
discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. It should be mentioned here that many of the journals involved were filled with writings in a uniquely wide variety of forms and languages, ranging from vernacular fiction to classical poetry. Compared to these journals, the organ of the Southern Society was more traditional, maintaining throughout the division into poetry, lyrics, and prose, even if Southern Society members published fiction and other modern genres elsewhere. Also traditional was the society’s continuously stated aim to foster morality or ‘moral courage’, compared to many of the fiction journals’ declared interest in playfulness and detachment (cf. Link, 171–2). These distinctions may not have been huge, but as we shall see they were cleverly exploited by the representatives of a new style of writing, the so-called New Literature, when they appeared in the Shanghai literary arena in the early 1920s.

Given the sheer size of the Southern Society, it is remarkable how well contact with the membership was maintained, especially with those members who did not take part in any of the gatherings but communicated by mail only and participated in the postal votes. The Literary Association (1920–1947), another large literary organization with a long life-span, founded roughly one year before the Southern Society folded, was never quite able to achieve a similar degree of coherence. Nevertheless, it too contributed significantly to the development of modern Chinese literary practice and to the establishment of boundaries between different literary spheres, especially between New Literature and other types of writing.

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13 Link’s assertion that by the late 1910s the Southern Society’s publications were “filled with love stories indistinguishable from those of the straight entertainment magazine” seems incorrect to me, based on the content of The Southern Society. Link’s impression may be based on the 1917 publication Nan she xiaoshuoji 南社小說集 (Southern Society Fiction Collection). As explained in the preface to that publication, however, it was a one-off collection edited by a group of members, with the permission of Liu Yazi. On the cover of the collection, it is identified as a ‘one-off special issue’ (linshi zengkan 臨時增刊) of The Southern Society (Nan she sheyuan 1917).

14 One helpful binding element may have been that some letters between members were published in the prose (wen) section of The Southern Society, as was perfectly acceptable under a traditional definition of wen. In journals employing a less traditional genre division of this and later periods, this function was taken over by the ‘Letters to the Editor’ (tongxin 通信) section.
The Literary Association: introduction

The Literary Association was established on 4 December 1920 by twelve founder members and officially inaugurated on 4 January 1921 during a meeting in Beijing’s Central Park (nowadays Zhongshan Park). The founder members were as follows: Zhu Xizu, Jiang Baili, Zhou Zuoren, Xu Disan, Guo Shaoyu, Ye Shengtao, Sun Fuyuan, Wang Tongzhao, Shen Yanbing, Zheng Zhenduo, Geng Jizhi, and Qu Shiying. In the following years, the Association was joined by more than 100 members. At least two branch societies were established. Under its aegis a number of literary supplements, magazines and series of books were published. It was the largest literary society of the 1920s. The exact date of its demise is unknown, but publications continued to appear under its name, though more and more sporadically, until 1947.

In most histories of Chinese literature, the Association is mentioned as the first society for New Literature. However, among the scores of societies and associations founded by Chinese students both inside and outside China during the late Qing and early Republican era, there are likely to have been other groups, no matter how small, devoted entirely to New Literature and founded before 1920. Fan Quan (1993) provides some evidence for this assumption. First of all, the first decade of the twentieth century witnessed the establishment of a number of societies for the writing and performing of new or spoken theatre (xinju or huaju). Even if we narrow our scope and include only societies covering literature as a whole and not just a specific genre, the Literary Association may have been preceded by a society called the Qinghua Literature Society (Qinghua wenxue she), founded, according to Fan Quan (1993:461), in 1918 by students and teachers of

15 The name Wenxue yanju hui can be translated as ‘Literary Research Association’, ‘Society for Literary Studies’, etc. Colophons of books published under the aegis of the association usually carry the English translation ‘The Chinese Literary Association’. In the rest of this chapter, I shall use the shorter form ‘The Literary Association’ throughout.

16 The most remarkable (but not the earliest!) being the Yisu she, founded in Shaanxi in 1912, which has apparently remained in existence under the same name until the present day (Fan Quan 1993:341–4).
Qinghua University, the later famous poet Wen Yiduo 聞一多 being one of its active members.\(^{17}\)

Although the Literary Association was thus not chronologically the first society for New Literature, it was the first to announce its existence in print on a nation-wide scale and to allow lovers of New Literature from all parts of the country to become members. In that respect, its ambitions as an organization were similar to those of the Southern Society, the most significant difference being that the Literary Association did not, as we shall see, place moral demands on its prospective members, but claimed to be interested only in their literary abilities.

Besides being one of the first societies for New Literature, the Literary Association was also, both during its existence and after its demise, one of the largest and most famous organizations within the field of modern Chinese literature. Previous studies of the Literary Association have mainly paid attention to the literary ideologies that some of its key members defended. Some of these ideologies have even become *pars pro toto* for the Association itself. The presumed unified ideological stance of the Association has been alternatively labelled as ‘art for life’s sake’ (*wei rensheng er yishu* 爲人生而藝術), ‘human literature’ (*ren de wenxue* 人的文學), ‘realism’ (*xieshi zhuyi* 實事主義 or *xianshi zhuyi* 現實主義) and ‘naturalism’ (*ziran zhuyi* 自然主義). Scholars focusing on these slogans often base their arguments on a corpus of texts from the journal *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報 (The Short Story Magazine), which, as I shall argue, is not representative for the Association as a collective.\(^{18}\)

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\(^{17}\) The founding date of this society is in dispute. According to Gu Yiqiao 顧一樵 (2000:18–19), it was not founded until November 1921. Another society, called the Fiction Research Society (*Xiaoshuo yanjiu she* 小說研究社) was founded at Qinghua in December 1920, i.e. at roughly the same time as the founding of the Literary Association, by Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋, Zhai Huan 蔡桓 and Gu Yiqiao (Fan Quan 1993:576). The latter two later joined the Literary Association.

\(^{18}\) This characterization of previous scholarship not only fits the majority of treatments of the Association in Chinese literary histories, but also standard English-language sources such as Ayers 1953 and Tagore 1967. Association members’ contributions to literary translation and the introduction of Western literary theories are treated in McDougall 1971. For critical discussions of the ‘realism’ of Association members, see Anderson 1990. Two sources that do touch upon the Association’s institutional existence, and that have strongly inspired the current discussion, are Lee 1973 and Wang Xiaoming 1991.
Much less work has been done on the institutional aspects of the Association and on the membership as a whole. Although membership lists are extant, biographical information on only a little over half of the members is provided in the most extensive reference work on the Association (Jia Zhifang 1985:21-41), and no attempts have been made to produce statistics concerning members' age, sex and place of birth. Even less is known about the functioning of the Association as an institution, performing actions or engaging in activities, including, for instance, financial dealings, on behalf of its members.

My discussion here pays relatively less attention to literary slogans and ideologies and concentrates, instead, on agency. By combining historical data about the members of the Literary Association with an investigation into its structure and activities, I shall show that the Association employed a number of strategies, including, but by no means limited to, literary production and ideological debates, in order to cordon off a relatively independent literary field that was even more specialized and professionalized than the sphere in which the Southern Society operated. During the course of the period under discussion, the Association consequently became a powerful organization within that field, until it was challenged by other groups that positioned themselves as the field's 'avant-garde'. Although Association members' involvement with the Shanghai Commercial Press (shangwu yinshu guan 商務印書館) played a crucial role in the process outlined above, I shall argue that there is little justification for singling out The Short Story Magazine, published by the Commercial Press, as the predominant source of information about the Association. I also analyse the Association membership and membership growth, in order to give an impression of the size and importance of the Association network. A list of members, providing summary biographical information, can be found in Appendix A.

The first phase: organization and self-image (1921)

By-laws and Editorial Rules

The first two texts presenting the Association as a collective agent on the literary scene were its manifesto and by-laws, both published in
January 1921 in *The Short Story Magazine.* The manifesto stated the Association’s intention of creating a forum (a ‘writers’ union’) for promoting mutual understanding and advancing the knowledge of literature. The by-laws laid down the concrete guidelines for the Association’s organization and future activities, in terms that are sometimes very similar to those used in the ordinances of the Southern Society.

**BY-LAWS OF THE LITERARY ASSOCIATION**

1. This Association is called The Literary Association.

2. The aims of this Association are studying and introducing foreign literature, re-arranging China’s old literature and creating new literature.

3. Membership is open to all those who subscribe to the aims of this Association. New members should be introduced by more than two members and accepted by the majority of all members.

4. The affairs of this Association are divided into the following two categories:
   a) study
      1) organizing a reading club;
      2) setting up a correspondence library;
   b) publishing
      1) distributing a newsletter;
      2) editing a series of books.

Other affairs can be discussed and executed *ex tempore.*

5. This Association will hold regular meetings each month to discuss ways of carrying out Association business. In case of special events, a special meeting can be convened *ex tempore.*

The ways of convening the reading clubs will be stipulated separately.

6. This Association will have one general secretary (*shuji ganshi* 書記幹事) and one treasurer (*kuaiji ganshi* 會計幹事). They will be in office for one year and elected around December of each year.

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19 Jia Zhifang 1985 (1–3). The manifesto was also published in a few newspapers in mid-December 1920.
Members living outside the location of the Association may vote by letter. For practical reasons, candidacy is limited to those residing at the location of the Association.

7. The expenses of this Association will be carried in full by its members. Funds will be raised in two ways:
   a) yearly contribution: fixed at two yuan;
   b) irregular contributions: no fixed amount, raised ex tempore.

8. In order to strengthen its [financial] basis and set up a library, this Association intends to raise a certain amount of funds in two ways:
   a) special donations from members and non-members;
   b) withholding ten per cent of royalties from books and newspapers published by this Association.

These funds will be deposited in a yet to be appointed bank and are not to be withdrawn unless for the purpose of buying books or for special expenditures.

9. This Association will be located in Beijing. If there are more than five members at one location outside Beijing, they may establish a branch association.

Branch association affairs will be stipulated by its own members.

10. These by-laws may be amended if unprovided cases occur.

During the inaugural meeting, chaired by Jiang Baili, on 4 January 1921, Zheng Zhenduo was elected the first general secretary and Geng Jizhi as the first treasurer of the Association. The meeting decided to postpone plans for setting up a library until enough funds had been raised. In the meantime, members were urged to hand in lists of all titles in their possession, which could then be copied and sent to all members, so that they could borrow books from one another. This request was repeated in an ‘Association Announcement’ published in Wenxue xunkan 文學旬刊 (Literature Trimonthly) in July 1922, i.e. more than a year later. Whether or not plans ever materialized remains unknown.

On 21 March 1921, a special meeting was convened to discuss the series of books the Association intended to publish. The contents of the meeting are documented in a ‘Report on Association Affairs’ (huiwu

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20 WXZB 43 (July 1922): 4.
baogao 會務報告), published in The Short Story Magazine. During the meeting, the general secretary Zheng Zhenduo informed those present that the Commercial Press had accepted the text of a contract that had been drafted and approved at the last Association meeting.\(^{21}\) I assume that this text is the same as, or similar to, the ‘Wenxue yanjiu hui congshu bianli’ 文學研究會叢書編理 (Rules for Editing the Literary Association Series), published together with a provisional list of titles in June 1921 in Dongfang zazhi 東方雜誌 (Eastern Miscellany).\(^{22}\)

The rules described a detailed editorial policy, including the establishment of an editorial committee, and the setting up of a system of ‘responsible editors’, according to which at least two persons (preferably Association members) were responsible for checking and editing\(^{23}\) a specific contribution to the series. This was described as a form of ‘friendly mutual assistance’ and not remunerated. Authors or translators of works appearing in the series were required to donate ten per cent of their royalties to the Association.

According to the editorial rules, the series was to consist of two parts, the first part made up of ‘books on literary knowledge’ and ‘works by our members’ and the second of ‘high-level works of world literature’ in Chinese translation. In a sense, the rules for the editing of the Literary Association Series form a concrete, institutionalized version of the Association’s initial ideology: works by Chinese writers are mentioned in one breath with ‘knowledge of literature (wenxue)’ and ‘high-level works of world literature’. The implied Chinese writers, however, are the Association’s own members. In the early stages of its existence, the Association, as a collective agent, claimed not only to engage in literature, but also to represent all those in China who had knowledge of it and attained its highest levels.

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\(^{21}\) This means that there must have been another meeting after the inaugural meeting, since the report about the latter states that the series of books was only shortly discussed and no decisions were taken. There are indeed two ‘Reports on Association Affairs’ missing. Nos. 1 and 2 were published in the February 1921 issue of The Short Story Magazine, whereas the report about the meeting of 21 March is Report no. 5. It is possible that the missing reports were never printed in any journal but only circulated among members. See below in the section on the Association membership, where Zheng Zhenduo is quoted talking about ‘printing circulars’.

\(^{22}\) Reprinted in Jia Zhifang 1985 (572–3).

\(^{23}\) The Chinese word used is shencha 審查, which nowadays means ‘censoring’ but is not used in that sense here.
**Entering the field**

The Literary Association's corporate claim to representation of all Chinese literary writers was of course an overstatement. It indicates that their usage of the term 'literature' wenxue was not inclusive but exclusive, referring only to New Literature. Within that particular context, however, their claim was justified. In 1920, Beijing's colleges and universities were the centre of the New Culture Movement. Many of the founders of the Association had been active in that movement for some years and had previously contributed to journals representative of the movement, such as New Youth and Xin chao 新潮 (The Renaissance). The Shanghai Commercial Press displayed a strong interest in the movement and solicited the services of a number of Beijing intellectuals (most notably Jiang Baili 姜培林) for projects involving the translation of foreign textbooks and foreign literary works. It was at Jiang's house that Zheng Zhenduo and his friends first met the Commercial Press leaders, which finally resulted in the founding of the Association and in its members gaining access to the pages of The Short Story Magazine.

This process was recounted for the first time, almost immediately after the inauguration of the Association, in the January 1921 issue of The Short Story Magazine, in another 'Report on Literary Association Affairs'. It was explained in that report that the original founder members were believers in the importance of literature, who wished to publish a literature magazine (wenxue zazhi 文學雜誌) but lacked the money to do so and therefore approached some of the big Shanghai publishing houses. After several failed negotiations, they finally struck a deal with the Commercial Press, the largest publishing house at the time, which made the pages of The Short Story Magazine available to them on one condition: that they not change the name of the magazine into Literature Magazine, as they

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24 Jiang Baili's status within the New Culture community may have been underestimated by scholars so far. Godley (1994) claims that Jiang, "[a]rguably the foremost military theorist in the modern period, [...] was just as influential in the intellectual community, listing not only Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shi, Liang Qichao, Zhang Dongsun, Carson Chang (Zhang Jiasen) and Ding Wenjiang as friends, but others who ended up on the political left" (cited with the author's permission).

25 For a detailed account of the meeting, see Chen Fukang 1991 (399-412).

26 Reprinted in Jia Zhifang 1985 (4-7).
had originally demanded. They decided to establish a literary association (wenxue hui 文學會) first, while contributing to The Short Story Magazine as individuals. In the meantime, they forgot about the ‘literature magazine’.

Right from the start, the Association founders appeared meticulous about disclaiming any institutional ties with The Short Story Magazine. Instead, they reaffirmed their preference for the institutional form of a large Association in order to achieve their aims. The strategies employed in the process were the following:

- **accumulation of symbolic capital (‘recognition’):** organizing a large collective involving established intellectuals (Zhu Xizu, Jiang Baili, Zhou Zuoren) and writers (Ye Shengtao, Bing Xin) created an image of combining literary quantity and quality, and enhanced other members’ chances of success;

- **accumulation of financial capital (‘independence’):** by setting up a formal structure and arranging for members’ payment of regular dues, funds needed to secure (future) independence from the Commercial Press could be gathered;

- **network-building and self-promotion:** for some of the more active members of the Association, for instance Zheng Zhenduo, representing a large Association was a way to make an impression on the Commercial Press executives, which would help him further a career in publishing. One may speculate that this was a two-way process: for Association members, the ties with the Commercial Press opened up career perspectives, while for the Commercial Press, the Association represented a pool of future employees.

In the first phase of its existence, the Association articulated its distinction from other literary groups, both previous ones and contemporary ones, by employing the notion of wenxue and their exclusive understanding of it. Due to their educational background and the cultural capital that came with it, this first generation of new-style college graduates entered the literary field with an unusual dose of confidence and with the capacity to establish and occupy a

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27 The Short Story Magazine had already been paying much attention to New Literature in the year before it was handed over to the Literary Association. This was the result of Shen Yanbing’s involvement with the journal. Shen was the only Literary Association founder to be based within the Shanghai publishing world. The founding of the Association coincided with his becoming editor-in-chief of The Short Story Magazine, charged with the task of turning it into a New Literature publication.
completely new position within that field, employing a discursive strategy that resembles the one described by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art* (Bourdieu 1996).

**The position of New Literature and the concept of wenxue**

According to Bourdieu, it is typical for those involved in defining a new position within the literary field to produce, on the level of discourse, what he calls 'the double rupture': *I detest X (a writer, manner, movement, theory etc.), but I detest just as much the opposite of X* (Bourdieu 1996:79). The opposites in question are, I presume, not objective opposites but are turned into opposites by the agents involved and by their particular perception of the available positions within the literary field. In other words, one’s ‘newness’ comes across more powerfully if one manages to phrase it in the form of an oxymoron, the two sides of which refer to readily recognizable and observable literary phenomena.

The founders of the Literary Association also performed such a double rupture. The two opposing styles from which they claimed to differ were traditional literature and commercial fiction. Traditional literary styles were described as viewing literature as a ‘pastime’ (*xiaojian* 消遣). This was a reference to the tradition of producing literature during social occasions (one is reminded of the elegant gatherings of the Southern Society) and as part of a variety of cultural practices, in none of which one would really specialize. In other words, this characterization of traditional literary styles was similar to what in Western scholarship has been termed ‘the amateur ideal’ (cf. Levenson 1958:15–43). The leisurely ‘writing for fun’ was pitted against the ‘writing for money’ associated with the commercial fiction magazines that dominated the Shanghai cultural publishing scene. A similar act of distinction was carried out in moral, rather than literary terms: traditional writing was considered suspect because it was overly moralistic (again the Southern Society comes to mind as a plausible target of this criticism) and was pitted against commercial fiction, which supposedly had no morals at all.

This double rupture was complemented with a very emphatic approval of the Euro-American literary canon and of the related literary values which separated ‘serious’ literature from ‘popular’ literature. This was a real distinction from the position taken by most of the literary publications coming out of Shanghai at the time, which were
less selective in their introduction of Western texts. Backed by the academic credentials of a number of the founders of the Association, their more discriminating attitude towards foreign literature and their claim to possess superior knowledge in this area were very powerful, not only in intellectual but especially in economic terms. In the concrete case of the Association gaining access to the Commercial Press, for instance, the strong link between New Literature and foreign literature considerably aided the closing of the deal, since the Commercial Press had already published large numbers of translated foreign works and was aware of the commercial benefits of such publications.

In the same vein, the founders of the Association demonstrated a selective attitude towards questions of genre, which they again couched in authority arguments based, in my view, on their academic credentials. The key concept of the position assumed by the proponents of New Literature was the word wenxue, originally a translation of the Western concept of 'literature' as it was understood in the nineteenth century. For Chinese writers and critics trying to distinguish their activities from those of others in terms of genre, it was a useful concept. Wenxue was a scholarly-sounding concept of writing which encompassed lyrical, narrative and dramatic texts and considered these to be of equal status and significance. It could also be used to claim respectability for writing in the vernacular, being the dominant writing language of Western literature, and to distinguish between a 'high' variety of vernacular writing for a limited audience and a 'low' variety of popular fiction for a mass audience. This understand-
ding of wenxue as a novel combination of genres possessing (scholarly) respectability and relevance is acutely present in the following lines from a 1921 article by Shen Yanbing:

"Literature has nowadays become a kind of science. Its object of research is human life—modern day human life—and its research tools are Poetry, Drama and Fiction. (Jia Zhifang 1985:57)"

In itself, views of literature that allowed fiction and drama a status equal to poetry were not new in China in this period. Not only the term wenxue, but also the term wenzhang 文章, and even the term xiaoshuo 小說 had been used in this way. As Yuan Jin 袁進 (1996:107-12) has shown, a significant aspect of the understanding of literature that would culminate in the New Literature position was not its inclusiveness but its exclusiveness. As early as 1908, Zhou Zuoren had dismissed non-imaginative writing as non-literary, thereby taking away the literary status of a whole range of prose genres, such as histories, memorials and biographies (Chen & Zhang 1995, 1:33-58). At the time, Yuan Jin says (111), Zhou’s was a minority view and it would not become predominant until the emergence of the New Culture Movement. As we have seen, neither the publications of the Southern Society, divided according to conventional genre definitions, nor the various commercial Shanghai journals, publishing a wide range of traditional and modern genres, were as exclusive as the New Literature in this respect.

The founders of the Literary Association rigorously applied their selective understanding of high literature to Chinese creative writing and not just to (translated) foreign writing. They claimed an independent, elevated position for their concept of literature, and subsequently used that concept to evaluate other types of Chinese creative writing, representing other positions, on the basis of evolutionary and qualitative distinctions that were also largely

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31 Italicized words appear in English in the original and are translated as shi 詩, juben 劇本 and shuobu 說部 respectively.

33 Wenzhang is used, for instance, in an early essay by Zhou Zuoren (see below). According to Wang Yunxi & Gu Yisheng (1996:641-2), prominent xiaoshuo theorists of the 1910s such as Guan Daru 賴達如 and Lü Simian 呂思勉 (Chengzhi 成之), understood xiaoshuo to include any texts that contained characters and a plot, whether they were narrative or dramatic, prosaic or poetic. The wide ‘coverage’ of the term xiaoshuo in this period has also been noted by C.T. Hsia (in Rickett 1978:224). See also Chapter Five. For a discussion of the usage of wenxue during the late Qing, see Huters 1988. For a general overview of the changes in views of literature during the early modern period, see Yuan Jin 1996.
borrowed from Western literary discourse. For instance, the kind of writing found in the collections of the Southern Society, although partly produced around the same time, could now be labelled as old literature (jiu wenxue 舊文學), while commercial fiction could be rejected as non-literature (fei wenxue 非文學). In more aggressive discussions, much more of which we shall see in Chapter Six, both types of writing could be disqualified as counter-literature (fan wenxue 反文學).34

In short, the founding of the Literary Association was not only about bringing together a community of like-minded associates, but also about disassociating the styles of that community from that of other communities. It is not surprising, therefore, that the founders of the Association constantly highlighted the term wenxue in their critical discourse, nor that they were wary of being identified with *The Short Story Magazine*, a well-known and long-standing commercial fiction journal with a name containing a term (xiaoshuo) that signalled a style of writing and a publishing community from which the Association was actively trying to distinguish itself. That the name of *The Short Story Magazine* was in fact interpreted that way can be seen from a small notice on the last page of the February 1923 issue, which reads as follows:

Many friends have written to us, asking us to change our name. We are very grateful for their kindness. However, for all kinds of reasons, we are at the moment unable to take their advice.35

The word wenxue is all over sources related to the Association. It is in its name, in the name of its first official organ (originally called Literature Trimonthly, later simply Literature) and in those of its branch societies, whose organs were all called Literature Trimonthly, and it is all over the pages of those organs, which incessantly featured articles with titles like ‘What is wenxue’, ‘My View of wenxue’, ‘The Mission of wenxue’ and so forth.

Finally, the Association founders also disassociated their activities from other elements of the New Culture Movement, which had been the cradle of New Literature. Unlike the participants in the Literary

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34 Cf. the following lines from the ‘manifesto’ of the Beijing organ of the Association, *Wenxue xunkan* (Literature Trimonthly), a supplement to the *Chen bao* 晨報 (Morning Post), published in the first issue on 1 June 1923: “We cannot tolerate counter-literary works, [such as] the blind ‘restoration school’ (jugu pai 復古派) and the boring and socially poisonous low-grade popular literature.”

35 ‘Zui hou yi ye’ (The Last Page), *XS YB* 14.2 (February 1923).
Revolution of 1917, the Association founders moved away from the idea of locating wenxue within a general drive for cultural change and education. This new attitude can be perceived at various levels. Setting up a special journal for New Literature was different from having literature sections in New Culture journals such as New Youth; a specialized literary society was different from general New Culture societies like the Renaissance Society or the Young China Society (shaonian zhongguo xuehui 少年中國學會, see below); and, ideologically, promoting wenxue as a serious occupation was different from promoting it as an “active instrument at the core of culture” (Huters 1988:272). No matter how blatantly utilitarian some of the proponents of New Literature may have been, from the founding of the Literary Association onwards they predominantly articulated their literary views in literary journals. Thus, in terms of practice, New Literature was becoming increasingly independent, and it is therefore logical that its members were drawn to the already existing professional literary arena in Shanghai.

Leo Ou-fan Lee has argued that the Literary Association asserted “a new stance, truly unprecedented, that literature ought to be regarded as a serious, independent, and honorable vocation”, adding that two significant contributions of the association were “to widen the scope of the literary arena” and “consolidating and popularizing the new role of the practitioners of New Literature” (Lee 1973:12-13). The preceding discussion has shown that the advent of the Literary Association on the Shanghai publishing scene did indeed widen the scope of the existing literary arena, but that, at the same time, the literary ideology embraced by its founders involved cordonning off a section of that arena as the only site where literature could be practised seriously, independently, and honourably. In other words: the programmatic aim of the Association was in fact to narrow, rather than to widen, the scope of the literary arena.

At the end of the first phase of its existence, the Association was still far from achieving these aims. In one of his 1921 letters to Zhou Zuoren, Shen Yanbing complained that The Short Story Magazine was the laughing stock of the Shanghai newspapers, that few people understood the new writing and that it was difficult to organize any
activities with so few associates (tongren 同仁) in Shanghai. This was soon to change. As many of the original founders and early members graduated and drifted to the South, especially to Shanghai, their ‘serious, independent vocation’ had somehow to win them a serious, independent profession, and of course a decent living. The publishing and editing business seemed to offer the most suitable career perspectives, but the question was how to gain access to it. Again, the answer seemed to lie in organization and collective action. Before long, Shanghai became the centre of Association activity.

The second phase (1922–1925): reorganization and becoming established

Moving to Shanghai

Work on the Literary Association Series, which for the larger part consisted of translations, progressed smoothly from the end of 1921 onwards, even though its contents came to diverge markedly from the original plan. Meanwhile, Zheng Zhenduo had moved to Shanghai and therefore resigned from his post as general secretary, in conformity with the sixth by-law. He was succeeded by Qu Shiying. Before he left for Shanghai, the special meeting on 21 March 1921 had asked Zheng to explore possibilities for publishing an Association newsletter (huibao 會報) with one of the Shanghai publishing houses. The Commercial Press was apparently not interested in publishing such an organ, just as they had refused earlier to publish a Wenxue zazhi.

Zheng Zhenduo went to Shanghai to do his practical training as a railway official at the Shanghai train station (in Beijing, he had been a student of the School for Railway Management). Before long, however, he abandoned his railway career and started to work as an

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36 See the letter dated 11 August 1921 in Sun Zhongtian & Zhou Ming 1988 (21). Shen Yanbing’s comments most likely referred to the attacks on The Short Story Magazine that had been appearing in the Shen bao 申報 (China Daily News) supplement Ziyou tan 自由談 (Free Talk).

37 The June 1921 announcement in Dongfang zazhi mentioned 83 titles. The later series ended up containing 107 titles of which only eight were completely identical (same title, same author/translator) to the original plan (Jia Zhifang 1985: 1372–4).

38 This is implicit further evidence of the fact that The Short Story Magazine was not perceived as an Association organ by members of the Association itself.
editor at the Commercial Press. Simultaneously, he began to edit a new supplement to the *Shishi xinbao* (China Times), called *Literature Trimonthly*. From the first issue, which came out in May 1921, members of the Literary Association provided most of the copy for the supplement, as they did for *The Short Story Magazine*. However, exactly one year later (May 1922), an official announcement appeared on the front page of *Literature Trimonthly*, proclaiming it to be a Literary Association organ. The announcement read as follows:

In accordance with a decision of the Shanghai members of the Literary Association, [as of the next issue] this publication will be edited by the Literary Association and become one of its regular organs. (WXZB 36:1)

This was the first time since the publication of the ‘Report on Association Affairs’ in *The Short Story Magazine* in June 1921 that the Association presented itself once more as a collective agent on the literary scene. The fact that the first official organ was finally launched by a decision of the Shanghai members shows that the Association was undergoing changes. In the three years that followed, the Association’s attempts at promoting wenxue became more concerted and effective. Attacks on representative persons and ideas of ‘old’ and ‘popular’ literature were combined with promotion campaigns for specific slogans (e.g. ‘literature of blood and tears’) and writers (e.g. the poet Xu Yunuo). However, as career opportunities for young intellectuals in publishing and journalism rapidly increased and their taste for wenxue became accepted and widespread, the need for one single organization to represent the New Literature diminished. As a result, Association activities also became increasingly aimed at holding its own network together, making it recognizable, and distinguishing it more assertively from other groups. The new strategies employed in this process were as follows:

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40 See Hockx 1994a (66–8).
visibility enhancement: by attaching the name of the Association to publications, activities and locations, the organization became a visible element of Shanghai society and the establishment of an emerging ‘scene’ for New Literature;41

monopolization and boycotts: in some cases, the Association utilized the power of publishers, editors or authors among its membership to gain control over non-Association publications or to make these publications less accessible to competing organizations;

aggression and abuse: the critical discourse used in Association organs became increasingly belligerent and argumentative, especially when aimed at commercial fiction publications. This continued process of disassociation on the discursive level is treated in some detail in Chapter Six.

Newsletters and branch societies
In a letter to Zhou Zuoren, dated November 1921, Zheng Zhenduo wrote:

[Geng] Jizhi wrote to me saying that our fellow Association members in Beijing seem to have scattered. [Sun] Fuyuan and [Fu] Donghua have been elected as newsletter editors, but still no publication date has been set. There are only four or five manuscripts for the series and there seems to be little communication between members in different places. This kind of phenomenon is quite deplorable, even though it is not yet as bad as the disintegration of the Young China Association.43 It would be a sad thing if our Literary Association also

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41 The ‘literary scene’ (wentan 交壇) of Republican-era Shanghai has been described in Lee 1973. I use the term ‘literary scene’ to refer to phenomena and activities related to the public image of literature and writers. The scene is only a small part of the literary field, which represents the relations between all those who produce literature and its value.

42 The word used is tongzhi 同志 ‘comrade’, at the time a very popular term of address within all kinds of collectives. I have opted for the translation ‘fellow member’ to avoid unwarranted associations with Communist Party discourse. In the Association’s manifesto, the term tongzhi is even used as an adjective, in the phrase tongzhi de renren 同志的人們 ‘people with like ambitions’.

43 The Young China Association (1918–1924?) was probably the largest and most active Chinese student organization of its time. During its heyday, it published two monthlies, Shaonian Zhongguo 少年中國 (Young China) and Shaonian shijie 少年世界 (Young World), had branch societies all over China and in various foreign countries, and held regular meetings. On a membership list published in 1921, the Association counted 95 members, the young Mao Zedong 毛澤東 being among them, but also later Literary Association members Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, Shen Zemin
turned out to have a tiger’s head but a rat’s tail and if it fell into the same trap that Chinese people always fall into when they try to set up an organization. The Shanghai members are still united, I hope Beijing can also be like that. When the ‘newsletter’ is published, we must pay special attention to the ‘Correspondence’ section, so that we can encourage each other. (Jia Zhifang 1985:681)

The remark about Sun Fuyuan and Fu Donghua being elected to edit the newsletter warrants the assumption that Association meetings were still being held in Beijing after June 1921 and that Shanghai members, like Zheng Zhenduo, were in principle willing to abide by the decisions of the Beijing headquarters. However, the Association’s functioning was hindered by the fact that it had problems in keeping its members together. This is typically a problem belonging to the institutional level. If the Association had merely been a ‘school’ or a loose ‘group’, Zheng Zhenduo and his Shanghai companions could have used its name freely in Literature Trimonthly from the very beginning; alternatively, they could have disregarded any affiliation at all. The fact that they waited for a whole year before they turned their supplement into an Association organ and that they kept in touch with what was going on in Beijing during the process can only mean that they took the Association seriously and wished, if at all possible, to abide by its by-laws and by decisions taken by its assemblies. Finally, they opted for a creative solution: they decided to declare their organ “one of the regular organs of the Association”, so as to keep open the possibility of establishing an official newsletter. They did, however, announce that each Association

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沈澤民 and Yi Jiayue 易家樁. The establishment of the Literary Association may have been inspired by the success of the Young China Association. The Literary Association by-laws, including the original stipulation about branch societies, show similarities with the by-laws of the Young China Association. (Although, as we have seen, it also shows similarities with the ordinances of the Southern Society.) The ‘Reports on Association Affairs’ in the 1921 Short Story Magazine are reminiscent of sections with the same title in Young China. Moreover, around the same time when they were trying to establish the Literary Association (late 1920), Zheng Zhenduo, Xu Dishan, Qu Shiying, Wang Tongzhao and Geng Jizhi had their l’Humanité Society (rendao she 人道社) and Morning Light Society (shuguang she 曙光社) enter into a union, called the Reform Union (gaizao lianhe 改造聯合), with three other societies, among which the Young China Association. See Shaonian Zhongguo xuehui 1920. For materials on the Young China Association, see Zhang Yunhou 1979 (211–572). For a study of its organization, major members and foreign branch societies, see Levine 1993.
member would receive a free copy of *Literature Trimonthly*, thus in effect making it similar to a newsletter. The announcement urged all members to keep the Association informed about changes of address.

Immediately after *Literature Trimonthly* had become its first official organ, the Association was revived as an active organization. Association announcements, announcements about the Association Series and ‘Members’ News’ sections appeared regularly. Readers were kept informed about which members were going abroad for study, and an obituary for Hu Tianyue 胡天月 (member no. 58), who died in 1922, was published. As mentioned above, members were once again urged to send in catalogues of books in their possession to facilitate the setting up of a correspondence library. The Shanghai members were very active in the summer of 1922 and even established a Shanghai branch (fenhui 分會) of the Association, which organized a meeting of Southern members on 8 July at a well-known Shanghai hotel to discuss literary matters and see off Yu Pingbo 俞平伯, who was going to the United States to study.

China’s first modern poetry magazine, *Shi Yuekan* 詩月刊 (Poetry Monthly), established in early 1922 by Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, Liu Yanling 劉延陵 and Ye Shengtao, all from the Shanghai/Hangzhou region, was turned into another ‘regular Association organ’. From 1922 onwards, the Association also had an address in Shanghai.

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44 See ‘Wenxue yanjiu hui tebie qishi’ 文學研究會特別啓事 (Special Announcement by the Literary Association), *WXZB* 37:4.

45 According to Shen Yanbing, writing in November 1922 (Jia Zhifang 1985:617), he was elected as secretary of that branch, established in the spring of 1922. Shen also mentions that this news was published in *Literature Trimonthly*. I have been unable to find any such announcement in the reprinted *Literature Trimonthly*. The announcement may have appeared, as did some other Association announcements, among the advertisements printed over the fold of the newspaper page, some of which are unreadable in the reprint. Alternatively, Shen Yanbing may simply have been mistaken.

46 See *WXZB* 42:1 and 43:4. The hotel in question was the Yi Pin Xiang 一品香 Hostel, which seems to have been a favourite venue for public occasions involving literary figures. The reception for Zheng Zhenduo’s wedding was held there, as was the famous meeting to commemorate the first anniversary of the publication of Guo Moruo’s 郭沫若 Nüshen 女神 (Goddesses), which was jointly organized by the Association and the Creation Society in an attempt to achieve reconciliation, but, after a series of misunderstandings, ended in argument and conflict (cf. Jia Zhifang 1985:614–15).
which at some point in time became physically recognizable by a sign on the door that read ‘The Literary Association’.47

The establishment of a Shanghai branch seems to have had an invigorating effect on what was now called the ‘Beijing headquarters’ (Beijing zong hui 北京總會). In March 1923, the 1922 general secretary and treasurer, Tang Xingtian 唐性天 and Xu Dishan, announced belated elections for the 1923 leadership of the Association.48 Members outside Beijing were encouraged to vote by letter. A meeting was held in Beijing in May and the election of Wang Tongzhao as general secretary and Tang Xingtian as treasurer was announced in the first issue of the Beijing Literature Trimonthly, published from June 1923 to September 1925 as a supplement of the Chen bao 晨報 (Morning Post). In July, the Shanghai organ became a weekly and changed its name to Wenxue (Literature). Twenty-six Association members were listed as its future regular contributors. In October, another Literature Trimonthly appeared as a supplement to the Yuehua bao 越華報 in Guangzhou, edited by a group of students and teachers from Lingnan University49 who had set themselves up as the Guangzhou branch of the Association.50

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47 An Association address (huizhi 住址) is mentioned in the special announcement (tebie qishi 特別啟事) in WXZB 37:4. The sign is mentioned in a 1983 interview with Ye Shengtao and his son (Jia Zhifang 1985:848).

48 It is not clear when and where Tang and Xu were elected. In all likelihood, their election took place in late 1921 or early 1922, in conformity with the Association by-laws. Since the Association had already stopped publishing announcements in The Short Story Magazine at that time but did not have its own organs yet, no reports appeared in print.

49 One of them being Chen Rongjie 陳榮捷, the editor of the Guangzhou Literature Trimonthly, who is better known to the Western sinological world as Wing-tsit Chan (1901–1994).

50 The Guangzhou branch is mentioned in almost all articles and reference works on the Association, as is the name of its organ. However, the organ itself seems to have been lost. The story of the establishment of the Guangzhou branch is recounted in some detail in a 1980 interview with Liu Simu 劉思慕 (Jia Zhifang 1985:855–7). According to Liu, he and his friends first established their branch and their organ, before writing to Zheng Zhenduo, who wrote back allowing them to become members of the Association. According to Shu Yi (1992:48–9), the fame of the Association may have led to similar situations taking place in other Chinese cities. Shu Yi notes that the Chinese writer Liang Bin’s 梁斌 memoirs mention the establishment of an Association branch in his middle school in Baoding as late as 1933, reflecting the students’ enthusiasm for New Literature. However, this did not lead, as in the Guangzhou case, to an official affiliation with the Association (see Liang Bin 1991:103). It is doubtful whether such local associations actually presented themselves as branches of the Association. It seems more likely that
Postcards and pictures

In the years 1923–1925, even though the Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou organs existed side by side, and Association members contributed to all, Association agency can only be detected on the Shanghai scene. One of the few texts speaking of the Association as an agent in these years is an advertisement, repeated in several issues of Literature, in which readers are urged to order a set of ‘Postcards with Pictures of Famous Foreign Writers’, published and sold by the Literary Association.

The Association’s finest hour came in April 1924, when the famous Bengali poet and Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore arrived in Shanghai. Already in 1923, Literature had published an announcement under the heading ‘Association Members’ News’, mentioning that its members Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 and Qu Shiyiing 启明星 would interpret for the great poet during his stay in China (WXZB 86:4) and when he finally arrived, the journalist who covered the event for a special supplement of The Short Story Magazine wrote: “The Literary Association arranged for photographs to be taken to commemorate Tagore setting foot on Chinese soil for the first time.”

Taking pictures of Tagore was one of the last things the Association actually did. After this, there are only a few texts that can serve as evidence of its existence as an organized body. All are from 1925 and all are endings of some sort. The first is the announcement in Literature (171) by the Association’s Shanghai Branch that the supplement was to become an independent publication named wenxue yanjiu hui 文學研究會 was a plausible name for literary clubs and/or societies on college campuses. For instance, in 1922, the Nanjing Higher Normal School (Nanjing gaodeng shifan xuexiao 南京高等師範學校 or Nanjing gaoshi 南京高師) had both a wenxue yanjiu hui 文學研究會 and a zhexue 哲學 (philosophy) yanjiu hui 研究會. The two jointly edited an organ, published by the Zhonghua shuju and entitled Wenzhe xuebao 文哲學報 (Journal of Literature and Philosophy Studies). In the first issue of that organ, which includes a manifesto, no reference at all is made to the Literary Association and there is no other evidence to suggest affiliation.

There may have been activity on the Guangzhou scene but, as mentioned above, I have been unable to trace the organ(s) of the Guangzhou branch.

See for instance WXZB 130:4. Ye Shengtao’s son, Ye Zhishan 葉子善, in one of his many reminiscences of his father’s life and work, has written about these postcards. His article carries reproductions of a few of them. See Ye Zhishan 1994 (20).

‘Huanying Taige’er’ (Welcome Tagore), Supplement to XSYB 15.4 (April 1924).
Wenxue zhoubao 文學週報 (Literature Weekly). The announcement mentions that the contributors to this new publication will be “some of the Literary Association members from Beijing, Shanghai and other places” (Beijing, Shanghai ji qita gechu de yi bufen wenxue yanjiu hui huiyuan 北京、上海及其他各處的一部分文學研究會會員) (WXZB 171:1). I consider this to be a carefully phrased statement indicating that the Association had in fact already ceased to exist as an organized, collective entity, but that its activities were carried on by a portion (bufen) of the former membership.

In the first issue of the new Literature Weekly, the phrase “A Regular Organ of the Literary Association” (Wenxue yanjiu hui dingqi kanwu zhiyi 文學研究會定期刊物之一), which had appeared on the front page of the supplement since May 1922, had been removed. At the same time, the journal ceased to be distributed with the China Times and became a publication of the Beixin Bookstore (Beixin shuju 北新書局). This achievement of the Shanghai members caused Wang Tongzhao, by then the sole editor of the Beijing Literature Trimonthly, to decide to stop that publication and join forces with the Shanghai group. The last Beijing Literature Trimonthly appeared in September 1925, carrying an explanation of the reason for stopping the supplement and a brief summary of its history.

This supplement first appeared in the summer of 1923 after a decision of the Beijing Literary Association. At that time, Sun Fuyuan and I were put forward as editors. Since last October, I have been solely responsible for it. From June to September I was not in Beijing and had left the editing of manuscripts to someone else. Having decided to stop the supplement, I wrote this brief summary of how it was edited. (Jia Zhifang 1985:565–6)

Finally, the Association is mentioned one more time in the Shanghai Literature Weekly, namely as co-signing party to a ‘Manifesto of United Shanghai Academic Organizations’ in the wake of the May Thirtieth Incident.54

Perhaps the most convincing evidence of the demise of the Literary Association as an active organization, however, is provided by the opening article of the first issue of the new Literature Weekly, which

54 In Jia Zhifang 1985 (886) it is claimed that the Association held a memorial ceremony for Guo Mengliang 郭夢良 (member no. 18) on 6 December 1925. I have been unable to trace the respective source.
does not mention the Association as such, but, in its closing lines, outlines the future of the journal as follows:

In the past, this journal concentrated especially on literature (wenxue). Now we want to talk more about other issues.

In the past, this journal favoured writing about research (yanjiu), now we want to struggle more with the masses, who are dreaming and lost. (WXZB 172:2)

If the former official organ of an association devoted to literary research (wenxue yanjiu) proclaims it will drop its focus on both literature and research, it can be safely assumed that the association itself has lost its function. There was no further mention of the Association in the post-1925 Literature Weekly, apart from references to books published in the Association Series.55

The Association and the Society

As the Literary Association was going through its most active period after the relocation to Shanghai, its example of publishing journals and newsletters solely devoted to wenxue or one of its genres was followed by other groups of mainly young university students or graduates. The Association’s monopoly on the production and publication of creative writing in the New Literature mode proved to be short lived, and was soon challenged by a group of Chinese students who had just returned from Japan, calling themselves the Creation Society (Chuangzao she 創造社). The conflict between the Literary Association and the Creation Society has been much discussed, but almost always from the vantage point of ideology (‘art for life’s sake’ versus ‘art for art’s sake’). In the present context, however, I want to emphasize some more practical aspects of the clash between the two groups.

First of all, I would like to call attention to the effectiveness of the strategy adopted by the Creation Society upon entering the literary field. In a typical avant-garde manner, the Creationists emphatically espoused what Bourdieu would call the field’s ‘autonomous principle’ (literary value, literary excellence, pure literature). At the

55 Zhao Jingshen 趙景深, in his preface to the Literature Weekly reprint, claims that the journal stopped publication in 1929 as the result of a decision made by the Association. This is a highly unlikely claim, neither documented in the journal itself, nor in any other sources.
same time, they accused the literary establishment, in passionate and aggressive language, of having surrendered to the ‘heteronomous principle’ (financial gain, status, power, politics). The following statement by Guo Moruo, from August 1922, is typical.

This little society of ours is not organized in any formal way. We do not have by-laws, we do not have institutions (jiguan 機關) and we do not have a uniform ideology. We are merely some friends who get together freely. Our ideologies and our thinking are certainly not alike. What we do have in common is the inner urge to engage in literary activities. (Rao Hongjing 1985:117)

There can be little doubt that Guo’s remark about formal organizations with by-laws and institutions was aimed at the Literary Association. Although Guo himself was already an established and respected poet at this time, his remarks and other, similar comments by his fellow Creation Society members, were meant to emphasize their lack of fame and power, and their total devotion to literature as art. In doing so, they introduced into New Literature practice a highly effective ‘underdog strategy’ that would be used over and over again by other writers and groups of writers throughout the Republican period (see Chapter Three).

The Creationists’ suspicion that the Association was attempting to monopolize the literary field originated in May 1922, when Literature Trimonthly began to serialize a somewhat condescending (though not particularly hostile) three-part review of the first issue of Chuangzao jikan 創造季刊 (Creation Quarterly) (Sun 1922). It was especially shocking for them to find out, a few months later, that the author of the review, who had used the pseudonym Sun 沈, was in fact Shen Yanbing, known to Guo and his friends mainly as the editor-in-chief of The Short Story Magazine, at the time the only existing highbrow, and supposedly non-partisan, journal for New Literature.

The underlying reasons for the conflict surfaced most clearly in late 1922 and early 1923, when an attempt at reconciliation was made by a certain Fuquan 福泉. In a November 1922 article (Jia Zhifang 1985:613–18) calling for the establishment of an Association for the Study of China’s Literary History, for which he wanted to recruit members from both groups, Fuquan tried to evaluate the conflict between the Association and the Creation Society from the point of

56 Shen Yanbing revealed his identity in September, in a little note to Guo Moruo in the ‘Tongxin’ 通 Xin (Letters to the Editor) section of WXQB 48.
view of a third party. He claimed that, on the one hand, complaints about the Association being too anxious about recruiting people (拉人) and behaving like a political party were widespread, but that, on the other hand, the Creationists (Yu Dafu 郁達夫 in particular) were sometimes too sensitive and suspicious. In his article, Fuquan stressed that he was acquainted with members of both groups and he addressed all of them with the intimate term 兄 ('brother', 'friend'), rather than the more formal 君 ('Mr').

Since the article was published in the Association organ *Literature Trimonthly*, Shen Yanbing and Zheng Zhenduo were able to add their own comments. Shen Yanbing stated that even though he was the secretary of the Shanghai Branch of the Association, his views did not represent those of the members; that the Association, unlike a political party, did not have any collective programme; and that new members were accepted by introduction only, so that they were actually turning down more membership applicants than they were recruiting. Zheng Zhenduo expressed his disappointment about Yu Dafu’s suspiciousness.

The following day, Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾 wrote a reply to Fuquan’s article (Jia Zhifang 1985:618–26), thanking him for his objective account, correcting factual mistakes in his article and adding his own view of things. Cheng especially showed disgust of the Association members’ frequent use of pseudonyms, making it impossible to know with whom one was dealing. When Cheng’s article was published in *Creation Quarterly* in January 1923, he added an indignant postscript, in which he recounted his attempts to get his piece published in two supposedly non-partisan newspaper supplements, including 学燈 (Light of Learning), at that time edited by Ke Yicen 柯一岑. Both supplements refused to publish his manuscript and even reprimanded him for trying to prolong the paper battle between the Association and the Society. Cheng accused both editors of being involved in the same kind of machinations as the Association.

Such was the nature of the Association’s monopolization of the New Literature field. It was not a matter of their ideological control over literary production, but rather of their network being physically in control. Ke Yicen (Association member no. 30) was only one of many publishers and editors who had become members of the Association. The frequent use of pseudonyms in *Literature Trimonthly*...
ly, itself a common strategy of editors all over the world to prevent giving the impression that they are single-handedly filling the pages of their own magazines, could in this context easily increase suspicion of the Association being involved in shady schemes to attack and suppress others on the literary scene.57

It seems that in this case Cheng Fangwu's indignation was justified. In his postscript, he addressed Fuquan, the objective, 'third party' peacemaker in the following way:

I would like to say a few words to Mr Fuquan. I think that Mr Fuquan has been speaking quite carelessly. If you want to say something about anything, you should at least get the facts straight. If you have not done that, you should not say anything at all. And if you do want to say something, you should at least avoid saying that this 'friend' is right and that 'friend' is wrong, causing people to think that everything you say is the absolute truth. Mr Fuquan is of course free to use whichever words he pleases, but since both what he said and the way he said it were harmful to the reality of things, he should absolutely not have done so. At this moment, I do not even have the honour (guangrong 光榮) of knowing Mr Fuquan's family name. In the future, it would be better if we knew a bit more about each other. (Jia Zhifang 1985:625)

Mr Fuquan's family name was Wang 汪. According to some reference works, he also had another name: Zhao Guangrong 趙光榮 ('honour'), which appears on the list of Association members as no. 75. If this is true, then his attempt to reconcile the 'establishment' and the 'avant-garde' of the Chinese wenxue scene was obviously a hoax. Unfortunately, biographical data on Wang Fuquan are so conflicting that it is impossible to conclude with any certainty that he and Zhao Guangrong were one and the same person.58 However, the fact

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57 It had been the standing custom of the Association members writing for Literature Trimonthly to employ only styles (without family names) or pseudonyms. Another reason for this was, I believe, that it gave the publication the more intimate character of an 'associates journal' (tongren zazhi 同仁雜誌), granting insiders among the readers the extra pleasure of being aware of who was hiding behind which name. Presumably as a result of the Creationists' criticism of this practice, it was later announced in Literature Trimonthly (WXZB 56:4) that each regular contributor would only use one pen-name and a small list was published explaining who was who. For more about the use of pseudonyms in criticism, see Chapter Six.

58 Even though almost every single reference work gives Zhao Guangrong as the pseudonym of Wang Fuquan, none of them mention examples of when and where Wang would have used that pseudonym. Moreover, most reference works consider Wang Fuquan to be another name of Wang Fuyan 汪馥炎. However, two 'versions'
that Fuquan published his article in *Literature Trimonthly* and that he later also published some poems in that supplement seems to prove at least that he was closer to the Association network than to the Creation Society, even though he seems to have been on friendly terms with at least one Creationist, Guo Moruo, around this time as well.\(^\text{59}\)

It is almost hard to believe that this happened less than two years after Shen Yanbing's complaints about *The Short Story Magazine* being ridiculed by the Shanghai newspapers. Now, the Association itself was attempting to intimidate the newcomers.\(^\text{60}\) However, the Creation Society's singling out of the Association as their opponent and its complete disregard for the proponents of traditional and commercial literature are noteworthy as well. Apparently, the old Association strategy of accumulating financial and symbolic capital under one collective label ('the Literary Association') had a

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of Wang Fuquan/Wang Fuyan are circulating: one is a professor of law and translator of Japanese works on literature, a native of Wujin, Jiangsu, born in 1890 and deceased (according to one source murdered) in 1939 or 1940. The other is a translator of Japanese works on literature and law, a native of Yuhang, Zhejiang, born in 1898 or 1899, who was either a traitor or a spy during the War and died in 1959. In reality, Wang Fuyan and Wang Fuquan were probably two people. Works written or translated by Wang Fuyan available in the Beijing University Library are all on law and all published before the War. Works written or translated by Wang Fuquan are all on literature and some were published in the 1950s. Li Liming (1977:160–1) claims that Wang Fuquan was born in 1894 (!) and that he was the editor of the well-known literary magazine *Xiandai* (Les Contemporains) from 1935 onwards (which is true). Works mentioned by Li are also only on literature. The name Zhao Guangrong occurs in the early issues of *Literature Trimonthly*, where he serialized a translation of a Japanese work on modern literature. A Chinese translation of the same work was published by the Commercial Press in 1930, translated by Zhang Wentian 張鴻天 and Wang Fuquan, which may account for some of the confusion. According to the Association membership list, Zhao Guangrong was a native of Jiading, Jiangsu. Xu Naixiang & Qin Hong (1988:462) also list Zhao Guangrong as a separate individual, who was a native of Dantu, Jiangsu. Cheng Fangwu's use of the word *guangrong* 'honor' when asking for Fuquan's name could be a hint, but could also be common usage, meant to emphasize his point that he did not know Fuquan and therefore did not appreciate the intimate terms of address used in Fuquan's article.

\(^\text{59}\) Guo Moruo (1933:193) mentions that Wang Fuquan visited him on several occasions in the summer of 1922, when Guo was living in Shanghai.

\(^\text{60}\) Former Association member Gu Yiqiao (Gu Yuxiu 顧毓琇, Y.H. Ku) reminisced in correspondence with me that the Creation Society later also resorted to 'boycotts', stopping the publication of one of his short stories in *Creation Quarterly* after they found out that he had published something in an Association organ. On a personal level, however, Gu, too, was on good terms with members of both groups.
significant drawback: the label could be used by others to identify the entire collective with one specific position within New Literature (the ‘establishment’), rather than one that represented New Literature. By placing themselves in such a relation with the Association, the Creation Society (the ‘avant-garde’) opened up a space for distinction among members of the same generation, with roughly the same educational background, reading habits and tastes. This drawing of boundaries within the field of New Literature was taking place simultaneously with the attempts by the Shanghai members of the Association to draw their own boundaries between their style and that of the commercial fiction journals. The latter were, after all, still the de facto establishment of the literary field as a whole, especially in terms of control over publishing resources, and the attacks on them in the Association publications were at least as aggressive and avant-garde-like as the attacks by the Creationists on the Association. The Association, in other words, was caught in a double bind when it came to its relationship with the Creation Society, which, on the one hand, it considered as an ally and, on the other hand, as a competitor. This ambiguity can be clearly seen in articles in *Literature Trimonthly* that deal with the Creation Society, some of which call for friendship and unity among all those “travelling the same road” (i.e. all those involved in New Literature), while others are full of sneers and ridicule.61

When both parties finally buried the hatchet in 1924, after a last long-drawn debate over Guo Moruo’s translation of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*,62 the Association had accepted that theirs was not the only possible position in the field, and that the ideal of establishing a writers’ union was not to become reality. The New Literature sphere that they had helped create was growing at a rapid pace and there was sufficient interest in New Literature publications among publishers to reduce the need for large-scale collective action. Instead, the example of the Creation Society to work in small, tight-knit groups, had set a trend that was to remain dominant throughout most of

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61 The most striking example of an Association critic ridiculing a Creation Society member is a 1923 review of Guo Moruo’s *Juaner ji* (Mouse Ear) by a critic using the pseudonym Xiaomin (possibly Wang Renshu). The review only deals with the first ten pages of the collection, because the critic claims they made him so sick that he could not read any further (Xiaomin 1923).

the Republican era. Meanwhile, the Association and its branches ceased all activities.

*The third phase (1925–1947): money matters*

**The series**

After 1925, there was only one business that the Association was involved in and that was the editing, publishing and selling of books. Besides the already mentioned Literary Association Series (1921–1939, 107 volumes), there was the Literary Association Creative Writing Series (*Wenxue yanjiu hui chuangzuo congshu* 文學研究會創作叢書, 1936–1947, 23 volumes), the Literary Association Famous Works of World Literature Series (*Wenxue yanjiu hui shijie wenxue mingzhu congshu* 文學研究會世界文學名著叢書, 1930–1939, 14 volumes), the Literary Association Popular Theatre Series (*Wenxue yanjiu hui tongsu xiju congshu* 文學研究會通俗影劇叢書, 1924–1928, 9 volumes) and the Literary Association Humour Series (*Wenxue yanjiu hui youmo congshu* 文學研究會幽默叢書, 1 volume, 1942). All these series were published and distributed by the Commercial Press and contributed to mainly (but not solely) by Association members.

The existence of those series is not much evidence of the continued existence as a collective agent of the Literary Association and it would certainly be justified to say that it ceased to exist in 1925. There remains, however, the question of money. Although the Association did not engage in any collective activities after the mid-

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63 For more examples of innovations in Chinese literary (publishing) practice inspired by the Creation Society, see Hockx 1999 (61–78).

64 Jia Zhifang 1985 also mentions two other series, the *Xiaoshuo yuebao congkan 小說月報叢刊*, a sort of ‘Best of *The Short Story Magazine*’, appearing regularly in 1924 and 1925 and the *Literature Weekly Series* (*Wenxue zhoubao congshu* 文學週報叢書, 1925–1930, 28 volumes, published by Kaiming shudian). Although neither *The Short Story Magazine* nor *Literature Weekly* had any direct institutional ties with the Association, most of the works in this series were also written and/or translated by Association members.

65 Most scholars claim that the Association gradually dissolved, either after *Literature Weekly* stopped appearing in 1929, or after the bombing of the Commercial Press by the Japanese in 1932, which signalled the end of *The Short Story Magazine*. It has also been claimed, without much supporting evidence, that the Association merged with the League of Left-Wing Writers in 1930.
1920s, several sources point to the fact that it must have had some sort of bank account in its name, as was originally stipulated in its eighth by-law.

First of all, during the first two phases of its existence, when it was still a relatively organized collective and still had a treasurer, it is likely to have collected regular membership fees from most of its members. They were not getting much in return for that, except a free copy of Literature Trimonthly and, perhaps, later of Literature. Since the annual subscription (for non-members) to these supplements was about one yuan, including postage, and membership dues are unlikely to have become less than the two yuan mentioned in the 1921 by-laws, a profit must have been made.

The second form of income was the withholding of part of the royalties of members’ contributions to the Literary Association Series, as stipulated in its editorial rules. This practice seems to have continued after 1925. In a 1979 interview, Xu Jie 許傑 reminisced that 15 per cent of the royalties on his 1926 volume of short stories Canwu 殘霧 (Lingering Mist), which appeared in the Literary Association Series, were withheld by the Association. He claimed that part of the money was used ‘to finance activities’ (huodong jijin 活動基金) and another part was saved to realize Zheng Zhenduo’s ideal of opening a ‘writers’ home’ (zuojia zhi jia 作家之家) on the borders of the West Lake in Hangzhou. While the latter never materialized, the former are likely to have included various dinner parties, such as the Southern Members Meeting mentioned above. Furthermore, Chen Fukang (1994:90) claims that the Association had rented a house in Shanghai, where members gathered for meetings and conversation on a daily basis. There are no other sources to

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66 Since the 1924 membership list shows that the addresses of some members were already unknown at the time, it is probable that not all early members faithfully paid their dues.

67 Jia Zhifang 1985 (854). It is not sure how long this practice continued and whether or not it was applied to all contributors to all series. When I asked Xiao Qian, whose Lixia ji 鼠下集 (Shelter) was published in the ‘Literary Association Creative Writing Series’ in 1936, he stated that he was sure he did not donate any money to the Association (interview, 8 March 1995, Beijing). Gu Yiqiao, in correspondence, stated that he did not receive any royalties, only a few free copies, of his 1923 contribution to the series, the novelette Zhilan yu moli 芝蘭與茉莉 (Violets and Jasmins [sic]).
corroborate this. When asked in correspondence, former member Gu Yiqiao replied that he had never heard of such a venue.

There is one source providing evidence of the Association spending money. Lu Xun’s diary mentions the receipt of 50 yuan in royalties from the Literary Association on 21 September 1925. The money arrived with a letter from his brother Zhou Jianren, Association member no. 65 and editor at the Commercial Press. Lu Xun published a number of translations in the Literary Association Series, but never became a member.68 If around the mid-1920s the Association was both paying and withholding royalties, the series might have been a more or less self-supporting enterprise, run by (former) Association members working for the Commercial Press. This assumption is supported by Ye Shengtao’s son’s recollection that his father, as late as 1926, dealt with Association correspondence and mail orders for Association publications on a daily basis.69 Wang Pingling, on the other hand, has claimed that Association funds were embezzled by Zheng Zhenduo.70 Although he did not sustain his claim with any evidence, it implies that there was at least the impression among contemporaries that the Association was making money.

Summing up, during the third phase of its existence, the Association was largely dormant. Although there were still members joining until 1928, there were no more recorded collective activities. The Association was embodied by commercially published series of good books, produced by well-known writers and translators. It was no longer involved in any debates, nor was it attacked by other organizations. By the mid-1930s, it became ‘officially’ part of the

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68 All reference works offer the same explanation for Lu Xun’s refusal to join the Association: being a civil servant working for the Ministry of Education, he was forbidden by law to join public organizations. The original source of this explanation is never cited (nor is the text of the law). It is possible that Lu Xun himself at one stage gave this reason, but it should be obvious that it can only have been a convenient excuse. After all, the Association membership list was never published, so the government had no way of finding out who the members were. If the government would have been interested in finding out, they surely would have suspected Lu Xun of being a member, since he was one of the most active contributors to Association organs. It is much more likely that Lu Xun was by nature reluctant to get involved in large organizations and preferred working alone or within small societies.

69 Quoted in Shang Jinlin 1986 (115).

70 Wang’s remarks are quoted in Chen Jingzhi 1980 (38–9).
history of the field it had created, as the Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi 中國新文學大系 (Compendium of Chinese New Literature) canonized its fiction in the first fiction volume. It is from this period, also, that the following oft quoted reminiscence stems, which seems to substantiate the impressions given above. In 1934, Mao Dun wrote, in an article later reprinted in the Compendium:

Some while ago I ran into an old friend (not someone from literary circles), [...] who suddenly asked me: “Does the Literary Association still exist or not?” This friend is trained in architecture, he knows how much architecture has changed during the past seven or eight years, but he does not know about the vicissitudes of the barometer of literature, that is why he seriously asked this naive question about whether or not it ‘still exists’. Younger people would never ask that. At the time I felt that this friend, who mingles with cement and concrete on a daily basis, had allowed even his thoughts and feelings to harden, harden to the extent that no ‘transformation’ was possible. However, since his eyes were fixed on my face and it seemed he would not let go until he got an answer, I was left with no other option but to say one word: “No.” Who would have thought that my friend refused to believe me, just as ten years ago there were people who simply refused to believe that the Literary Association was not plotting to ‘take sole charge’ of the literary scene. I had no choice but to add a few words: “All right, let’s say it still exists. It was a peculiar group right from the start. Saying that it was only an empty name would be ignoring the facts, but can one say that it was an organized collective? No. Magazine editors have a way of putting it, based on their experience. They say: ‘In the beginning the people control the magazine, afterwards the magazine controls the people.’ The Literary Association was also like that. In the beginning the people controlled the Literary Association, later the Literary Association controlled the people. All Literary Association members living in Shanghai were at one time controlled by it. You want to know what it is?—It’s the Literary Association Series!” (Zhao Jiabi 1935, 10:88)

The members of the association

The 1924 membership list

In 1924, the Literary Association printed and distributed a list of members. That list was recently rediscovered and reproduced in a

71 For a discussion of the Compendium in relation to the canonization of the literature from the period 1917–1927, see Lydia Liu 1995, Chapter 8.
1992 article by Shu Yi. It is a unique historical document, providing not only the names (ming 名) and styles (hao 號) of the 131 people who had joined the Association by 1924, but also their place of origin (jiguan 籍貫), the foreign languages that they claimed to know, and their 1924 address.

The list of 131 members (see Appendix A) lends itself to all kinds of statistics. First of all, I have drawn up statistics for age, based on information on 82 members whose date of birth can be found in various reference works. The oldest were Association founder Zhu Xizu (member no. 1) and Guangzhou branch co-founder Gan Naiguang 甘乃光 (member no. 114), both born in 1879. The youngest was Yan Dunyi 喪敦易 (no. 105), born in 1905. Three-fourths of all members on the list were born after 1892, with 1899, 1900 and 1901 as the peak years. Obviously, the majority of them belonged to the first generation of intellectuals that grew up without having to study for the imperial civil service examinations. The fact that an average knowledge of 1.2 foreign languages (mostly English) was claimed by each member, suggests that the majority of them had received a new-style education, or wished to portray themselves as such.

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72 The original list is now kept in the Modern Chinese Literature Archives (Zhongguo xiandai wenxue guan 中國現代文學館) in Beijing. Besides the list that was reprinted in Shu Yi 1992, the original booklet also contains an index on family name, place of origin and address, the Association manifesto and a later version of the by-laws which differs in some places from the original ones quoted above. It carries a short introduction, mentioning that there had been an earlier membership list, drawn up when the Association had 46 members. That list is no longer extant.

73 There is also a second, incomplete list of 23 members who joined between 1924 and 1928. This list was published in 1948 by Zhao Jingshen, and was based on completed membership application forms found in a drawer in Zheng Zhenduo's office at the Commercial Press. The forms were numbered from 132 to 172 and thus form a sequel to the first list. Unfortunately Zhao did not copy all the names, and the forms were later lost. According to Zhao, the names he left out were those of members who hardly published anything in the area of literature. Since there is no way to verify this, I shall limit the discussion below to the first, printed membership list (cf. Zhao 1983:203–14). See also the interview with Zhao Jingshen in Jia Zhifang 1985 (851–3).

74 The foreign languages mentioned are (in order of popularity): English (mentioned by 92 members), Japanese (25), French (13), German (10), Russian (7), Ancient Greek (3), Esperanto (3) and Norwegian (1). Sixteen members did not claim any knowledge of foreign languages. One (Hu Tianyue) is unaccounted for, because he was deceased by the time the list was drawn up. Naturally there is no way of knowing what the actual level of knowledge of these languages was, but that is less
The first generation of the new-style educated can still be expected to show many similarities with the educated elite under the old system. This means first of all that it is likely that most of them were men. Although the list does not mention whether members were male or female, it is certain that at least five of them were women. They are as follows: writers Lu Yin, Wang Shiyi and Bing Xin; poet and translator (of Oscar Wilde) Zhang Jinfen (better known as ‘Miss C.F.’, C.F. nüshi 女士); and translator of children’s literature Gao Junzhen.

The geographical distribution of Association members’ places of origin is also highly uneven: over 50 per cent of them were originally from Jiangsu and Zhejiang, two provinces that traditionally supplied a large proportion of China’s educated elite, and that were, for instance, equally dominantly represented in the membership of the Southern Society. One should also take into account that nine of the twelve founder members of the Association were from these provinces and that it is likely that the earliest members were recruited through their networks.

Membership growth

Together with data from other sources, the list of members reflects membership growth between 1921 and 1924. By looking at the list of people who were present at the inaugural meeting on 4 January 1921, which has been reconstructed from a photograph taken on the occasion, one can deduce that the Association may already have had 46 members at the time, since member no. 46 (Jiang Xiaojian) was at the meeting. The fact that foreign language knowledge was claimed by such a large proportion of the membership is relevant in this context than the fact that foreign language knowledge was claimed by such a large proportion of the membership.

Here, I am assuming that members are listed in chronological order. Although this is indeed merely an assumption, there are several circumstances that make it a highly likely one. The incomplete second list of members (see above) is structured in the same way as the first list (name, style, place of origin, foreign languages) but has an extra column mentioning the year of joining the Association, which shows that members are numbered in chronological order; members on the lower half of the list are younger; no other ordering principle can be detected (except for the 12 founders, who of course ‘joined’ on the same day, and are listed according to age).

The ‘Report on Association Affairs’ from January 1921 mentions that 21 people were present at the meeting, but only twenty are in the picture, including Yang Weiye, who was a student at Beijing University at the time (cf. Chen Yutang 1993:266), but whose name does not appear on the membership list.
That the response to early calls to join the Association was quite overwhelming during the first few months also becomes clear from a passage in a letter from Zheng Zhenduo to Zhou Zuoren, dated 3 March 1921. A mere three months after the founding of the Association, Zheng wrote to Zhou:

> It is necessary to restrict membership. Our Association already has 48 members. If it becomes even larger, we will not only be scattered in spirit (that is inevitable), but my hands will hurt even more from printing so many circulars. I think that from now on, new members should (1) be well versed in literature and (2) all members should know a little bit about them or their works. No more introducing. (Jia Zhifang 1985:677; emphasis added)

Despite Zheng Zhenduo’s worries, the membership continued to grow during the first half of 1921. Among the names of members of the reading club, published in June 1921, we find member no. 61 Zhang Yugui 張遇桂 (Zhang Xinnan 張辛南). Moreover, member no. 74, Bing Xin, remembered that she joined the Association in 1921 as well (Bing Xin 1992:31). All in all, it is safe to say that well over half of the members on the 1924 list joined the Association in the first year of its existence.

As Zheng Zhenduo’s letter, quoted above, points out, the initial membership boom was due to the Association’s lenient policy towards membership applicants. One could join the Association if one was introduced by two members. Whether or not one was actively involved in writing or translating was not enquired after. As a result, 51 of the 74 members that joined in 1921 did not actively contribute to Association organs.\(^77\)

It is likely that those early members included many friends and friends-of-friends of founders who were soon hard to trace and/or motivate, and that the Association therefore adopted much stricter standards for membership later on. In the 1924 version of the Association by-laws, printed in the original booklet kept in the Modern

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\(^77\) This result was acquired by checking the 74 names against a ‘top 50’ of the most prolific contributors to Association magazines and *The Short Story Magazine* between 1921 and 1925, drawn up by Shu Yi (1992:51–2). This list is not entirely accurate, since Shu’s statistics do not include the Literary Association Series, whereas they do include *The Short Story Magazine*, which was not really an Association organ. However, even without reference to Shu’s statistics, a look at Appendix A makes it clear that the largest proportion of unknown members is in the first half of the list.
Chinese Literature Archives, but not in the 1992 reprint, the third bylaw reads as follows (emphasis added where the text differs from the 1921 by-laws):

Membership is open to all those who subscribe to the aims of this Association and who have published works (or translations). New members should be introduced by more than four members and accepted by the majority of all members.

In practice, what that rule came down to was probably an active recruitment policy among those who sent manuscripts to *The Short Story Magazine* and *Literature Trimonthly* and those who were contracted to contribute to the Association Series. Most of this recruitment seems to have taken place after the Association had re-established itself in Shanghai, since according to my sources, not a single member joined the Association in 1922. The rest of those that are on the 1924 list joined in 1923. Almost 50 per cent of them lived in Shanghai (as opposed to less than 30 per cent of the early members) and almost 50 per cent were active contributors to Association magazines. At least ten of them worked at the Commercial Press or other publishing houses.

The difficulties in keeping the Association together and especially in keeping in touch with those outside the Shanghai scene are reflected in the membership list by the occurrence of vague addresses like “Harbin (?)” (no. 14) or “London, England” (no. 99). Intriguing is the address provided for no. 22, Wang Xinghan 王星漢 (Wang Zhongren 王仲仁). According to the list, his 1924 address was “Beijing University, Renaissance Society”. In reality, he had died in 1923. That members often did not know each other can be learned from passages in Zhao Jingshen’s report of a writers’ meeting in 1948, at which he introduces himself to his former fellow Association members Chen Xiaohang 陳小航 (Luo Jinan 羅稷南) and Gu Yiqiao (Zhao Jingshen 1983:153, 161).

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78 Saying this with 100 per cent certainty is made impossible by the conflicting information about Zhao Guangrong (Wang Fuquan? Wang Fuyan?; see above), who is member no. 75, i.e. in between Bing Xin, who joined in 1921, and Wang Boxiang 王伯祥, who is said to have joined in 1923 (see the short biography of Wang Boxiang in Jia Zhifang 1985 (21)).
Summing up, one can say that the membership of the Association went through two separate phases of development, corresponding to the first two phases of its development as an institution. Before 1922, it was a broadly oriented group of young, male intellectuals that basically anyone could join. After 1922, it was a more elitist group of mainly Shanghai-based writers and publicists, whose works were good enough to appear in magazines published and/or distributed by major publishing houses, or who were professionally involved in publishing.

Besides publishing, the other most common activities for Association members were studying and teaching. If one reads the biographical materials on Association members, one is struck by the fact that, during the 1920s and 1930s, most of them had the same type of career, leading them from a Chinese university (as a student), to Chinese middle schools (as teachers), to publishing houses (as editors and translators) and finally back to a Chinese university (as professors). Those who had graduated from foreign universities were often able to skip the second stage.

A minority of Association members was or became actively involved in politics. There was clearly no dominating political conviction among Association members, as is sometimes suggested, since the sympathies of those who entered that realm are equally spread over communist and non-communist parties. Besides the famous case of Zhou Zuoren, there are a few other examples of Association members ending up on the pro-Japanese side during the War of Resistance.

Although the War did cause casualties among Association members, an astonishing 50 per cent of all members whose dates are known lived to beyond the age of seventy, twenty-six reaching eighty. Only one member, Gu Yiqiao, is still alive at this writing.

Continuities and innovations

Most of the gatherings, parties, competitions, societies and associations discussed in this and the previous chapter had one thing in common: their organization was meant to result in publications. In the case of traditional shishe, the publications would often be of a
one-off nature, meant to commemorate a gathering during which literary texts were produced or presented, or to report the results of a writing competition. In the case of traditional *wenshe*, the publications might appear more regularly and incorporate texts written by or for members preparing to sit for the various levels of the imperial examinations. In the early twentieth century, the Southern Society combined both practices, organizing frequent gatherings for its members while publishing a regular organ containing poetry and prose in traditional genres. In the 1920s, the Literary Association, especially its Shanghai branch, also met socially, although those meetings are scarcely documented. The quantity of its publications, however, which included a number of journals and book series, was staggering, especially if one considers that its membership was much smaller than that of the Southern Society or its model, the Revival Society.

What most collectives, traditional and modern, also had in common was that their publications were solely or predominantly meant to print the works of their own members. In the case of event-oriented publications, membership could simply be defined as ‘having been there’. More formal organizations would set up membership application procedures which typically involved an element of ideology (the aspiring new member had to subscribe to the programme of the organization) and an element of intimacy (the new member had to be introduced by existing members). In many cases, and certainly in the case of the Literary Association, new members would be recruited specifically for what they could contribute to the collective’s publications.

As the professional involvement of writers with editing and publishing increased over time, the social element of literary practice, at least in the case of the Literary Association, seems to have declined. It is tempting to see the Literary Association as continuing the *wenshe* tradition, by emphasizing the programmatic nature of its publications and the involvement of many of its members in education, but even a massive *wenshe* like the Revival Society did organize at least a few social gatherings. Moreover, as has been pointed out, its members all belonged to smaller, local groups that did meet frequently as collectives. Meetings held by the Literary Association *under that name* were very scarce and are hardly documented. After all, the Association took pride in being a
professional organization. Already in its manifesto, it had disassociated itself from the possibility to combine literature with relaxation (xiaojian 消遣), and its own activities as a collective mirrored that conviction. Whatever Association members did in their spare time, they did not do it under the name of the collective. The impact of this style, however, was not as pervasive as the current canonical status of the Association might lead one to suspect. In the rest of this study, we shall come across plenty of groups and individuals who managed to combine writing with fun, even if they were often castigated for doing so by critics subscribing to the working style introduced by the Association.

When viewed in historical context, it is difficult to interpret either the Southern Society or the Literary Association as making a clean break with 'tradition' in terms of literary practice. However, both organizations were innovative in at least three respects: their professional approach to editing and publishing; their recognition of the literary field as their main sphere of activity; and their detailed ordinances and by-laws and democratic voting procedures. Of these three characteristics, the first two were shared by the 'journalist-littérateurs' on the Shanghai scene, who went about their business without feeling the need to be actively involved in any collective (although many of them attended at least one meeting of the Southern Society). The third characteristic is more typical of literary societies, especially those with a relatively large or scattered membership, and can be encountered frequently in later decades.

Another lasting impact was made by the two distinct ways in which the two organizations funded their publications. The Southern Society funded its own organ, using money from membership fees, fundraising and sales. This was the 'traditional' way of doing it, made even more feasible by the lower cost of printing. The publications of the Association, on the other hand, were initially subsidized by a large publisher (the Commercial Press) and two large newspapers (the China Times in Shanghai and the Morning Post in Beijing), drastically reducing the need for fundraising, but also curtailing the independence of the organization. The Creation Society later entered the literary field in a similar way, by throwing in its lot
with the Taidong Bookshop (taidong shuju 泰東書局)\textsuperscript{79} which, as in the case of the Association and the Commercial Press, also employed a number of the members of the society. This phenomenon was new, even in comparison with the practice of the 1910s, when journalist-littérateurs worked for publishing houses and newspapers as individuals, or at most in loosely organized, unnamed networks. Both styles of operation, self-funding and external funding, remained available to literary groups throughout the Republican period.

In all likelihood, the Literary Association was the first literary collective to be associated with printed organs that appeared with high frequency and at low cost, combining the traditional habit of working in societies with the efficiency of the modern printing industry. During the rest of the Republican period, the link between societies and journals almost went without saying and there was hardly a single collective that, like the Southern Society, merely aimed to publish book-length collections once or twice a year. Fan Quan (1993), in his dictionary of literary societies of this period, included only societies that had their own organs, and ended up listing more than one thousand. Many of them were small and existed only for short periods of time, but all of them could be documented because the journals were still extant. In the next chapter, I discuss the phenomenon of literary societies in more detail, concentrating solely on New Literature groups of the 1920s and 1930s, and introducing some little known collectives and their practices, representing only a fraction of the total.

\textsuperscript{79} The entire history of the relationship between the Creation Society and the Taidong Bookshop is recounted in a book-length study by Liu Na (1999).
CHAPTER THREE


Literary production, literary activity, and the role of Shanghai

In the previous chapter I have demonstrated that the early practitioners of New Literature developed an innovative working style, combining traditional forms of organization with modern forms of publishing. Named collectives were responsible for the production of the majority of New Literature journals throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Literary societies were to be found all over the country, as were their periodicals. Relatively speaking, however, more journals were published in Shanghai, the hub of Republican China’s printing industry, than elsewhere. Even societies not based in Shanghai would often have their journals published, or handled by a distributor, in that city. This means that, while confirming the close relationship between societies and journals, it is nevertheless necessary to make a conceptual distinction between literary production and literary activity, both of which are elements of the literary field. For the purposes of this study, literary production is defined as

the manufacturing of printed texts that are recognized as being literary in nature (material production) or as contributing to the establishment of literary values (symbolic production).\(^1\)

Literary activity refers to

concrete, documented acts or events involving literary producers that are recognized as being literary in nature, but that do not directly lead to the manufacturing of printed texts.

The literary field, then, can be redefined as follows:

The literary field is an interest community of agents and institutions involved in literary production and literary activity, governed by at

\(^1\) For the distinction between material and symbolic production, I am indebted to Van Rees & Vermunt 1996 and Van Rees & Dorleijn 1993. See also Hockx 1999 (7).
least one autonomous principle that is fully or partially at odds with at least one heteronomous principle.\(^2\)

Although the distinction between literary production and literary activity is not always as clear-cut as it is presented here, it is relevant for the interpretation of some of the statistics concerning literary societies and literary journals of the 1920s and 1930s that I have put together, and which are reproduced in detail in Appendix B. The statistics consist of counts of the number of literary journals founded in each year of the period 1920–1936, of the number of literary journals in circulation in each year of the same period, of the geographical distribution of these journals based on the location at which they were published, and of the number of literary societies founded in those same years. The statistics regarding literary journals are based on four different sources, none of which are complete, since there does not exist a complete listing of all journals published during this period.

The first of the three sources I used is the most common reference work for journals of this period (Tang Yuan 1988), which contains the tables of contents of 274 literary journals published between 1915 and 1949. Comparison with the other sources shows that this seemingly very comprehensive and useful reference work in fact displays a strong bias towards journals published in Shanghai, including a relatively large number of journals that were published underground by Leftist organizations. Moreover, it completely excludes literary journals that were not in the New Literature mode. It certainly seems less representative than the second source I used: the journal catalogue of the Beijing Library.\(^3\) This is a rather large catalogue, including both literary and non-literary journals organized by location, of which I only consulted the sections on Shanghai and Beijing, marking those literary journals founded before or during 1936, leading to a total of 188 journals, of which 128 were founded in Shanghai and 60 in Beijing. Almost two-thirds of those journals (115) were founded after 1930, with Beijing journals making up almost 40 per cent (45) of that figure.

\(^2\) This definition is adapted from the one in Hockx 1999 (9). The basic definition of the literary field as an 'interest community' is again indebted to the work of Van Rees (see previous note).

\(^3\) I would like to thank Chen Hanyu and the staff of the Beijing Library Sinological Services Office for allowing me to borrow this catalogue during my stay in Beijing in 1995.
Two trends become apparent from these counts: firstly, literary production increased massively during the second half of the period under investigation; secondly, although at any given time by far the largest quantity of literary journals was published in Shanghai, the relative importance of the Shanghai scene decreased as the period advanced.

These conclusions are confirmed by the third and fourth sources: the literary periodicals catalogue of the Beijing University Library and an early catalogue of holdings in Shanghai (Xiandai wenxue qikan lianhe diaocha xiaozu 1961). In the former, I found 379 titles of journals founded before or during 1936, including 205 from the period 1930–1936. Shanghai journals make up 47.3 per cent of the total, but they constitute only 38 per cent of journals from the pre-war 1930s. In comparison, Beijing journals in both cases make up a little over 21 per cent, whereas the 1930s show a relative increase of the importance of journals from Nanjing (the Guomindang capital, rising from 4 per cent to 9 per cent) and Guangzhou (from 3 per cent to 5 per cent). The fourth source, the Shanghai catalogue, naturally includes relatively more Shanghai journals, but is much less biased than the first source. Of the 316 journals I counted, all founded between 1920 and 1936, slightly less than one-fourth were from outside Shanghai. However, the proportion of non-Shanghai journals is only 13 per cent for the pre-1930 period, while it is as high as 30 per cent for the period 1930–1936. It is likely that a more complete empirical study of literary production in the pre-war 1930s can be made if other library catalogues are included.

Meanwhile, some tentative further conclusions can be drawn from the statistics concerning literary societies, based on Fan Quan 1993. Having counted only the entries referring to the period 1920–1936, I tabulated a total of 620 societies, less than 30 per cent of which were active in Shanghai. First of all, the large total, almost twice as large as the largest total number of journals in any of the four sources mentioned above, confirms my suggestion that many more journals must have been published, and much more literary production must have been taking place outside Shanghai than is commonly assumed. After all, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Fan Quan’s reference work only lists societies that actually published journals. Secondly, however, the very small number of Shanghai societies, when compared to that of Shanghai journals, can also be taken as an indication of the
fact that at least a part of the literary production in that city resulted from literary activity taking place elsewhere.

Even though a very large proportion of Republican-era literary products were made in or distributed through Shanghai, this should not be mistaken to imply activities actually taking place on some huge Shanghai literary scene. Shanghai was the major site of literary production itself, but it was also a turnover point for literary products from elsewhere. For those writers or editors who aspired to nationwide distribution of their work, signing a contract with one of Shanghai’s publishing houses was the best thing to do. Literary journals, especially, very often seem to have reached larger audiences only through the mediation of Shanghai publishers—or bookstores (shudian) as many of them rightly called themselves—as can be learned from their copyright pages, which, besides the local distributor (faxingzhe) frequently mention a Shanghai company as ‘general re-distributor’ (zong daili faxingzhe) or ‘general reseller’ (zong daishou). In short: in order to achieve literary success in Republican-era China, it was not an absolute necessity to be in Shanghai, but some sort of involvement with a Shanghai publishing company was inevitable.

**Types of literary societies**

In the contact between Shanghai publishing companies and writers of New Literature, literary societies played a crucial role. The question of why there was such a strong need within the New Literature community to work in collectives is difficult to answer, as it touches upon aspects of sociology and psychology that are well beyond the scope of this study. Much more relevant are the questions of how those collectives functioned and how the phenomenon fits into the overall New Literature working style that I have set out to describe. In the remainder of this chapter, I present a typology of literary societies of the 1920s and 1930s, including short treatments of a number of examples of societies of various types and their strategies within the literary field.

New Literature collectives of the 1920s and 1930s can be divided into two general types, which I shall refer to as habitual societies and organized societies. The organized societies can be further divided
into literary sphere organizations, public sphere organizations, political organizations and professional organizations.

**Habitual societies**

Habitual literary societies are societies formed as part of the habits involved in setting up a publishing venture. Such societies did not have any traceable activities; often they did not even have a membership. The names of such societies appear in copyright pages of literary journals as either editors or distributors, but they are not mentioned elsewhere in the journal. As a result, little can be known or said about the nature of these societies, but the following anecdote, recounted by Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 in the first issue of the journal *Wenfan xiaopin* 文飯小品 (Literary Food Vignettes* *) gives some indication of their significance:

After the journal *Xiandai* (Les Contemporains) had ceased publication, I left my job at the Xiandai Publishing House and found myself with a lot of time on my hands. One day I ran into [Kang] Siqun 康嗣群 at the Shanghai Journal Company and I asked him: “How about it? Do you still want to publish a journal?” He answered: “If I do, I want to publish it myself, so that I can do what I want with it.” The manager of the Shanghai Journal Company, [...] Zhang Jinglu 張靜廬, happened to be standing next to us. He said: “Wonderful. If you two do a journal, without any constraints, then I’ll represent you in distribution matters. That will solve a lot of practical problems for you.” Thereupon I also became enthusiastic: “Kang, my friend, you get together the manuscripts for the first issue and I’ll distribute it.” This is how I became the distributor of *Literary Food Vignettes*.

So this distributor is not like your average distributor. I did not bring in my own money, nor do I intend to make a profit, and I certainly do not have any background. [...] The second point, that I do not intend to make a profit, needs some explanation. It means that I myself do not expect to get rich from it. One of the plans we have in connection with this journal is to print some books that the average

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4 The somewhat unusual name of this journal, taken from a Ming-dynasty collection of vignettes by Wang Siren 王思任, is explained by the editor Kang Siqun in the founding statement of the journal as referring to the fact that, on the one hand, literary writers have to write in order to be able to eat while, on the other hand, literary nourishment is different from normal nourishment. With this latter point Kang, like Shi Zhecun, intended to emphasize that the journal was not established in order to make money. See Kang Shiqun, ‘Chuangkan shiming’ 創刊釋名 (Explaining the Name of the Journal Founded), *Wenfan xiaopin* 1:1, p. 2.
bookstore won’t sell. Therefore we made up a ‘Maiwang Society Publishing Department’ (mäiwang shè chūbānbu 脈望社出版部). If this little essay journal can earn us some capital for printing books, our publishing department will soon be publishing its first book..." The whole construction was neatly outlined in the copyright page of the first issue, which reads:

Editor: Kang Siqun
Distributor: Shi Zhecun
Distribution Office: Maiwang Society Publishing Department
General Re-distributor: Shanghai Journal Company

The episode recounted here sheds some light on the division of tasks involved in managing a journal in the 1930s. The role of the editor was clearly to collect and select manuscripts. The distributor would commonly be a business partner bringing in his or her own money, in the hope of gaining a profit. The actual work done by the distributor, at least in the case of this particular journal, as Shi Zhecun later reminisced, was to take the edited manuscripts to the printers, and to deliver the printed journals to local bookshops. From this it follows that the re-distributor, in this case the Shanghai Journal Company, would be responsible for the distribution outside Shanghai. Indeed, the Shanghai Journal Company under Zhang Jinglu made a lot of money operating the national distribution of countless magazines (not just literary ones) in this way, as described in Zhang’s memoirs (Zhang Jinglu 1938). The total print-run of each issue of Literary Food Vignettes, again according to Shi Zhecun’s reminiscence, was 1,000 issues. It is not clear how many of these were distributed locally and how many nationally.

However, what intrigues me most in the quoted excerpt above is the use of the word ‘therefore’ (yìncí 因此) in the statement

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5 The maiwang is a mythological metamorphosis of an insect known as duyú 銀魚 (silverfish). In this case, however, the term is more likely to be a reference to the famous Maiwang library of the late-Ming literatus Zhao Yongxian 趙用賢. I am grateful to Susan Daruvala for pointing this out.


7 Interview with Shi Zhecun, 24 October 1998.

8 Another aspect involved here is the publication registration and censorship system introduced in the 1930s. During my interview with him, Shi Zhecun confirmed that, for registration purposes, each journal needed to name both its editor and distributor. See Chapter Seven for a detailed treatment of these regulations.
“therefore we made up a Maiwang Society Publishing Department”. Apparently the naming of some group or collective behind the publication of a journal or book series had become part of accepted behaviour within the literary field at the time, and was considered such a natural thing to do that Shi felt the readership needed no explanation for it. In this particular case, Shi may in fact have been following a famous example from the mid-1920s, namely the establishment by the Creation Society of its own publishing house, called the Creation Society Publishing Department (Chuangzao she chubanbu 創造社出版部). As I have argued elsewhere (cf. Hockx 1999:74), the Creation Society presented this development as a step towards independence from commercial publishers, although in practice it meant that the society itself became commercialized. In the case of the ‘Maiwang Society’, the wish to establish an independent journal uncontrolled by a major publisher is implicit in Shi’s reference to his experience with the journal Les Contemporains and the Xiandai publishing house.9

Somewhat different than the above example, but related to this type is the zazhishe 雜誌社. When this term, preceded by the name of the journal in question, is mentioned on the copyright page, it commonly refers to the section of a publishing house responsible for the editing of the journal, in other words: the editorial office. This kind of ‘society’ naturally had no formal organization or institutional existence outside the publisher’s premises, nor did it have a membership. Its existence in name can partly be ascribed to habit, partly to the broad array of meanings of the word she which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, can also function as an indication of a particular space.

9 For an extensive treatment of Shi Zhecun’s involvement with Les Contemporains, see Lee 1999 (130–37). The name of Zhang Jinglu also pops up in Lee’s account, as Zhang was manager of the Xiandai publishing house around the time that Shi edited Les Contemporains. Lee claims that Zhang also ‘owned’ the publishing house. In my interview with him, Shi Zhecun mentioned that the publishing house was in fact set up through an investment by Yu Qiaqing 虞洽卿, the powerful chairman of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, who apparently lived next door to the publishing house. In an earlier published reminiscence, Shi Zhecun (1980, 1:213) mentions both Zhang Jinglu and Hong Xuefan 洪學帆 as the managers of the publishing house. In the same article, Shi makes a few passing references to financial backers, but without mentioning any names.
It is important to be aware of the existence of habitual societies to avoid creating the impression that collective rather than individual agency is behind every publishing venture of the Republican era. For the study of the relationship between the social and the textual, between literary societies and their journals, however, the second, more common type of literary collective, the organized society, is more relevant.

Organized societies

This type of society would be formed by a group of friends, associates or otherwise kindred spirits, usually referred to in Chinese as tongren 同仁. The three modern societies treated in the previous chapter (the Southern Society, the Literary Association and the Creation Society) all started out in this way, although all eventually grew into something much larger than what is usually covered by the Chinese term tongren jituan 同仁集團 (associates collective). In the typology presented here, however, all three belong to the category of organized societies.

Organized societies, whether self-funded or supported by a publishing house, ordinarily announced their existence in local newspapers by means of an official proclamation, often accompanied by a manifesto. The manifesto would normally be reprinted in the first issue of the organ of the society. In most cases, the literary journal run by the society also functioned as a newsletter for its members, to whom it was distributed freely or at a discount. Therefore, the organ would contain such sections as ‘Members’ News’ (sheyuan xiaoxi 社員消息) or ‘Society Talk’ (shetan 社談).\(^\text{10}\) Most of these organs would in principle welcome contributions from non-members, but in practice they would serve predominantly as the publication outlet for members. As we have seen in the case of the Literary Association, one way to remedy this somewhat contradictory situation was to actively recruit new members among those submitting manuscripts to the journal. In other cases, a society’s journal would be open for contributions by outsiders only if they

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\(^\text{10}\) Note, however, that even in such cases the she might refer to a location rather than to a society. This was the case, for instance, with the ‘Letters to the Editor’ section of Les Contemporains under Shi Zhecun’s editorship, which was entitled ‘Shezhong zuotan 社中座談 (Discussions in the Editorial Office).
were in genres in which members themselves were not particularly interested. Finally, the society would sign its name as editor, and often also as distributor, on the copyright page.

Organized societies came in all shapes and sizes, but four kinds can be distinguished on the basis of the scope and nature of their activities, as follows:

**Literary Sphere Organizations**
Small societies mainly involved in the editing of a literary journal, meant for the publication of members' own works. Membership is limited to those involved in running the journal. Activities of such societies are limited to what takes place in the literary field and their reputation does not usually extend beyond the literary sphere.

**Public Sphere Organizations**
Literary societies or associations with a relatively formal structure and a public function which extends beyond the literary community. Collectives of this kind depend on a large membership or on shareholders for funding a variety of (publishing) activities, including literary journals, literary series and literature textbooks. Their public visibility derives from factors such as the hosting of receptions and dinner parties; the establishment of an official location (a bookshop, printing shop or clubhouse carrying the name of the society); or the co-signing of general political or cultural manifestos.

**Political Organizations**
Organizations whose literary activities are restricted because they are determined by the agenda of a government or a political party. Their literary significance is usually limited, but for the sponsoring party their value may be considerable.

**Professional Organizations**
Organizations which provide the basis for their members' livelihood. Many small drama societies of the Republican era were of this type, but the most important example is the Chinese Writers' Union, the main literary institution of the People's Republic of China, which falls beyond the scope of the present study.

These are, of course, fluid categories. It is possible for societies to belong to more than one category, or to develop from one type into another, especially from the first into the second, which may be considered a sign of 'success'. A good example is the Creation Society which, as we have seen, started out as a small collective with (avant-garde) ambitions limited to the literary sphere, but which gradually developed into a complicated commercial venture with hundreds of shareholders and a well-known physical location in
Shanghai (cf. Hockx 1999:74). Moreover, in its later stages, it was also at least partly a political and a professional organization, as some of its members maintained close ties with the Communist Party, whereas others supported their livelihood by working full-time in the Creation Society Publishing Department. The Literary Association, treated in the previous chapter, is typical of the second category of non-political public cultural organizations that are, I believe, unique to the Republican period. The best example of the third category is the 1930s League of Left-Wing Writers, which has been the subject of a book-length study by Wang-chi Wong (1991) and will therefore not be treated here in any depth.

For literary sphere organizations, the example set by the Creation Society in its challenge to the Literary Association, as described in the previous chapter, soon became paradigmatic. Most manifestos of such organizations emphasize the lack of ideology or organization, and the singular devotion to literature. A typical case is the Low Grass Society (qiancao she 淺草社), which founded the quarterly journal Low Grass in 1923. The cover of the first issue, published in March of that year, proudly states that the journal was a “self supported publication of the Low Grass Society” (qiancao she zifei chuban 淺草社自費出版). A poem-like manifesto on the opening page was complemented at the end of the issue with a more prosaic statement of the aims of the organization, signed by one of its founders, Lin Ruji 林如稷:

We do not dare to speak loftily of any literary ism (zhuyi 義), nor do we dare to use that traditional erroneous notion of putting out a sign and telling people we are unique.

We are unwilling to be affected by the vulgar habit of ‘literary men disparaging one another’ (wenren xiangqing 文人相輕), turning the untainted garden of art into a manure pit, where maggots fight for food.

In fact, in China’s immature—we believe that is what we are—literary arena, all one can hope for is that all kinds of literary isms sprout forth like bamboo shoots after the rain. The dream of unification we dare not and will not dream!

Writers of literature have suffered long enough from the scorn of society, even if this deserves to be borne by those common beggars of letters. But we believe that only those who are truly faithful to art can

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11 The journal, of which four issues were published between March 1923 and February 1925, was reprinted by Shanghai shudian in 1984.
understand real works of literature. Therefore we are only willing to cherish and encourage each other.

This is the attitude held by the associates of our little society. It is also what we wish for with the publication of this little magazine.\(^{12}\)

The rest of the article of which these are the opening lines is in part addressed to the other members of the society, who were scattered over four different cities (Beijing, Nanjing, Shanghai, Tianjin). Lin Ruji explains, for instance, why the first issue, which he edited, does not contain a criticism section, in a statement that seems clearly addressed not to the general readership but to his fellow society founders:

We associates are determined not to criticize any works by any current Chinese writers. Moreover, we shall never discuss other people’s criticism of us, but let others judge by themselves, in order to reduce conflicts. For this reason I have decided to leave out the criticism section. This is a change from the editorial principles we drafted for the first time last year...\(^{13}\) (emphasis added)

The passage indicates that the Low Grass Society existed at least a year before the journal came out and that meetings and perhaps other literary activities were held by the founding members, presumably when they were all still studying in Beijing.\(^{14}\) It also indicates that Lin took these meetings, and therefore the institutional level of the society, seriously, and wished to abide as much as possible by its decisions. In the same piece, Lin also calls upon his fellow members to send in manuscripts for the second issue of the journal, which will be edited by one of the other members.

The Low Grass Society achieved rapid success and, typically, relinquished much of its independence in the process. Already in the second issue of Low Grass (July 1923) it was announced that the society was to publish a second organ: a trimonthly supplement to The Republican Daily News, once the stronghold of the core members of the Southern Society, entitled Wenyi xunkan 文藝旬刊 (Literary Arts Trimonthly). Following the example of the Literary

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\(^{12}\) ‘Bianzhe zhuihua’ 編者敘話 (Words from the Editor), Qiancao 1:1, section ‘Zalu’ 雜錄 (Random Records), p. 1.

\(^{13}\) Ibid. (1–2).

\(^{14}\) Fan Quan (1993:347) gives 1921 as the founding date and describes the founding process of the society, as well as its later development into the Sunken Bell Society (Chenzhong she 沈鐘社). Fan Quan (349) also cites the high praise given to the poets of this society by none other than Lu Xun.
Association’s *Literature Trimonthly*, with which it was perhaps meant to compete, this supplement contained more essayistic than literary writings. It apparently lasted for fifty issues, changing into a weekly after the twenty-first issue. Also like the Literary Association organ, the Low Grass Society used its supplement partly as a newsletter to maintain contact between members and strengthen the collective identity of the organization. In the seventh issue (6 September 1923), an obituary for a deceased society member appeared on the front page of the supplement. From the tenth issue (16 October 1923) onwards, a section called ‘Ben she xiaoxi’ 本社消息 (News from Our Society) began to appear irregularly. Later retitled ‘Tongxun’ 通訊 (Correspondence), the sole aim of this section was to allow members to keep in touch, as many had travelled abroad for study. Paradoxical as it may sound, the management and the readership of *The Republican Daily News* apparently had no problems with the fact that a small literary collective was using up space in a mass-distributed newspaper to publish letters exchanged among its members. As I shall argue in Chapter Six, within the New Literature style the societal and the textual continued to be seen as interconnected and knowledge of the people behind the texts was appreciated by many readers, and gladly provided by many writers.

Another way in which the Low Grass Society enhanced its public profile in the pages of *Literary Arts Trimonthly* was by publishing reviews of its own quarterly journal. Meanwhile, the quarterly itself, from the third issue (December 1923) onwards, was published and distributed by the Taidong Bookshop, which also published the Creation Society journals. One of the ‘News from Our Society’ columns in *Literary Arts Trimonthly* explained this move in a somewhat apologetic fashion, by pointing out that there were not enough members to take care of the printing and distribution. However, the takeover by Taidong can also be seen as a measure of success, which certainly not all societies managed to accomplish. The growing distinction between successful and unsuccessful individuals and groups within the ever-expanding New Literature community gave rise to another strategy employed by aspiring writers and

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15 Information provided in Fan Quan 1993 (347). I have only seen the first twenty issues of the trimonthly in the 1981 reprint of *The Republican Daily News*.
16 See *Wenyi xunkan* 3 (26 July 1923), 4 (6 August 1923) and 6 (26 August 1923).
collectives throughout the 1920s and 1930s. This was the strategy of posing as an ‘unknown author’ (wuming zuojia 無名作家, literally ‘un-famous author’). In the next sections, I look at some examples of this strategy as employed by literary societies of the period.

**Unknown authors**

From the beginning, one of the strong points of the Low Grass Society was its ability to establish contacts with other similar groups from all over the country. The Low Grass quarterly always contained many simple advertisements for publications of such groups. In the second issue, a list of sixteen journals was published with which the Low Grass Society had established ‘exchanges’, probably meaning that they exchanged copies of and advertisements for each other’s journals.\(^{17}\) Printed on the (unnumbered) page across from this list, however, one finds an advertisement-like announcement containing, as far as I know, the earliest occurrence of the programmatic use of the term ‘unknown author’, which was to appear with great frequency in literary discourse during the following decades. The announcement is worth translating in full:

**Unknown Authors Society Agreement**

(Previous page: "Unknown Authors Society Agreement"

1. Name: **Unknown Authors Society**.

2. Nature: To put effort into the study and creation of literature.

3. Membership: All unknown authors can join. No introductions necessary.

4. Enterprises: First to bring out a regularly appearing publication, as an organ for publishing research and opinions; then to engage in as many editing, translation and publication enterprises as possible.

5. Duties: Each member must pay an annual fee of two yuan. Those who do not pay shall not enjoy the rights mentioned under (6) below.

6. Rights: Members have the right to elect officers, to submit manuscripts without restrictions and to purchase this society’s publications at a discount.

\(^{17}\) *Qiancao* 1:2 (July 1923): 136.
7. Officers: One editor, one secretary *cum* treasurer, one distributor.

8. Elections: Once a year, to be held during the annual general meeting, with the exception of [the election of] the editor.

9. Meetings: An annual general meeting will be held each year in mid-August to report on all current affairs of this society. Provisional meetings can be called by the officers.

10. Correspondence: Our temporary correspondence address is: Mr Yang Yongxue, No. 4 Normal School, Nanjing.

APPENDIX

By-laws of the first regular publication:

1. This publication will be called *Unknown Authors*.

2. Publication will be twice a month, one large page, approximately 14,000 characters.

3. Content sections: Discussion, research, creation, translation, reading notes, random jottings, etc.

4. The first issue will appear on 1 September 1923.

5. Contributions are welcome, but only remunerated with a copy of this publication.

I do not know if this society ever did anything other than publish this ‘agreement’. The journal *Unknown Authors* is certainly nowhere to be found, and one would almost be tempted to consider the possibility that the announcement was a hoax. Even if it were, however, it introduced a very powerful concept into literary discourse. Its strategic usefulness was instantly recognized by the members of the Low Grass Society themselves, who used it in a manifesto-like proclamation in the first issue of *Literary Arts Trimonthly*, printed on the fold between the first and the last page of the supplement, a space commonly used for all kinds of advertisements and announcements. The text of the proclamation read as follows:

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18 Fan Quan (1993:579) deals with the society in one line and also has no information about any publications.
Special Announcement by This Supplement

This supplement has obtained the support of The Republican Daily News and was founded on 5 July [1923]. Its content is purely [devoted to] the study of literary arts.

We shall adopt a completely open attitude and we welcome submissions. For we believe that among writers in China, apart from the famous ones, there must be countless unknown authors. Therefore we very much hope that unknown practitioners of the literary arts will come and help us. However, we do not accept any attacks or unreasonable criticism. Manuscripts may be sent to The Republican Daily News.

The members of the Low Grass Society employed the concept of the ‘unknown author’ to attract contributors, without openly polarizing against ‘famous authors’. However, the distinction itself contained the seeds of polarization, and before long the term ‘unknown author’ became part of avant-garde discourse. Unknown authors came to represent not only an untapped resource of literary talent, but also a community of artists who were more talented and more committed to literature than the establishment which ‘oppressed’ them. Some perfect examples of this phenomenon can be found in the journal Bailu 白露 (White Dew).

White Dew, edited by ‘The Literary Arts Research Association of the Progress Society’ (Jin she wenyi yanjiu hui 進社文藝研究會), began publication in November 1926, and was another avant-garde New Literature venture supported by Taidong publishers. Moreover, for a very short while during 1926, the same Association, like the Low Grass Society before it, also ran a literary supplement to The Republican Daily News, even under the same name of Literary Arts Trimonthly. So what kind of an organization was the Literary Arts Research Association of the Progress Society, and how did they fight the cause of the unknown author?

The Progress Society and the attacks on celebrities

The third issue of White Dew, dated December 1926, carried a call for members of the Progress Society, in which the aims of the society were described as follows:

This society aims to unite ambitious young people (you zhi qingnian 有志青年) from all over the country, to engage, on the basis of the
principles of division of labour and mutual aid, in academic debate and cultural propaganda, in order to attain social reform. We were established three years ago. Branch societies have been established in various places. We strive to spread our work among the people. As far as academic research is concerned, we have already established branch societies for social sciences, natural sciences and literary arts in Beijing, Guangdong and Shanghai. As far as publications are concerned, we are exerting all our efforts to plan their further development. […]

The statement was signed by a Yang Youjiong 楊幼炯 at Fudan University. A similar announced appeared in White Dew in May 1927, this time unsigned. The aims of the Progress Society were restated. It was further stated that ‘young comrades’ had been coming forth in large numbers to join the society. The society would still accept every applicant expressing his or her honest opinion about the society and introducing his or her recent activities. Applicants were reminded that one must first become a member of the ‘main branch’ (zongshe 總社) before joining one of the three branches. Finally, in an editorial in the next issue, the activities of the society were introduced in more detail, and immediately appeared much less impressive than the various announcements had made them seem. As it turned out, the journal White Dew was the only publication of the society in print at the time and it was, as mentioned above, produced under the responsibility of the Literary Arts Association of the society. The Social Sciences Association had announced the publication of The Social Sciences Magazine, forthcoming with Taidong publishers, but not yet in print. Two branch societies in Guangzhou and Nanjing had published short-lived journals, which had closed down due to lack of funding. Naturally, this modest output need not mean that
society activity at the local level was equally limited, but *White Dew* contains no records that might corroborate such an assumption.

Compared to the main branch of the society, its Literary Association adopted a much more belligerent stance. Already in the first issue of *White Dew*, a short notice was printed on the copyright page, stating the following:

>This journal is of a pure literary nature. We sincerely welcome all unknown young authors from inside and outside China (guo neiwei qingnian wuming zuojia 國内外青年無名作家) to contribute. We regret, however, that we cannot accept any so-called masterpieces by celebrities (mingliu jiezuo 名流傑作).²³

In the second issue, the Association published its own manifesto, full of hyperbolic language comparing, among other things, literature to a burning torch, stimulating alcohol, a revealing and moving painting and a tender rose. In by now familiar language, the author of the manifesto and main motivating force of the Association, Wang Baoxuan 王寶瑄, deplored the decline of society and of literature, and called upon all like-minded young people to “come and work with us; the *Muse* is smiling and holding out her arms.”²⁴ Some of the language of this manifesto demonstrates the fact that avant-garde positions within the literary field can be occupied with the help of any available literary ideology. Even though the style of the manifesto resembles that of the earlier Creation Society, the content is more reminiscent of the latter’s nemesis, the Literary Association and its supposed stance of ‘art for life’s sake’. In Wang Baoxuan’s words:

>The comrades of the Progress Society have become aware of the closeness and importance of the relationship between literature and life. Moreover, we feel that until now our contributions to the literary arts have truly been too irregular, and too listless, therefore we have organized a Literary Arts Association in order to continue the work of the great historic calling, so that our thoughts and works can gradually move up the right track of literary art, and step onto the level road of life...²⁵

²³ ‘Benkan qishi’ 本刊啓事 (Announcement by This Journal), *Bailu* 1 (November 1926), unnumbered page on inside back cover.
²⁴ Ibid. ‘Muse’ in English in original.
²⁵ Ibid.
The same mix of avant-garde rhetorics with a famous slogan related to the Literary Association can be found in an announcement at the beginning of the third issue of *White Dew*, signed by the Literary Arts Association of the Progress Society, which is worth quoting in full:

**United Front of Unknown Authors**

Idols have seized the palace of literary arts. Since then talent has been buried forever. Unknown authors have been obliterated. We cannot continue to be weak. We must leap to our feet like an angry lion. We must shower the paper with our blood and tears. Unknown authors, are you still not coming here?

Here is the garden where the flowers of your mind can wildly blossom. Here is our united front! We shall attack the bogus writers with full force. We aspire to be the loyal servants of the literary arts. Oh, unknown authors, *White Dew* welcomes you!

The Literary Arts Association of the Progress Society

In a slightly later article by Gu Fengtian 谷鳳田 (1927), entitled ‘Qilai, women de zhanshi!’ 起來, 女人de戰士！ (Arise, Our Fighters!), the author combines the unknown authors’ stance with a double rupture, as follows:

[T]hose shameless, unfilial beings calling themselves literary writers, they have committed blasphemy against our most lofty, most sacred God of the Literary Arts! What’s more, they have been allowed to pollute our most esteemed Garden of the Literary Arts! It is they who are wearing the masks, it is they who are pulling mischief and stirring up trouble (*zhuang gui zuo guai* 装鬼作怪), who have come to trample on the Garden of the Literary Arts, and therefore our Garden of the Literary Arts has been unable to produce even a few splendid flowers! Let us open our eyes and see. It does not matter to what society they belong, or to what association. It does not matter if they pedantically call their publications ‘self-sponsored’. Can we see any collective that isn’t full of demons (*yaomo* 妖魔), full of stench? Have pity on the sacred and pure God of the Literary Arts, who has been fouled by them! And on the verdant garden of literary arts, which has been violated by them! As for those filthy, smelly beggars of letters (*wengai* 文丐), let’s not even talk about them. How about those dog-like self-styled literary writers, which of them doesn’t stink all over? [...] *All who are our comrades, come stand by our side, we must form a huge united front,*

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26 ‘Wuming zuojia lianhe zhanxian’ 無名作家聯合戰線 (United Front of Unknown Authors), *Bailu* 3 (December 1926), unnumbered page following table of contents.
Somewhat surprisingly, the aggressive style of criticism employed by the White Dew authors (more examples of which in Chapter Six), is not reflected in their literary work at all. Much of the fiction published in the journal during these years, by authors such as former Southern Society member Liu Wuji, is relatively well written, if overly sentimental, but rarely particularly inflammatory or confrontational. It is my impression that those who employed the unknown author epithet were generally fully aware of its strategic nature. The fact that, during the 1920s, the Taidong bookshop was supporting a number of groups using similar strategies indicates that a commercial aspect was also involved. Nevertheless, it remains striking to see how many groups and individuals were tempted to style themselves as unknown authors.

The term returns regularly in the 1930s, when more attempts were made to unite unknown authors in large collectives. Meanwhile, the commercial overtones became stronger. In many manifestos and editorials, the unknown author was portrayed as an aspiring writer with much talent but few connections, whose eager attempts to get published were constantly frustrated by journal editors only interested in buying manuscripts from famous authors. The plight of the unknown author eventually became an issue of debate in literary circles in Shanghai, taking the term beyond its initial strategic usefulness. There was concern about the fact that the quality of the work of established authors was suffering under the pressures put on them by journal editors wanting to buy their manuscripts. There was also acknowledgement of the fact that such editorial behaviour violated principles of quality and made it difficult for newcomers without connections to publish work of possibly high quality. Many journals, not just avant-garde ones, began to include specific statements in their colophons that they welcomed contributions by

27 See, for instance, Liu’s story ‘Shengdan ye’ (Christmas Eve), Bailu 7 (February 1927): 23–34.
28 Fan Quan (1993: 156–7) mentions the ‘Organization of Unknown Authors’ (wuming zuojia zuhe 無名作家組合), founded in 1931 and the ‘Unknown Literary Arts Society’ (wuming wenyi she 無名文藝社), founded in 1933. Another journal for unknown authors, entitled Wuming yuekan 無名月刊 (Unknown Monthly), was announced in Zhongguo xin shu yuebao 2:7 (July 1932): 34.
unknown authors. Zhang Ziping’s journal *Jieqian* 潔茜 even went so far as to publish a special issue in which all contributions were published anonymously, challenging the reader to see if s/he could tell the difference between the works of known and unknown authors. As we shall see in Chapter Six, Zeng Jinke 澤今可 was even more skilful in exploiting both the strategic and the commercial potential of the term.

The term ‘unknown author’ was originally a strategic notion employed by avant-garde collectives eager to present themselves to the literary community. Later, it also became a topic of debate among literary figures worried about editorial practices and interested in cultivating hidden talent. In both cases, the underlying assumption was that literature was not merely a serious vocation, but one that could yield profits to those involved, in the form of financial gains (fees, royalties) and especially symbolic gains (fame, recognition, being published). Those who had gained fame were viewed with suspicion, while those who had not were encouraged to come and get it. From a strategic perspective, labelling oneself as unknown was one of the best ways to become known.

*Other societies and collectives of the 1930s*

The examples discussed above show that many were aware of the strategic nature of the unknown author label. Some of the manifestos I quoted should at least partly be read as forms of posturing, which were sometimes even tongue-in-cheek. Strategic thinking and polarization were typical of many literary sphere societies of the Republican period, especially during the first decade or so of the development of New Literature. There were, however, plenty of other groups which engaged much less actively in the ‘fame game’ and paid more attention to their own collective activities.

A good example is the Tender Age Society (*Hualing she* 華齡社), which I have been unable to trace in any reference work, but which was apparently quite active on the literary scene in Chongqing.

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29 *Jieqian* 1:2 (September 1932). This information is based on advertisements in other journals and references in bibliographies. I have not seen this journal, of which only two issues came out.
around 1935. In an issue of their journal *Lanman* (Romantic), published on 15 June 1935, appears a letter from one of the members who had apparently left the city, under the title ‘Sheyou zhi yin’ (The Voice of a Fellow Member). On the next page, there are three announcements for society members: the first urges everybody to keep the ‘secretary of the standing committee’ (changweihui shuji) informed about changes of address; the second announces the holding of a tea party for members on 30 June and the third mentions the publication of special summer holiday issues of both journals published by the society, leading one to assume that most members were students. The rules for contributors are printed at the top of the copyright page, as was common in most journals. The first rule states that outside contributions (laigao) are welcome, except for poetry, which was the favoured genre of the society members. Further down, it is also stated that contributors whose work is published will receive either a fee or a free copy of the journal. The editor and distributor printed on the copyright page are both the Tender Age Publishing Society (Hualing chuban she), but one of the other two distributing institutions mentioned is a middle school in Shanghai.

Another example is the Beijing-based Spray Society (*Langhua she*), which, according to Fan Quan, counted between 100 and 200 members, holding fortnightly meetings to “discuss current literary issues or the works of society members” (Fan Quan 1993:355–6). In 1936, the society signed its name on the copyright page of its organ *Spray* as both editor and distributor, but used an equally large font to print the name of its general reseller, the Shanghai Journal Company, which distributed the journal to bookstores all over the country.

In the 1930s one also comes across several larger study societies, especially in universities in Beijing, publishing journals devoted to the study of classical literature or folk songs. Due to the fact that many of the contributors to these journals (and members of these associations) were accomplished writers, those organizations are sometimes considered part of the literary field. To me, it seems

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30 I consulted an incomplete set of this journal in the journal library of the Modern Chinese Literature Archives in Beijing.
32 *Langhua* 1 (1936), back cover.
unlikely that their journals, such as *Wenxue nianbao* 文學年報 (Literature Yearbook), played an active role in either material or symbolic literary production. One thing to be kept in mind, however, referring to Chapter Seven on literary censorship in the 1930s, is that frequently censored, banned and persecuted authors like Guo Moruo were able to publish academic articles in these journals without any problems.

In 1930s Shanghai, meanwhile, a number of groups and publications emerged which restored the tradition of literary figures meeting over food, wine and tea (and increasingly coffee), but with the participants commonly being adherents of New Literature. These were public sphere organizations, belonging both to the literary life and the social life of certain members of the Shanghai cultural élite. The two most visible, and probably largest of these groups are treated below.

*Tea Talk*

In 1932, a group of people from Shanghai’s literature and art circles, including a number of returned students from France, began holding meetings in Shanghai every Sunday under the name ‘Literature and Art Tea Talk Meeting’ (*wenyi chahua hui* 文藝茶話會). After the seventh meeting, the group came out with its own journal, entitled *Wenyi chahua* 文藝茶花 (Literature and Art Tea Talk; hereafter *Tea Talk*). The first editor of the journal was Zhang Yiping 章衣萍 (1902 – 1946), but his involvement with the group was relatively short lived. From all accounts it appears that the three main motivators of the group, which continued to meet weekly and publish its journal monthly for the next two years, were Xu Zhongnian 徐仲年 (1904 – 1981), Hua Lin 華林 (1889 – 1980) and Sun Fuxi 孫福熙 (1898 – 1962). All three of them had studied in France, Hua and Sun specializing in art, whereas Xu obtained a Ph.D. in literature from the University of Lyon. Perhaps the most respected and revered member of the group, however, was the former Southern Society manager Liu Yazi.

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33 Zhang soon went on to launch a similar journal of his own, entitled *Wenyi chunqiu* 文藝春秋 (Literature and Art Spring and Autumn).
The reason behind the organization of the tea parties is explained in Zhang Yiping’s editorial in the first issue of the group’s journal. Zhang refers not only to the tradition of such meetings in China itself, but also to British literary clubs and, especially, to the French salons where, says Zhang, “there are beautiful ladies present”. All the writers involved in such gatherings in past and present are, assures Zhang, “our comrades and friends”. In a later passage in the same article, Zhang explains in more detail the function of the tea parties:

When the sun is sinking in the West, or under the clear moon and in the cool wind, we drink a cup of tea or two and eat a few snacks. Some of us tell a few stories, others crack a few jokes or draw a few cartoons. We do not need to be all seriousness and discuss literature and art; that’s what university professors are good at. The atmosphere of our literature and art floats among unwittingly uttered words and laughs, like drifting clouds and streaming water, moving as it pleases (dongjing ziru 動靜自如). We are all busy people, we are spiritual labourers, we have jobs. Our everyday life is always too dreary and too mechanical. Only the literature and arts tea parties can give us comfort, peace and happiness. It is a sophisticated (gaoshang 高尚) form of entertainment (xiaogqian 消遣), which benefits knowledge and emotions. Some people are better at speaking than at writing, others better at writing than at speaking, yet others better at painting than either writing or speaking. All that does not matter, because speaking and writing and painting are all expression, they are all good ways of expressing individual thoughts and feelings. We would like the spoken tea talk to have some success (you dian chengji 有點成績), therefore we are publishing this little Tea Talk. This is the only forum for our associates (tongren 同人) to express themselves freely—but we also hope that we can attract the attention of literary and artistic friends all over the country and all over the world, and that they accept or grasp our free expression and artistic taste (quwei 趣味). This we would enjoy and be thankful for. (Zhang Yiping 1932:1)

I have quoted Zhang Yiping at length because his comments provide a succinct introduction to the aesthetic values of the members of this group, values which centre around friendship and communication, combined with the urge to reach out to an audience and, of course, to have some success. Noteworthy is the suggestion that the tea talks are

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34 For descriptions of another, slightly earlier, Shanghai group with a strong French connection, namely the circle around father and son Zeng Pu and Zeng Xubai, see Fruehauf 1993 (143–5) and Lee 1999 (18–20).

35 In English in the original.
a form of sophisticated entertainment, which appears to be an attempt to distinguish the group’s activities from more common forms of popular culture. Similarly, Zhang’s comments about ‘university professors’, presumably a veiled reference to the literary scene in Beijing, can be seen as an act of distinction. Compared to the polarizing style of positioning discussed above, however, the style of the Tea Talk group appears to be more relaxed and more focused on the social element of literary activity.

In the second article of the opening issue, Hua Lin takes the same argument a step further, by approaching the matter from a nationalist angle. According to Hua, Chinese people at the time were over-indulging in ‘low level entertainment’ such as gambling, whoring and smoking. It would be the mission of the Tea Talk group to correct these bad habits by advocating “the sophisticated enjoyment of literature and arts” (wenyi de gaoshang yule 文藝的高尚娛樂). Hua goes on to note that in Europe, there are already many places where such enjoyment can be found, especially in coffeehouses. He then introduces a number of famous European coffeehouses that were frequented by writers and artists, also providing some pictures as illustration (Hua Lin 1932).

Finally, yet a different approach is taken in another article in the first issue, by Sun Fuxi. Sun emphasizes the fact that the tea talks are meant as a nice Sunday activity for people who are already in literary and artistic occupations. Apart from entertainment and relaxation, he also sees more practical advantages:

If you are an editor and are short of some stories or plays or similar goods (huose 貨色), you can solicit them at the Tea Talk meeting. If you have poems you want to sell, you can bring the goods to the meeting to get them off your hands. Since literature is your occupation, you must of course market your writings as best you can. There is nothing funny about that.

Day in day out we work hard in our jobs. On Sundays, we can look for some entertainment. The best thing is to interact with colleagues from literary and artistic circles, because we all have similar tastes.

People who are involved in literature and arts all have very sophisticated tastes. Entertainment is not the only goal. As we drink our tea and enjoy ourselves, perhaps a great work will be created. That would be a fortunate achievement. (Sun Fuxi 1932)

The Tea Talk meetings appear to have been relatively informal gatherings, where members could read or show new work to each
other, engage in discussion, or give humorous speeches. Although difficult to ascertain, it is likely that part of the content of the journal *Tea Talk* consisted of texts and of reproductions of paintings produced during or for the meetings. In a few cases, records of meetings, illustrated with pictures, were published in the journal. A good example is the record of the 59th *Tea Talk* meeting, held on 6 August 1933, published in the August 1933 issue of the journal. The meeting in question was dedicated to the work of the artist Zhou Bichu 周碧初, who was showing landscape paintings made in Suzhou during the summer. Rather than to translate the whole account, I paraphrase below the contents of the proceedings:

Sun Fuxi opens the meeting

Hua Lin introduces Zhou Bichu as one of his most hard-working friends. He comments on the use of colour in the new paintings, and adds that, now that Mr Zhou has found stable love, his paintings have become more cheerful.

Wang Yachen 汪亞塵 comments on Mr Zhou’s strong physique, which has enabled him to continue working under the scorching summer sun. He invites the organizer, Sun Fuxi, to comment.

Sun Fuxi explains that not he, but Xu Zhongnian, who is taking minutes, is the organizer of the meeting. He also comments on Mr Zhou’s hard work under the hot sun and lays a link to the use of colour in his paintings; explains how today’s little exhibition was organized; expresses the wish that other painters among the members will exhibit their work as well; and introduces Chen Yada 謝亞達, who has just returned from abroad.

Chen Yada explains he knows nothing about painting and would not know what to say. (In a note to the article, Xu Zhongnian explains that Mr Chen, before the meeting, had highly praised Zhou’s work.)

Wang Yachen explains that Mr Chen has never attended the *Tea Talk* meetings before; that he had run into him earlier that day and persuaded him to come along; that Mr Chen has been educated in Beijing and in France, where he studied art. He invites Mr Chen to report on the situation of Chinese art students in Paris.

Chen Yada says he is sad to say that, due to economic pressures, very few of his fellow students are able to devote all their time to studies. The less said about this the better.

Wang Yachen remarks that Mr Chen is like all great scholars: the more they know the less they say. He invites Mr Chen to bring along his works to a later *Tea Talk* meeting.
Lang Luxun 朗魯遜 returns to the topic of Mr Zhou’s paintings; says he at first did not believe that Zhou was going to Suzhou to paint. (Hangzhou would have been the logical option.) In response to Hua Lin’s romanticized theory of art (aiqinghua huihua lun 愛情化繪畫論), he notes that Mr Zhou went to Suzhou alone, and therefore has kept love and art separate.

Miss Rong Junli 榮君立女士 agrees with Lang and invites Mr Zhou to comment on the development of both his art and his love life.

Zhou Bichu says he is not good at talking and begins to blush.

Peng Rongzhen 彭榮楨 says that Mr Zhou’s work expresses his individuality. Art is like literature: there are many schools, and one of them is the expression of the author’s individuality. In art, the use of red, for instance, indicates the painter’s fiery nature (huoxing 火性). In Mr Zhou’s work, the colours are bright, therefore his character is optimistic, and his works give the viewer a feeling of pleasure.

Li Xiangrong 李向榮 says he has been to Suzhou and seeing Mr Zhou’s work makes him think of that experience.

Miss Xu Huifang 徐惠芳女士 states not to know much about art, but to enjoy viewing landscape paintings and imagining the scenery of places she has never visited. Although she is familiar with Suzhou, she thanks Mr Zhou for giving her the opportunity to roam through its scenery once more.

Miss Yu Xiwen 俞秀文 apologizes for not daring to speak, as it is the first time she attends.

Sun Zhigong 孫治公 does not understand art, but Mr Zhou’s works make him happy and he believes the artist is an optimist.

Li Lianggong 李亮恭 gives a short, humorous speech. It is his first visit to the Tea Talk (he does not live in Shanghai). There is ‘tea’ and ‘talk’ but he has not prepared any ‘talk’. Apart from tea and talk there is also famous art, which makes him very happy. Although he has nothing to say, he enjoys listening to the very literary and artistic talk of the others. He returns to the theme of the possible influence of Mr Zhou’s love life on his art, and asks Mr Zhou to either confirm or deny that.

Miss Fang Yuanshan 方宛珊女士 is not a good speaker and refuses to talk.

Miss Liu Xueya 劉雪亞女士 says her own paintings are vastly inferior to Mr Zhou’s. Mr Zhou’s paintings are good, just as good as his lover.

Chen Chengyin 陳承箴 is an outsider when it comes to art. To him, there are two types of art: the kind you understand and the kind you
don’t understand. The kind of art that you can understand gives the
viewer a feeling of ‘necessity’. Viewing such a piece of art, one feels a
connection between one’s own experiences and those of the artist, or
one is deeply impressed by the artist’s experiences, even though one
has not had such experiences oneself. He complements Mr Zhou on his
work, and especially likes the bright colours.

Xu Zhongnian refuses to comment on the paintings, as he does not
really understand art and, moreover, he has previously published a
review or Mr Zhou’s work. He does want to comment on Mr Zhou’s
hard-working attitude, which clearly shows that he engages in art not
for money nor for fame, but only for art itself. It is this attitude that
distinguishes him from some so-called ‘artists’ on the Shanghai scene
who are only after fame and money.

Zhou Bichu thanks everybody for their comments. At first he was
uneasy about agreeing to Sun Fuxi’s request to exhibit his paintings,
but because everyone present is familiar to him, he feels less uneasy.
As for the interest in his love life, he does not dare to say that it is
stable, for love is a mysterious thing. The future will tell.

Hua Lin says that Mr Zhou’s paintings show that he is completely
carefree (xin kuang ti pang 心曠體胖). He represents light in the
darkness of China. He clearly observes the darkness, but does not
mingle with it, and gives us light.

Lang Luxun says that, recently, every time he asked Mr Zhou about
his love life he had commented that it was ‘stable’. His denial just now
was just politeness, and everybody should wait for some good news in
two months’ time.

Sun Fuxi says that Hua Lin’s words sum up the artist’s character. As
for Mr Zhou’s blue skies, perhaps they are meaningless, perhaps they
are related to his love life, perhaps it is a bit of both. Sun thanks Mr
Zhou and thanks all those who spoke. (Xu Zhongnian 1933a)

Although the summary above does not do justice to the rhetorical
qualities of the original, it does convey what must have been the
typical atmosphere of the Tea Talk meetings. Members would engage
in a mixture of comical banter and friendly criticism. Their critical
statements would be predominantly concerned with the personality
and personal life of the author or artist.

Attendance to the meetings would vary, one of the largest
meetings probably being the 73rd Tea Talk meeting of 12 November
1933, which was commemorated with an official group picture of the
34 participants, published in the December 1933 issue of the journal.
A relatively large number of women would usually be present at the
meetings, and the female membership of the Tea Talk group was certainly larger than that of any other literary group at the time.

As we have seen above in Zhang Yiping's comment on the French salons, the male members of the tea talks considered female presence as part of the necessary atmosphere for their gatherings, and in their writings they often referred to the pleasure of having ladies (in most cases their partners36) present. The female presence was far from cosmetic, however, as many of the female participants were themselves active as writers and/or artists, and the contributions by female authors and artists to the journal Tea Talk were numerous and varied. Nevertheless, male members tended to emphasize gender issues in the context of the meetings, and their attitude towards the female members was one of lingering superiority, mixed with romantic-style gallantry and defiance of gender-related social conventions. As Wu Fuhui (1995:72) perceptively observes, however, the social critique was often mere veneer for the urge to write about sex, as in the following lines from a poem by He Deming 何德明, entitled ‘Dangfu qu 蕃婦曲 (Ballad of the Loose Ladies) (He Deming 1933). The poem is written in the form of a doggerel, and may well have been read at one of the Tea Talk meetings.

[...]

'Lust' has long been exclusive to men,
Women only show tenderness and shyness;
    Men cannot be cursed for this,
    It just means we have not yet figured it out.

Today I perform the 'Ballad of the Loose Ladies',
    I want to set 'love' and 'lust' free.
Let women no longer blindly observe chastity,
    Let them enjoy it just as much as men.

Writing poetry was a favourite activity of many members of the group. The content of their journal features poetry in a wide variety of styles, ranging from traditional song lyrics (ci 詞) to vernacular free verse. The April 1934 issue was devoted in full to the memory of the poet Liu Dabai 劉大白, who had died two years earlier and whose posthumous writings had been collected by another active member of the Tea Talk group, Zhong Jingwen 鍾敬文 (b. 1903). A

36 For a more detailed study of 'literary couples' of this period, see Findeisen 1999.
number of the contributions to that issue point out Liu Dabai’s interest in poetic form, and his ability to write in every possible style, including the new style, making his work in some sense exemplary for the aspirations of many of the members of the Tea Talk group.\(^{37}\)

The group’s prose writings, as found in the pages of its journal, are difficult to categorize under any single normative form, but appear relatively less indebted to tradition. Although the genre of xiaopinwen 小品文, favoured by many contributors to the journal, was a genre with traditional roots; it was theorized in an article by Xu Zhongnian (1933) in relation to the modern genre of prose poetry. Similarly, when Liu Yazi published a short autobiography in the journal, he pointed out that he had originally written something in the classical xingshu 行術 style, but had changed it into something more modern (in the vernacular) at the advice of his son. The journal also contained short fiction (mainly but not exclusively love stories), essays and criticism, and some articles introducing members of the group to the readership. Apart from Tea Talk, another journal related to this group is Yifeng 藝風 (Art Style) (1933–1936), which is very similar in appearance to Tea Talk and features many of the same contributors, but is almost exclusively devoted to art. Another related publication, which I have not consulted so far, is the China Daily News supplement Miluo zhoukan 繁羅周刊 (Milo Weekly), edited by Hua Lin, Xu Zhongnian, Li Baoquan 李寶泉 and Tianlu 天盧 (ps. Huang Tianpeng 黃天鵬). The establishment of this supplement was advertised in the first issue of Tea Talk, under the slogan “Elevate love through literature and art, beautify life through love” (yi wenyi 提高愛情, yi aiqing 美化人生). Finally, I have found scattered references to a newspaper supplement or journal entitled Xiao gongxian 小貢獻 (Little Contribution), edited by Sun Fuxi, which may have contained further reports of Tea Talk meetings. The journal Tea Talk folded after two juan of ten issues each, in the early summer of 1934. In the final issue, Xu Zhongnian promised that something new and ‘big’ would come in its place, but it is not clear what that was, and whether it ever

\(^{37}\) Similarly, the group’s interests in art were not restricted to traditional landscape painting but included modern art and foreign art. There was also some direct exchange with foreign art circles. The 87th Tea Talk meeting, held on 18 February 1934 and recorded in the March 1934 issue of Tea Talk, was devoted to a visit by the Italian artist Carlo Zanon.
materialized. Considering the involvement of Liu Yazi in the Tea Talk meetings and the similarities in style between the Tea Talk group and the old Southern Society, it is possible that Xu Zhongnian’s intriguing announcement hinted at some sort of revival of the Southern Society, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was indeed to take place the next year.38 Whether or not the Tea Talk meetings continued in Shanghai after the folding of the journal is also unclear.

*The Chinese branch of the International P.E.N.*

Perhaps the most astute example of how post-1949 canonization processes have completely reversed the original distribution of symbolic capital in the modern Chinese literary field is the fact that the Chinese branch of the highly prestigious International P.E.N. has sunk almost totally into academic oblivion. Fortunately, there now exists a superbly researched article by Chen Zishan 陈子善 (1998:404–51) which minutely details all the activities of the branch, and on which the cursory overview below is based.

The first Chinese member of the International P.E.N. was Liang Qichao 梁啓超, who was awarded an honorary membership in 1923. On 16 November 1930, however, an official Chinese P.E.N. branch was established39 and henceforth represented at International P.E.N. meetings in Europe. The first president of the branch was Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, who was supported by the journalist Ge Gongzhen 戈公振 as secretary and the poet Shao Xunmei 邵洵美 as treasurer.40 The membership of the branch consisted by and large of literary figures associated with four better-known collectives, some of which were no longer in existence at the time. They were the Literary Association, represented by its former key members Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 and Lu Yin 廈隱; the Crescent Moon

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38 According to Daruvala 2001, ways of reviving the Southern Society were constantly discussed in circles around Liu Yazi throughout this period.
39 One of the many accomplishments of Chen Zishan’s article is that it proves that only this date, and none of the other dates mentioned in various reference works, can have been the actual founding date of the Chinese P.E.N.
40 For a full-length article on Shao Xunmei, which touches upon his involvement in the Chinese P.E.N., see Hutt 2001. For Shao, see also Fruehauf 1993 and Lee 1999 (241–57).
society, represented by Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 and Hu Shi 胡适; the group around the journal *Lunyu* 論語 (The Analects), most notably Lin Yutang 林語堂 himself; and the *Truth, Beauty and Goodness* group, including Zeng Pu and Zeng Xubai. The branch meetings were also attended by members of the Tea Talk group and other Shanghai literary figures such as Wang Lixi 王禮锡, Zhang Kebiao 章克標, Zhang Ruogu 張若谷, Zhang Yiping, Zeng Jinke and Yu Xiuyun 虞岫雲.

Before his untimely death in 1931, Xu Zhimo was the main motivator of the branch, and was even planning to publish a branch magazine. In accordance with its constitution, the branch held monthly dinner parties in Shanghai, and pledged not to discuss politics, an attitude which it maintained even after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Both its political stance and its way of gathering at dinner parties were scorned by members of the League of Left-Wing Writers, which was founded in the same year and considered the branch a ‘bourgeois organization’. When the branch entertained fellow P.E.N. member George Bernard Shaw at dinner in February 1933, however, the chairman of the Left League, Lu Xun, did make an appearance, although his report of the event is highly satirical (Lu Xun 1981, 4:494–9). Between 1930 and 1933, the branch was relatively active in terms of social gatherings and entertaining foreign visitors. After 1933 it led a dormant existence until 1935, when it was briefly revived, again under the leadership of Cai Yuanpei, until the outbreak of the War of Resistance.

One of the most regular attendants of the Chinese P.E.N. meetings in the early 1930s was Zeng Jinke, who claimed that his career as a writer took off as a direct result of his involvement with the branch, as is explained by Zeng himself in the preface to his first collection of short stories:

> Because members of the P.E.N. must have published works, I cannot but force myself to print these few short stories. It’s really a funny thing: the members of the P.E.N. in all countries of the world have all joined after they had published works, but I have had no option but to publish this collection of short stories exactly because I have joined the P.E.N. as a member. (Zeng Jinke 1933:161)

Apart from attending the meetings, Zeng also regularly reported on them in his journal *Xin shidai* 新時代 (The New Era), which I shall discuss in detail in Chapter Six.
In this chapter, I have discussed literary and public sphere organizations of the 1920s and 1930s, their activities, and the styles they adopted in order to position themselves within the literary field. From the materials I have presented, two conclusions can be drawn that are relevant to the central argument of this book, that continuity between traditional and modern Chinese literature is to be found in its social, rather than its textual characteristics. Firstly, it has become clear that collective literary activity continued to take place on various scales throughout China, and that such activity was by no means limited to the Shanghai scene, even if many society organs were printed there and distributed from there. This means that the material modernity of Shanghai was not an overly dominant factor in the shaping of styles of literary behaviour. Secondly, this chapter has shown that literary collectives in Republican-era China were not merely instruments of the avant-garde, although the avant-garde style of positioning was certainly prominently present, and even became institutionalized through the concept of the ‘unknown author’. Other, less polemical styles of gathering and publishing were equally available and visible, including that of the Tea Talk group, which valued sociability and inclusiveness over polarization and exclusion.

In the next chapter, I return to the beginning of the Republican era, to trace the emergence of modern textual styles, related to the new medium of the literary journal, to propose a reading strategy that can complement the historical study of literary societies, and to lay the groundwork for the analysis of style boundaries and conflicts that were to become more and more apparent as the era progressed.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE COLLECTIVE AUTHOR AND THE HORIZONTAL READER: AESTHETIC DIMENSIONS OF LITERARY JOURNALS

This chapter is concerned with two problems, one of method and one of value. Both follow from one of the main observations made in the previous chapters, namely that literary journals were the primary medium of literary production in Republican China. By this I do not mean that there were more literary journals published than literary books at any given time during this era, although even that argument, backed by the necessary statistics, could perhaps be made. What I do mean is that virtually all literary work by all literary writers of the Republican era was primarily written for publication in journals. The vast majority of literary works of this period appeared in journals before they appeared in book form. This was even true for novels, which were often serialized in journals.¹

In view of this, it is astonishing how rarely scholars and critics who read and interpret literary texts from this period take the fact of journal publication into account, preferring to lift certain poems, stories or essays out of their context before applying a critical apparatus to them. In this chapter, I propose to take a different approach, one that arguably does more justice to the publishing practice and the collective literary activities surrounding the production of literary works in this period. I call this approach ‘horizontal reading’, to emphasize the spatial relation between texts published in the same issue of the same journal. I do not insist upon this method as the only valid one for interpreting Republican-era literature. In fact, in subsequent chapters I shall return to a more traditional approach which focuses on contributions by individuals. However, I believe it is necessary to attempt this alternative way of reading, if only because it shows how much modern Western

¹ The journal continues to be an important medium in China even nowadays, and the phenomenon of novels being serialized in literary journals, or sometimes even published in one issue, continues to exist. Although this is a fascinating example of continuity, it lies well beyond the scope of the present study.
conceptions of the nature of texts and of authorship are taken for granted when dealing with literary texts that came forth from a significantly different practice. Moreover, I believe the method I have developed also provides alternatives to the standard way of teaching Republican-era literature. Finally, I have found that using this method leads to new ways of articulating the literary and cultural value of the texts involved. In this chapter, I limit my examples of horizontal readings to the period of the 1910s, focusing on the more or less commercial journals published in Shanghai during that period, which I referred to briefly in the context of my discussion of the Southern Society in Chapter Two. During the 1910s, a wide variety of literary styles was available to journal writers, without there being any clear or rigorous polarization between different camps. What happens when this polarization does occur is discussed in Chapters Four and Five. Below, I shall first introduce my method of reading and its rationale in more detail.

Defining literary journals

Before even beginning to discuss approaches to literary journals of the 1910s, the question must be asked whether it is possible to define, at least to some extent, what a literary journal is or should be, in order to be able to defend decisions to include some journals in the analysis, while leaving others out of consideration. In general studies of literary journals of other countries, this problem has also been recognized, and the approach found the most sensible has usually been that of maximum inclusiveness. For instance, in Edward E. Chielens's monumental research guides on American literary journals (1975; 1977), space is devoted to highbrow journals and pulp journals, to journals with nation-wide distribution and regional journals, to commercial and non-commercial journals, and to ‘big’ and ‘little’ magazines. Nevertheless, the assumption that it should be possible to distinguish a literary journal from a non-literary one is present in Chielens's work, and for good reasons. The rise of journal publication, and of print culture in general, in most societies went hand in hand with the development of professionalism, specialization and compartmentalization. In the ‘Introduction’ to a recent collection of essays on Victorian periodicals, mention is made of
an emergent professionalism throughout the nineteenth century in nearly all walks of life. [...] One sees how periodicals influenced the progress of the “professional” writer, how the successful pursuit of international copyright laws, the royalty system, and the literary agent tended to “elevate the prestige of authorship” and also to create a “sociology of authorship”. (Vann & VanArsdel 1994:5)

It follows from this that recognizing boundaries between journals from different fields is not only possible, but is indeed a continuing legacy from the early heyday of periodical publication. In China in the 1910s, similar processes of professionalization were at work. The concept of wenxue 文學 had, from the late Qing onwards, developed a more specialized meaning (cf. Huters 1987; 1988; Andrš 2000), while the even more popular concept of xiaoshuo 小說 often also seemed to be endowed with a meaning almost as broad as that of the English ‘literature’, yet narrow enough to avoid confusion with other types of writing. Moreover, in terms of, for instance, editorial practice, boundaries were drawn between literary and non-literary journals. This is most easily recognized by looking at journal colophons, which usually contain a section specifying the type of contributions welcomed. Invariably, these contain calls for submission of fiction (long or short, translated or original), various forms of short prose and essay writing, often drama, as well as poetry, and writings about literature. Apart from that, the colophons also regularly ask for submission of visual material (pictures and illustrations). This habit of making literary magazines also visually attractive might provide some initial justification for considering illustrations as part of the aesthetic universe of modern Chinese journal literature.

Having established that the category of ‘literature’ can be and has been sufficiently narrowed down in this period, the next question should be whether or not the category is too narrow. If all literary journals of this period would be extremely similar in form, style and content (as they were often dismissively considered to be by their later rivals in the New Literature community), if there were no clearly distinguished ‘positions’ in this ‘field’, if there were no rivalry between competing groups or individuals, the use of the term ‘literary journal’ might be an imposition. Although the rich variety in

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2 I am grateful to Denise Gimpel for introducing this book to me.
3 For more on the definition of xiaoshuo in this period, see Chapter Five.
content of each of the journals is clear for all to see and is, especially, in terms of the genres, styles and languages represented, frequently more impressive than that encountered in many later journals, the question is what distinguished journals from each other. What, for instance, would cause a reader in 1914 to buy or subscribe to Zhonghua xiaoshuo jie (The Chung Hwa Novel Magazine), rather than Yuxing (Leisure), Meiyou 眉語 (Eyebrow Talk), or Fanhua zazhi 繁華雜誌 (Plentiful Magazine). All four were monthly journals, but the former two cost only half the price of the latter two (0.20 yuan per issue versus 0.40 yuan per issue). The former two will probably also have been better marketed and more widely available, through the networks of their respective backing organizations, the Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 and the Shi bao 時報 (Eastern Times). These, however, are not literary considerations.

All four journals declared in their manifestos or opening statements (fakanci 發刊詞) to be interested in entertainment, but both The Chung Hwa Novel Magazine and Eyebrow Talk appear to be more apologetic, pointing out that what appears to be mere entertainment or play can serve a serious purpose. Plentiful Magazine, on the other hand, made it clear in its rules for submission that, true to its name, it wanted to be as varied as possible, but that it would not accept any texts that were political in nature. Leisure, starting its opening issue with a number of hilarious ‘laws and proclamations’ by the ‘Department of Leisure’ (yuxing bu 餘興部), unconditionally stated its intent to practise satire, including political satire.

Further distinctions become apparent as one leafs through the journals. Leisure is definitely a humorous journal, containing sections with jokes and funny stories and also a large number of cartoons. The journal remained in existence for a year, and was then succeeded by the very similar looking Huaji shibao 滑稽時報 (Comical Times), which, however, folded after one issue. The content of Plentiful Magazine is indeed varied and entertaining, containing, besides literary texts, regular sections on magic (moshu 魔術) and a section with games and riddles. It also contains texts in the huaji 滑稽 mode, including some speculations about how poetry might look in thirty

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4 The manifesto in the first issue of the journal explains the somewhat unusual title by referring to the arched shape of the moon each month at the time the journal appears. Another possible translation would therefore be Arch Talk.
years’ time. In the third (undated) issue of the journal, there are three anonymous ‘New Poems’ (xin shi 新詩) in traditional form but with grotesque imagery such as “Carps are flying over the trees / On the waves someone steps over black shells” (liyu fei zai shutou shang / bomian heren kua heiluo 鯉魚飛在樹頭上。波面何人跨黑螺。).

If new poetry was made a laughing stock, new drama apparently represented a strong interest of the thirteen (!) editors of Plentiful Magazine. Among the journals I have seen, it has one of the most distinctive regular ‘New Drama’ (xin ju 新劇) sections. Although it did not publish many drama texts, it featured extensive critical discussions of new drama theory and reviews of performances.

As Perry Link (1981:171) has pointed out, Eyebrow Talk clearly achieved its distinction by emphasizing the gender (or supposed gender) of its contributors. The journal was edited (in name only, according to Link) by a woman (Gao Jianhua 高劍華), with support from her partner Xu Xiaotian 許嘯天, who went on to develop his career in popular fiction journal editing that lasted at least until the 1930s. Three other women, whose pictures appear in the first issue, were claimed to be involved in the editing of the journal, and also contributed to it. According to the manifesto in the first issue, the contents of the journal were produced by talented women during their ‘time off work’ (zhiye zhi xia 職業之霞), and were meant to provide both entertainment and, indirectly, some moral guidance to both male and female readers. The rules for submission emphasized that contributions by women were especially welcome, but did not exclude male contributors.

Eyebrow Talk burst onto the literary scene in February 1914 with a first issue carrying a provocative cover (Illustration 1) portraying a Chinese woman wrapped in a long veil and baring one breast, entitled ‘Qingbai nu’er shen’ (Body of an Innocent Woman). The assumption that this was indeed a shocking cover is confirmed by the fact that it was removed or perhaps censored in later print runs. Whereas the copy of the first issue in the Shanghai library does have the said cover, the copy in the Hoover Library at Stanford has a different cover, featuring a fully clothed woman (Illustration 2). The content of the two issues is, as far as I can tell (the Stanford issue was badly damaged), completely identical. Even the title of the cover

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5 In the 1930s, Xu Xiaotian had a brief run-in with Zeng Jinke. See Chapter Six.
illustration, as given in the Table of Contents, has been left un­
changed.

*The Chung Hwa Novel Magazine* was perhaps the most prestig­
ious journal of the four, partly because of the reputation of its two
main contributors, Lin Shu 林紳 and Bao Tianxiao 包天笑, who both
serialized long novels in the journal. However, its serious and
professional attitude towards literature is also evident, for instance, in
its attention to literary theory, providing ample space for Lú Simian
呂思勉 (Chengzhi 成之) to serialize his ideas about the nature of
fiction (cf. Andrš 2000). The journal also attracted those who were
interested in Western ‘high literature’, so that, side by side with
translations of Conan Doyle stories, we also come across Liu
Bannong’s 劉半僧 translations of Turgenev and Tolstoy, and Zhou
Zuoren’s 周作人 translations of ancient Greek mimes. The *Chung
Hwa Novel Magazine*, together with its main competitor, *Xiaoshuo
yuebao* 小說月報 (The Short Story Magazine), published by the
rivaling Commercial Press, can be seen as cradles of the New
Literature movement.

Later on in the decade, literary journals specialized even further,
partly under the influence of leading personalities within the field. In
1917, Bao Tianxiao launched *Xiaoshuo huabao* 小說畫報 (Illustrated
Novel Magazine), a journal which exclusively published writing in
the vernacular. In 1918, Xu Zhenya 許枕亞 started *Xiaoshuo jibao*
小説季報 (Fiction Quarterly), an expensive highbrow publication
containing only original fiction, mainly in wenyan, and no
translations, and accepting short biji 筆記 texts only if they were
sent in as collections, not as individual pieces.

In short, I believe there is sufficient evidence to conclude that a
literary field did exist in this period, and that it does make sense to
single out literary journals as objects of investigation, or, for that
matter, to single out literary sections in general interest journals as
part of a specialized literary practice. Apart from journal publication,
this practice of course also involved book publication. The next

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6 See Chapter Five for more details.
7 The contents of the early *Short Story Magazine*, before its take-over by
members of the Literary Association, have been exhaustively described and analysed
in Gimpel 2001.
8 This rule, however, was not adhered to strictly, as the first issue contains at
least two translations.
question, therefore, should be what distinguishes the journal from other media, and what approaches are suitable for studying it.

*Approaching literary journals*

The most common way to approach literary journals is as a repository of texts to be studied within the context of a research framework that is unrelated to journals as such. The researcher may be looking for works by one particular author or related to one particular theme, or interested in the development of certain ideas. In many cases, the researcher will have collected materials from book publications or anthologies first, and will turn to the journals only to find either related texts that were never published in book form, or earlier, perhaps slightly different, publications of texts already encountered elsewhere. In addition, turning to these texts in their journal format will provide the researcher with essential context information. It will indicate whether or not the text or its author belonged to a particular group or school; it will provide some knowledge about the possible readership or possible debates surrounding the text; and, for instance in the case of serialized fiction, it will provide information useful for the analysis of the structure of a text. All these approaches are valid and widely practised, but for the present purposes they can be seen as involving a slight distortion of the nature of literary journals.

A journal issue arrives in the hands of the reader as a finished product, as a *text*, rather than a *context*. Upon receiving the text, the reader may decide to read it from cover to cover, to read only parts, or to skim through it hastily, similar to the various ways in which one can read, for instance, a novel. In other words, a journal issue, at least in the material sense and possibly in other senses as well, possesses a certain measure of *unity*, which, as in the case of a novel, can be emphasized by means of analysis and interpretation.

There are, of course, various reasons why this is not commonly done. For instance, the assumption of unity has implications for the concept of authorship. A journal issue seen as an analytical unit cannot be considered as the product of a single author. Instead, it can be considered in three alternative ways: as a collectively authored text, as the product of a single editor, or as an authorless collection of
‘voices’. All three of these actually would fit very comfortably within structuralist and post-structuralist notions of intertextuality and ‘the death of the Author’. But the fact that these notions are still predominantly applied only to texts that carry the name of one individual as their creator should be sufficient to realize that the Author is not quite so dead in Western theory, or at least not so dead as s/he could be. This is not the result of theoretical inadequacies but of actual publication practice.

Publishing in Europe (and I presume in America as well) has never moved beyond ‘the Author’, and book publications are endowed with symbolic capital only rarely possessed by journals. As a result, authors are reluctant to commit their entire literary production to journals and rather do so selectively, either in the form of first versions of texts later to be revised for book publication, or in the form of carefully selected pre-publications to create interest in a forthcoming book. Other institutions, for instance literary prizes, also continue to place the Author squarely in the centre of the literary field. Academic research on literature is still steered by this practice.

The literary practice of Republican China can be constructed differently. Aware of the risk of turning China into a convenient ‘Other’ for my own purposes, I would nevertheless like to suggest, backed by the evidence I have gathered from reading journals of the Republican period, that the journal occupies a much more central place in the structure of the literary field than it does in the West.\(^9\)

The first and foremost reason for this might appear to be an economical one: writers depended on the income they could gather from publishing their work in literary journals. As a result, every single work they wrote appeared in journals first before it came out in book form, often unrevised, indicating that book publication was not necessarily seen as possessing much higher symbolic value. At the

\(^9\) Taking a historical perspective it is possible to argue that in Western literature, too, there have been periods during which journal publication possessed much more significance than it does now. The introduction to Vann & VanArsdel 1994 emphasizes that the journal was the dominant medium for cultural production in Britain during the Victorian era. However, this does not invalidate my claim that most literary theories and methods employed by scholars in the West for the past five decades or so have been based on the assumption that book publications or texts by single authors are the only legitimate object of study. All that this means is that the Chinese situation is not the only one that challenges these underlying assumptions of most known literary thought.
same time, however, those who could easily afford not being so prolific or not publishing so profusely, because they were economically independent, would nevertheless adhere to the same practice. Regardless, then, of the fact that journals were viewed and used as commodities, they were the essential, dominant medium of literary production in Republican China. This raises a number of questions.

The first question is that of return on investment. If high productivity was the norm and long-term investment of time and energy in the production of a single (book-length) work was not considered a necessary strategy, what, besides fees and royalties, did authors expect to get in return for their efforts? Was there any kind of symbolic capital to be gained in this high-speed literary economy, and, if so, what were the norms for obtaining such recognition?

The second question, which follows from the first, is that of the status of the author. Is it possible that individual authors were not the sole key agents in this practice, and that therefore less investment was required of them? Does the trend of publishing in journals, and the habit of working in literary societies, force us to consider collectives, rather than individuals, to be the main operatives within the field?

And finally, if journals are collectively authored texts, should we not analyse their entire content, including the visual materials so specifically asked for in the rules for submission of so many journals of the 1910s, and so prominently present also in many journals of the later decades? And if this is the case, how do we describe and categorize that content? And how do we read it?

The first two questions are central to this study’s claims concerning literary styles of the Republican period. In that period, the preference for high-speed, collective periodical production appears to be shared by all types of literary writing, be it the New Literature, the so-called ‘Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School’, or anything in between. When approaching these seemingly so strongly opposed groups from an overarching, inclusive perspective, the differences between them become less clear. They appear to be differences of style, rather than of essence, and once this is realized, it is striking how often the participants in literary debates themselves call upon a very traditional notion of style, which sees the experiences of reading and writing as determined by shared norms. As a result of this, the
author is not the dominating, elevated figure of Western literary practice, but rather someone more familiar and on the same level as the reader, and someone whom the reader might genuinely get to know through reading the author’s writings.

With the literary and the personal intertwined like this, it is conceivable that authors’ prolificness, which is so striking a characteristic of this practice, stemmed not only from economic motives, but also from a wish to invest as much as possible in frequent contact with the reader. Establishing such contact within the boundaries of recognized norms or styles necessitated some sort of community building, which may offer a literary explanation for the practice of working in collectives.\textsuperscript{10} It also provides some explanation for another characteristic of modern Chinese literary practice, which can still be observed nowadays, namely the common attempts by writers and editors to persuade as many as possible of their ‘friends’ to get involved in writing and publishing, and to promote their work relentlessly, regardless of its quality. Journal publication, in other words, presupposes a poetics of \textit{intimacy} and \textit{immediacy}, with the literary text serving the need to share one’s thoughts, feelings and experiences with one’s readership in a fairly unmediated form, with the aim to entertain, to educate, or simply to communicate. The more effective this communication is, the higher the symbolic capital of the text (and its authors), regardless of the journal’s material status as a dispensable consumer product.

The attraction of literary journals of the 1910s, at least for this reader, is that they offer such a dizzying variety of styles and forms, yet without the mutual animosity that was to characterize the literary scene in the next two decades. In the 1910s, the modern literary field was ‘under construction’ so to speak, and although distinctions clearly existed, they had not yet become very pronounced. On the one hand, this poses extra difficulties in reading and interpretation, since it is difficult to apply some of the familiar distinctions that structure our understanding of later periods in modern Chinese literature. On the other hand, a more comprehensive reading strategy

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{10} As we have seen in the previous chapters, there were also non-literary, practical reasons for working in collectives, related to the time and effort needed to put together a journal.
\end{quote}
of the journals of the 1910s may well lead to a similarly comprehensive approach to the literature of the rest of the Republican era. Attempting to read the various different styles of writing present in journals of the 1910s as part of a large and varied literary practice points the way to an understanding of the literary field of later decades as consisting of different styles that inform and contextualize each other, rather than oppose or repress each other. The question of reading, to which I now turn, is therefore not devoid of larger significance. Below, I first present an overview of the different types of journal content that might be included in horizontal readings, before proceeding to more systematic reading attempts.

Elements of horizontal reading: covers and illustrations

Treating each issue of a literary journal as an independent literary text and interpreting it as a whole does not mean that one necessarily has to start at the beginning, i.e. by looking at the cover. Yet the cover will usually be the first thing readers notice and will determine to some extent their assumptions regarding the style of the journal and the people behind it. Especially beautiful covers can be found on the journal *Xiaoshuo shibao* (Fiction Times), of which I have seen twenty-four original issues from the period 1909–1914. Each cover of the large-size journal presents expertly made colour paintings of individual women, including a large number of working women, in a variety of surroundings and postures. The quality of the pictures on the first few pages of the first issue, in blue and green colours and framed in various kinds of artwork, is equally high. Most of these pictures continue the attention for the female physique announced on the cover, and give it a particular twist as pictures of Chinese, Japanese and French beauties are contrasted with a picture of bound feet, entitled ‘The Sorry State of China’ (*Zhongguo kuzhuang hua* 中国苦状畫). A more general interest in change and progress pervades the contents of the first issue, which includes short pieces on ‘new things and new creatures’ (*xin shi xin wu* 新事新物), complete with pictures, as well as a 58-page science fiction story in *baihua*. The general impression that this journal was certainly not meant to

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11 According to Zheng Yimei (1961:6), a total of 33 issues of this journal were published, the last one coming out in 1917.
provide conventional or mass entertainment is confirmed by its relatively high price, 0.80 yuan per issue, and by the inclusion of an advertisement in English in a later issue.

A particularly clear message appears to be given by the cover of no. 12, published in June 1911 (Illustration 3), showing a cheerful young woman, seated on the rings of Saturn, optimistically looking up to the stars, and waving the Imperial flag. Three issues later, in no. 15, a striking contrast appears as the cover shows a somewhat melancholic looking, sternly dressed woman, carefully supporting a lantern in the colours of the Republican flag (Illustration 4). Naturally this contrast is especially eye-catching for the ‘vertical’ reader, leafing through bound volumes in present-day library collections. Nevertheless, both covers could be promising starting points for readings of the issues on which they appear.

The importance of pictures and illustrations for the image and value of literary journals from this period can be established by looking at tables of contents and advertisements for other journals. The majority of illustrations and pictures (tuhua 图画) were located at the beginning of journal issues. The titles of the various pictures were invariably listed in the tables of contents and in advertisements for journals, as can be seen, for instance, from an advertisement for Funü shibao 婦女時報 (Women Times) in Fiction Times (Illustration 5). Illustrations were clearly an integral part of the content of journals of this period. To exclude the illustrations from readings of these journals is like excising a chapter from a novel.¹²

When reading the actual literary texts collected in a journal issue, one once again might come across illustrations. Text illustrations were not listed in the table of contents, but nevertheless formed part of the reading experience. Similarly, but less explicitly, the punctuation employed in texts of this period added, I would argue, a visual element to the reading experience, using various symbols to emphasize the parts of the text that the author (or the editor?) considered most important or beautiful. Readings and interpretations of texts could take these elements into account. At the very least, this type of punctuation must be seen as an important indicator of style.

¹² The entries in Zheng Yimei 1961 further corroborate the significance of illustrations. When describing the contents of journals of this period, Zheng always makes sure to mention the titles of what he considers to be the representative texts and the representative illustrations.
Since the later New Literature community was to discard this type of punctuation altogether, any journal using it could immediately be recognized as subscribing to a different set of literary views and norms.

*Elements of horizontal reading: table of contents, colophon, advertisements*

The case for including the table of contents, colophon and advertisements of journals in one's reading is less straightforward than the case for covers and illustrations presented above. One way to defend the inclusion of such materials is by arguing that the reception of a literary work is always to some extent determined by what is printed around it. This is a common assumption in the academic field of book history. The position is summarized by Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles in the introduction to their *Reading Books*:

Are [the advertisements included in a copy of Melville’s *Typee*] irrelevant because they do not represent the author’s intended meaning or because they are not an artefact of the book’s original culture of production, or are the sheets centrally relevant because they form part of the context of meaning for any reader who engages the particular edition or form of that text?

Our assumptions about where literary meaning resides will dictate our answer to this and other related questions. Early book historians like William Charvat reacted against the limits of New Critical definitions of literature as an ideal object, but they also worried that a more sociological study of the book could not capture “literariness.” The scholars represented in this collection conjoin literariness and materiality; they employ broad and sometimes amorphous definitions of the literary object, but they see and read a fundamental relationship between book and text. Illustrations, bindings, scholarly introductions—all function in their analyses as determinants of and participants in literary meaning. For none of these scholars is there a clear line between the “ideal” and the “material.” (Moylan & Stiles 1996:11)

Nonetheless, arguing that tables of contents, colophons and ads were, like illustrations, integral parts of the journal would be stretching the point. They may, however, in some cases have something to say about the journal as literary work. For instance, it makes a difference whether or not the table of contents of a journal mentions the names
of the authors of each contribution. In the later Republican era, it was common practice to mention the authors’ names, but in the 1910s it was not. Some journals mentioned only the content sections and/or the titles of individual contributions without mentioning the authors. Others, however, did not only mention authors’ names, but even offered to print authors’ pictures if they were sent in with their manuscript. These distinctions indicate slightly different positionings within the literary field and might in some cases influence readings and interpretations.

A special case might be made here for the position and status of the editors of journals of the 1910s. Even those journals that did not mention authors’ names in their tables of contents would often give prominent attention to the name of their editor, and editors’ portraits commonly adorn the opening pages of the first issue of any journal. In some cases, the status of the editor is elevated to such an extent that the name functions almost as that of an overall ‘author’ of the journal. For instance, on the cover of *Illustrated Novel Magazine*, we find, apart from the title, also the phrase “Manager: Bao Tianxiao” (*Bao Tianxiao zhuren* 包天笑主任). On the covers of the first three *juan* of *New Youth*, the editor is given even more symbolic capital, as the phrase next to the title reads: “Chief Contributor: Mister Chen Duxiu” (*Chen Duxiu xiansheng zhuzhuan* 陳獨秀先生主撰), with the word *xiansheng* clearly being used as an honorific. It is plausible that, for potential buyers and readers of these journals, covers like this performed a function similar to that of a book cover mentioning title and author.

Colophons were probably least likely to be read with much attention by any reader. On the other hand, part of the information that the researcher can obtain from the colophon, for instance the price of the journal and the places where it was distributed, represent knowledge that the historical reader would have possessed already or obtained in different ways (for instance by asking the bookshop assistant for the price). Moreover, the journal’s ‘rules for submission’, often printed as part of the colophon, would have been scrutinized by all those readers wanting to try their hand at writing themselves and/or looking for places to sell their manuscripts. Finally, in one case I have come across, a colophon provided an unlikely case of plagiarism: the colophon of the 1915 *Xiaoshuo hai* 小說海, a cheap small monthly journal, contains the same English title *(The Short
Story Magazine (Issued Monthly)), even printed in the same font, as the colophon of the famous Xiaoshuo yuebao.

Advertisements were separate from the content of a journal in the sense that their inclusion was usually beyond editorial control. The publishers' estimation of the type of readership of a particular journal would have influenced decisions about which ads to include in which journal. Readers would have noticed the ads and read them in some cases, and purchases may have resulted from this, but it is difficult to find any function for advertisements within the overall aesthetic structure of the journal. The amount and kind of advertisements included of course say something about the orientation of a journal. The presence of large numbers of ads changes the appearance of a journal and thereby, to some extent, its impact on the reader. It is questionable, however, to what extent it would matter what the advertisements are for. It is more interesting to look at the kinds of advertisements: whether they are predominantly for general consumer products, or predominantly for books and other journals. Studying advertisements for other journals, as we have seen above, has the added benefit that one can gather information about journals no longer extant.

An advertisement for the second issue of Xiangyan zazhi 香豔雜誌 (Enticing Magazine) even allows for a rudimentary horizontal reading of the journal. The advertisement (Illustration 6a) mentions that the first issue of Enticing Magazine sold more than 8,000 copies nation-wide, especially among female readers. The titles of the pictures in the tuhua section seem to indicate that they portray both well-known actresses or courtesans and female school principals, whereas the textual contents comprise a biography of Qiu Jin as well as poems and funny stories associated with women's quarters (gui 鬧). One is left with the clear impression that despite the claims about large numbers of female readers (how would that be measured anyway?) Enticing Magazine was predominantly meant to cater to a male audience.

In the 1910s, there were some journals containing hardly any advertisements, indicating either that they had sufficient financial backing to survive without them (such as New Youth in its later years) or that they were small scale (and inevitably short lived), such as the 1914 Xiaoshuo xunbao 小說旬報 (Fiction Trimonthly), which started out with the ambitious plan to publish thirty-six issues a year, but
folded after three. Relatively few journals of the 1910s seem to have been run in what would become the most common mode in the later Republican era, namely by literary societies, with the members of the society carrying most of the production costs, resulting in little need for advertising. Apart from the Southern Society publications, the only successful example from the 1910s I have seen is the journal *Shisheng* 詩聲 (The Sound of Poetry), published from 1915 to 1920 by the Xuetang Poetry Society (Xuetang shishe 雪堂詩社) based in Macao 澳門, with branch societies in Hong Kong and Yokohama. A less successful example is the 1913 *Huaji zazhi* 滑稽雑誌 (The Comical Journal), published in Suzhou. The first issue calls for readers to become members of the 'Comical Journal Society'. Upon payment of one yuan and sending in a picture, they would receive a society membership ID. The journal even contains the musical score of a kind of club anthem, entitled 'Huaji zazhi wansui' 滑稽雑誌萬歲 (Long Live *The Comical Journal*). It seems, however, that the journal folded after one issue.

The texts included in literary journals of the Republican period (not just of the 1910s) were virtually always divided into sections. The most common way to divide sections was by genre, which in the 1910s meant a division into short fiction, long (i.e. serialized) fiction, poetry and drama, together with additional prose sections (*biji* 筆記, for instance) and miscellaneous ‘fun and games’ sections (often called *zazu* 雜俎). Addressing all these sections in a reading or interpretation of a journal issue poses considerable problems to the researcher, since knowledge of the norms of various different genres is required to be able to understand what is going on in each of these sections. My general impression is that, in most 1910s journals, the

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13 *The Sound of Poetry* is also the only poetry journal I know from this period. I have consulted only the third and fourth *juan* (1917–1920). Since every *juan* consisted of twelve issues, published monthly, I assume that the journal was founded in 1915. In the first issue of the third *juan* (dated September 1917), a short article calling for new society members also mentions the fact that the society had been in existence for four years, and the journal for three years. The content of the journal was devoted solely to poetry in classical styles until the beginning of *juan* 4, when a new section containing various forms of prose writing was introduced.

14 Only one issue was available in the Fung Ping Shan Library, where I consulted it. Since this journal is not included in the list in Chen & Yuan 1993 (60–6), it is difficult to ascertain whether any later issues were published.

15 Fiction genres were often divided into a whole range of sub-genres, based on content. For a detailed study of early fiction genre theory, see Andrés 2000.
fiction and drama sections were most experimental, frequently trying to establish new norms and categories rather than abiding by existing ones, whereas the poetry sections were largely conventional. But what about a section like the zazu? Can any genre norms be identified for such a section, and if so what are they?

I believe that fruitful and informed cross-genre readings of the various journal sections will have to be the result of collaborative efforts by groups of scholars, rather than of individual enterprises. The reading examples provided below, therefore, are admittedly fragmentary. Nevertheless, I hope they illustrate how journal reading can be an enjoyable and aesthetically pleasing experience. To emphasize that this is true not only of one particular type of journal (the commercial entertainment magazine), the final one of my three examples deals with the famous New Culture journal *New Youth*.

**Eyebrow Talk**

The journal *Eyebrow Talk* (1914–1916), as mentioned above, was presumably edited by a group of women headed by Gao Jianhua, and appears to send out a message of women’s emancipation. That message, however, is almost immediately undermined by even a very cursory horizontal reading. The issue opens with a manifesto, which announces in big print Gao Jianhua’s editorship. In the photograph section with which the issue opens we find a picture of Gao Jianhua and a man called Xu Zehua 許澤華, who is clearly standing on an elevation of some sort, towering over Gao Jianhua and reducing her to tiny proportions (*Illustration 7*). On the next page, pictures of all four editors appear. This is immediately followed, however, by a picture of two men, who are introduced as ‘editorial assistants’ (*bianji xiangli*) in a much larger font than the one used on the previous page to introduce the women (*Illustrations 8 & 9*). One of the two men is identified as Xu Xiaotian, who turns out to be the same person as the afore-mentioned Xu Zehua.

Xu Xiaotian is also the author of a remarkable short story in the same issue of *Eyebrow Talk*, which uses the same strategy of foregrounding women’s issues only to end up confirming male dominance. The story, entitled ‘Taohuaniang’ 桃花娘 (Ms Peach
Blossom), written in a very natural vernacular style, immediately catches the reader’s attention by virtue of its opening lines:

Right. We girl students do not obey men. Men are slaves, women are masters. Today I am in love with you, so as a man you should obey me, just like a slave obeys his master. If I tell you to come here, you shouldn’t walk away. If I tell you to go East, you can’t go West. Only in this way can you please us women. But when it comes to fancying men, we women are quite free. For instance, today I fancy you, that’s up to me. Tomorrow I no longer fancy you, that’s also up to me. It’s up to me to fancy one man, it’s also up to me to fancy two men. I can fancy whomever I want. If I fancy two men, I’ll have two slaves. If I fancy four or five men, I’ll have four or five slaves. It is the same with eight or ten men, or with a few dozen. We women are all entitled to enjoy such happiness and to possess such power. You men cannot obstruct or restrain us. This is the famous theory known as free love...

It is only after this ‘shocking’ introduction that the reader is made aware of the fact that these words do not represent the opinion of the author/narrator, but are spoken by the main character, a woman called Ms Peach Blossom. In the rest of the story, the author/narrator clearly does his best to put Ms Peach Blossom in a very negative light, showing her radical stance on free love to be nothing but an excuse for moral depravity and lust for money and status. With the help of her equally devious friends Mr Wei Wenming (‘No Culture’), Mr Jia Junzi (‘Phoney Gentleman’) and Ms Jin Chongshi (‘Money Worship Power’), she scandalously takes advantage of the affluent yet slightly naïve Mr Hu Tu (‘Muddlehead’), only to leave him when he runs out of money. However, when fate turns on Ms Peach Blossom and she ends up as a poor prostitute suffering from venereal diseases, feeling bitter remorse for all her past wrongdoings, it is Mr Hu Tu who appears as a deus ex machina and saves her from the gutter.

Another short story, written by a woman called Wu Peihua 吳佩華, is preceded by a short introduction in which the author

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17 Link (1981:171) has demonstrated that not all contributions signed with women’s names in this journal were actually written by female authors. The fact that the story in question was written from a male perspective may be an indication that this story, too, was written by a man. There is, however, no conclusive evidence to support this.
18 The story is the seventh in the short story section.
introduces her text as an experiment in the kind of detailed description of ordinary romantic events (pingchang qingshi 平常情事) that she claims can be found in Western fiction, as well as in *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (The Story of the Stone) and *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (The Story of the Western Wing). The story, written in baihua, describes the wedding day and first days of wedlock of a young couple and does so from the perspective of the man. Nevertheless, the author’s indeed very elaborate descriptions are most successful in characterizing the loneliness of the woman in her new husband’s household and her total dependence upon him. The marriage is furthermore described as the result of free courtship and love, not of any arrangements between the families, and the male voice emphatically defends the advantages of such a marriage. Although this story does not contain any of the shock effects of the previous one and makes no display of women’s liberation or independence, its sensitive description of the couple’s mutual affection seems to point at more realistic, though obviously minimal, improvements in gender relations as a result of a free choice of marriage partner.

Any of the pictures or stories in the first issue of *Eyebrow Talk* referred to above could well be read and interpreted in isolation, or in connection with other texts on similar themes. Depending on the text and context chosen, the meaning of the works might come to appear much more radically sexist or feminist. It is only by reading the texts in conjunction, as parts of a larger whole, that a full sense of the complex message of *Eyebrow Talk* can be obtained. If *Eyebrow Talk* was indeed, as the pictures and statements in the front suggest, the product of collaboration between female and male editors and writers, the result is a unique, collectively authored literary product that deserves to be read, interpreted and appreciated as such.

*The Pastime*

*The Pastime* was the English title of the journal *Youxi zazhi* 游戲雜誌, which was edited by Wang Dungen 王鈺根 and ran from 1913 to 1915. It was published by the Zhonghua tushuguan and very reason-
ably priced at 0.40 yuan per issue. Each of the nineteen voluminous issues counts well over a hundred pages, which is another reason why the reading of the first issue below can only be a partial one. The reading below comprises references to the following materials, all included in the first issue: the front and back cover, two advertisements, the rules for submission of manuscripts, the introduction (xu 序) and an introductory ‘small statement’ (xiaoyan 小言), pictures, and texts from the sections huaji wen (humour), yilin (translations) and shuobu (fiction).

Given the bulky nature of each issue of The Pastime, the apparent ease with which the figure depicted on the front cover of the first issue is holding his copy is most impressive (Illustration 10). Although only the back cover of the magazine in the man’s hand is shown, and the writing on it is not actually readable, a look at the actual back cover of the journal (Illustration 11) shows that the man is undoubtedly holding a copy of the first issue of The Pastime. This immediately renders a playful element to the picture. After all, the fact that the back cover of the journal held by the man in the picture is indeed the back cover of the actual journal held by the reader is easy to observe if one is working from photocopies, as we are now, but would have been much more difficult for the actual reader, who would have had to turn the journal continuously over and over in his hands. Although the person in the picture, an old man dressed in traditional literati attire, is looking away from the journal in his hands, the smile on his face seems to show that his reading has been giving him great pleasure. Similar caricatures of smiling figures were to be found on the covers of other journals adopting the huaji 滑稽 or comical mode in this period.

The combination of age and amusement is maintained when one turns over the front cover and is confronted with two advertisements, one on the inside cover and one on the page facing it (see Illustrations 6a and 6b). The advertisement for Enticing Magazine contrasts starkly with the advertisement for the Twenty-Four Histories, not only in terms of the product advertised, but also with respect to the fonts that are used. Even though both advertisements

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publications were related to the group of writers and editors surrounding the famous China Daily News supplement Free Talk.

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30 I am using the male third person singular because I am assuming, as my interpretation will show, that the readers of The Pastime were predominantly male.
are for publications of the Zhonghua tushuguan, I assume that there was some sort of ‘targeting’ involved in publishers’ decisions on which ads to run in which journals. In other words, solely on the basis of these opening images, one can safely guess that the implied reader of the journal is male, well educated and in need of both symbols of learning and sources of entertainment. (I am assuming that the men in question would want to possess the Twenty-Four Histories, whereas they would want to read the Enticing Magazine.)

The rules for submission of manuscripts, which appear on the next page, are simple and straightforward. ‘Interesting writing’ (youqu zhi wenzi 有趣之文字) in all genres is accepted, while ‘playful photographs’ (youxi zhaopian 游戏照片) are especially welcome. Two different kinds of incentive are provided for prospective contributors. The first is financial: three categories of payment for manuscripts are mentioned. Poetry, as usual, is excluded from remuneration. The second incentive is more symbolic: submitters are encouraged to send in photographs of themselves together with their manuscripts. If one’s manuscript is selected for publication, the photograph will be included in the picture section in the front. Apparently this policy was already followed in this first issue. The picture section is quite large and does indeed contain the pictures of contributors, who are all male and mostly much younger than, but dressed in the same way as the man on the cover.

The ‘Youxi zazhi xu’ (Introduction to The Pastime) on the following page continues the themes of the preceding pages, intertwining the frivolous and the respectable, the practical and the symbolic, but with a strong melancholic undertone. First of all, it lists a number of major calamities from Chinese history and states that all of them are, “when you think about it nowadays”, “like play” (rutong youxi 如同游戏). Immediately after that, however, the preface praises those historical figures who used “playful words” (youxi zhi ci 游戏之词) and “humorous statements” (huaji zhi shuo 滑稽之说) to admonish their monarchs and to criticize immoral behaviour. A lament about the present times, in which loyal advice is

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21 The term youxi zhaopian is perhaps best translated as ‘funny pictures’. Among the pictures in the front of the issue is one of a couple in wedding dress, entitled ‘Youxi jiehun zhi tu’ (Playful Wedding Picture). The title apparently indicated that the persons in the pictures dressed up for fun and the picture was not taken at a real wedding.
not appreciated, leads to the conclusion that only veiled criticism is feasible these days and that therefore the journal, despite its title, may one day be needed to put people on the right path. In the manifesto-like ‘small statement’ that follows on the next page, this hesitant commitment is brushed aside in no uncertain terms:

China has had no playful journals before this one. It is not certain if this journal will in the future be able to occupy a position on the Chinese journal scene. However, we are sure that it will break fresh ground [biekai shengmian 別開生面] for literati and will be welcomed by society at large. The authors have made this playful journal with playful methods. Likewise, the reader is best advised to read this journal in a playful way.

The statement ends by stipulating, again in no uncertain terms, that the journal will not get involved in politics or in ‘praise and blame’ (huiyu 毀譽).

As soon as the reader arrives at the ‘humour’ section, which is the first after the pictures, the claim against involvement in politics is undermined by a number of sharp political satires scattered among the contributions. One piece lists a number of local proverbs of the xiehouyu 歇後語 type and links them to current political events (section huaji wen: 11–13). A second is written in the form of a fake letter from the Mexican president to the Chinese president, in which the former compliments the latter on his brilliant way of getting rid of the opposition in parliament without disbanding it and ends by exclaiming that “the world’s only two heroes are the Mexican and Chinese presidents” (16). A third text presents itself as an advertisement of a Shanghai store specializing in ‘buying up rubbish’, inviting people to sell their rubbish such as items from Qing dynasty palaces so that they can be sold to foreign museums wanting to put such junk on display. The shop is especially interested in cut-off queues from imperial magistrates and women’s foot-binding cloth, while Republican government decorations and medals are also most welcome (17).

By the time one reads these satires, it has become a bit clearer what is meant by “reading the playful journal in a playful way”. Apparently the journal does not merely proffer to provide entertainment but encourages its readers to assume a distinctly cynical outlook on life, taking nothing serious, not even the old Empire or the new Republic which, one may safely assume, many of
them had fought for or against only two years earlier. However, amidst the disillusionment, there seem to be two things, one practical and one symbolic, that these literati, breaking fresh ground for themselves, continue to take seriously, namely money and education. This can be seen from two other texts, one from the ‘translation’ section and one from the ‘fiction’ section.

The translation section consists not of literary translations, but, as was common in other journals as well, of translations of (parts of) newspaper and journal articles introducing strange or interesting facts from other countries. A piece entitled ‘Xiaoshuo jia zhi rukuàn’ 小說家之入款 (Novelists’ Income) (section yilin: 11), by a certain Changjue 常覺 (whose face the interested reader can find in the picture section), introduces the system of payment for fiction writers writing for London newspapers. It is explained that those writers earn fifty American dollars per hour (why London-based writers would earn U.S. dollars is not clear) and that they can make huge earnings in royalties and by selling their copyrights to movie or drama companies. The article ends with the comment that those who live off writing fiction earn a better living than those who write ‘normal texts’ (xunchang wenzi 尋常文字). At this point, the interested reader might want to leaf back to the ‘rules for submission’ to find that Changjue probably earned something between 0.20 and 0.50 yuan for his translation, depending on which rate of payment he negotiated.

The value of education, and the difficulty of obtaining it, is highlighted in one of the stories in the shuobu subsection of the xiaoshuo section. It was written by a certain Meng Dusheng 夢犧生 (no picture) and is entitled ‘Xiaoxue tang san ri ji’ 小學堂三日記 (Three Days in a Primary School) (section shuobu: 27–30). The opening lines are worth quoting for their inherent judgement on the difficulty of fiction texts compared to other forms of literature:

Among my many relatives there is a young boy, who is very intelligent. Around the age of five, his mother read poems to him and he could memorize and recite them all. When he was about eight, he had already finished reading aloud the Four Books and the Book of Songs. (27)

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22 As the other two subsections are chuangqi 傳奇 (here referring to the drama form of that name) and tanci 彈詞, xiaoshuo should not be translated as ‘fiction’ here, but rather as ‘fictional texts’ especially since shuobu was also a common term for ‘fiction’.
These lines are part of an introduction by the author/narrator, who explains that when the boy was nine, his father was due to return from the capital after a long absence. The mother, afraid her husband would be dissatisfied with his son’s academic progress, decided to send him off to a (presumably new-style) primary school. After his first day at school, the boy, who was very fond of learning and eager to get a formal education, returned home very distressed. The second day, he appeared equally displeased and spent the whole afternoon leafing through books. On the third day, he came back in tears and said he never wanted to go to the school again. According to the introduction, the story that follows is a concise version of the explanation that the boy finally gave for his behaviour.

The story is told by the nine-year-old in first-person narration, in classical Chinese. As it turns out, the first day at school he was put in the lower of two classes, where pupils were asked to do nothing but repeat after the teacher reading simple characters on the blackboard. Unfortunately the teacher had an accent, reading the character ren 人 as yin 銀, so that the whole class shouted yinyin 銀銀 (‘silver silver’ or ‘Money! Money!’) when he tried to teach them the word renren 人人 (‘everybody’). Disappointed, the boy asked for a transfer to the higher class and attended it on the second day. The teacher in the higher class did not limit himself to single words and characters but explained complete phrases, however the young boy was surprised to discover that the teacher’s explanations were completely wrong (and for the reader quite funny). Unsure, he first went home and checked his own interpretation against a number of books, before confronting the teacher on the third day. The teacher defended his own reading by giving an even more ludicrous interpretation of one of the characters. The child decided not to go to the school again. The story ends without any further comments from the author/narrator or any further information as to what happened to the little boy.

It seems typical for the cynical overall tone of this issue of The Pastime (though not necessarily of other issues, for which separate readings would have to be provided) that the stories above aim to provide ‘factual’ information only and do not waste any words on what was undoubtedly the message that was supposed to ring through: that the current generation of literati, who were converting their cultural capital (education, status) into professionalized symbolic capital (a career and a position on the journal scene), was getting
neither the financial nor the symbolic rewards it deserved; that the next generation of literati would be frustrated in their education, provided by frauds caring more about ‘money’ than about ‘people’, and that the only way open for literati was to laugh at everything—including oneself and one another, much like the man in the picture on the cover, not looking at his journal but laughing at the reader holding his own copy of the same journal.

Nowhere does this attitude become more clear than in a short piece entitled ‘Youxi zazhi’ (The Pastime), identified as duanpian youxi 短篇遊戯 or ‘short game’ and included in the fiction section. The full text, signed by a certain Wohen 我恨 (‘I hate’ or ‘self-hate’), reads as follows:

One day, I, Wohen, picked up my pen, wanting to write a short story to send to The Pastime. I had only just written down the word Pastime, when my hand was stopped by a person standing behind me, who prevented me from writing on. He said: “There is such chaos these days. The nation and the people are in such poverty. If you have so much time, why don’t you write a few useful texts, to criticize the government and mobilize the people? What’s with this Pastime business? Isn’t that a waste of ink and paper, a betrayal of youth?” When I heard this, I laughed and said: “Right you are! Your words are valuable indeed. And your heart is truly hot blooded. But don’t you know that among the millions of people who call themselves commentators nowadays, one can hardly find one who is honest and selfless? They go on and on about the benefit of the nation and the welfare of the people and they make it sound really nice, but if you listen carefully to what they mean, they are always either out to blame someone or to defend their private views. Some of them have even given in to the temptation of money and gradually altered their tone of voice. I ask you: what’s the value of that kind of commentary? Of course I do not have their qualifications, but even if I did have them, I would not disdain to do what they are doing and I would rather write a few stories to ease my loneliness. The way I see it, of all kinds of writing in the world, fiction at least still contains some conscience and some reason. You don’t believe me? Fortunately Dungen’s The Pastime has already been published. There is a story in it, submitted by a certain Wohen, which is also called something like ‘The Pastime’. Why don’t you give it a read and then you’ll know that it is absolutely necessary to write fiction. Then I think you will not only no longer prevent me from writing fiction, but you will like writing fiction yourself as well.” After that man had heard what I said, he immediately let go and went out to buy a copy of The Pastime. He
read it from beginning to end and then he, too, began to write fiction very diligently. (section shuobu: 40–1)

This text, with its circular irony that immediately reminds one of the journal’s front cover, would hardly be worthy of an accomplished reader’s or literary critic’s attention if read in isolation. However, when read in conjunction with other texts from the same journal issue, even though they were written by different people, the text adds significantly to the profound feelings of worthlessness that the literati who produced it were experiencing. If we have already seen above that this feeling extended into the social and cultural realms, through worries about professional careers and about the crisis in education, the ‘story’ by Wohen extends the feeling to the linguistic realm, turning the literati’s call for ‘conscience’ and ‘reason’ into an empty gesture. Wohen is saying “when you hear what I have to say you will believe me”, but it turns out that is all he is saying. Moreover, as if to emphasize the worthlessness of his effort, Wohen added three characters in brackets to his text: bu shou chou 不受籌 or, translated a bit freely: “Don’t pay me for this.”

My horizontal reading of The Pastime, Volume One, is certainly not the only possible reading. By placing different emphases, by selecting different parts from different sections of the journal, much can be added in the way of interpretation. Moreover, it is quite likely that the actual historical reader of The Pastime, if he really read straight from beginning to end, as Wohen suggests near the end of his story, would come up with many more interpretations, especially since this reader possessed an enormous amount of cultural baggage that I do not possess. If such different readings are indeed possible, however, and if other issues of other journals lead to yet other readings, this will only serve to confirm that issues of Chinese journals of the 1910s are polyvalent idiolects open to multiple interpretations. Or, in plain English, they are literary texts. The only difference is that they were not written by one single author, but were the product of a collective effort. My final example, related to two issues of New Youth, both from 1918, will serve to underline this point, and will show that even this supposedly highly serious reformers’ journal can be shown to possess a mixture of aesthetic characteristics, some of them serious, some of them much more playful. Moreover, this final example touches upon perhaps the most
often read and interpreted modern Chinese short story, Lu Xun’s 'Kuangren riji' (Diary of a Madman), showing that horizontal reading allows for new meaning to be found in even the most canonical of literary texts.

New Youth

One of my favourite stories related to the early history of modern Chinese literature is the following:

In the summer of 1917, [Chen Hengzhe 陈衡哲] and some of her classmates visited a meeting in New York, organized by The Chinese Students Quarterly. At that time, not many girls were allowed to study in the USA. After the meeting, a few enthusiastic organizers, eager to obtain the ladies’ favours, collected money to invite them to a picnic at a scenic spot outside the city, followed by a rowing trip on the Hudson. When they arrived there, however, the weather changed and it started to rain. The young ladies and gentlemen were soaked like boiler chicken. The gentlemen’s overbearing generosity had brought about an embarrassing situation. Some of the gentlemen felt ashamed and the invited ladies were also quite dismayed. However, this situation aroused the ‘inspiration’ of Mr Hu Shi 胡适, who wrote a poem in the vernacular about it and published it in The Quarterly. Some other poetically inclined gentlemen, such as Ren Hongjun 任鸿隽, Mei Guangdi 梅光迪 and Zhu Jingnong 朱經農, suspecting Hu of trying to ingratiate himself with the ladies and displaying his talents only so as to gain their affection, published vehement attacks on Hu Shi’s poem, calling it a monotonous doggerel. Hu naturally refused to give in and immediately launched a counter-attack. He spent many hours in the library to construct a theoretical basis for his ‘vernacular poetry’. Everybody was doing their best to impress the ladies. [...] Thus came about one of the most famous ‘revolutions’ in the history of Chinese culture.  

Though not necessarily sufficient to change established academic views of the significance of Hu Shi’s 1917 proposals for literary reform, the story is refreshing in that it counterbalances the stereotypical image of the Republican-era Chinese writer as a troubled intellectual, obsessed with saving his (sometimes ‘her’) country from imperialist oppression and enlightening the common populace. The average age of the ‘May Fourth’ enlighteners, as well

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23 In view of what follows, this date must be erroneous. Probably 1916 is meant.
24 Recounted by Wang Pingling 王平陵 and quoted in Chen Jingzhi 1980 (31–2).
as their position in the relatively protected environment of the (foreign) university campus, makes it even more likely that their intellectual activities, though usually strongly goal-oriented and programmatic, contained an element of playfulness. To rediscover such playfulness is one of the aims of my reading in this case.

My reading focuses on two texts, whose mutual affinity has been noted but never studied. They are the first modern short story in baihua by a male writer and the first poem in baihua by a female writer. Besides both being the first of their kind, the affinity extends further in that both texts feature a protagonist who is mad. Both texts were published in the same journal (New Youth) and in the same year (1918). They are Lu Xun's 'Diary of a Madman' and Chen Hengzhe's "Renjia shuo wo fa le chi" ("People Say I'm Crazy"). As the latter text is nowadays all but forgotten and its author considerably less well known, a short introduction to Chen Hengzhe and her work will precede the actual discussion.

Chen Hengzhe

Chen Hengzhe (1890–1976), also known as Sophia H. Chen Zen, grew up in Jiangsu. She lived with her parents until the age of 13, after which she moved in with an uncle's family in Guangzhou. One year later (in 1904), she moved again to live with relatives in Shanghai. In Shanghai she first started to attend school, something which her uncle had been encouraging her to do. She was originally meant to go to Cai Yuanpei's 'patriotic girls' school' (Cai was a friend of her father's), but that school had already closed down when she reached Shanghai. As a result, she spent three years at a school where, according to her own recollection, she learned little except English. Between 1907 and 1914 she studied in various schools. Near the end of that period, she apparently came under pressure from her father to marry a young man he had selected for her, which she consistently refused. In 1914 she was one of the first

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25 The best source for biographical information about Chen Hengzhe is her English-language autobiography, published under the pseudonym Chen Nan-Hua (1935?). Another useful source is the biographical entry in Boorman & Howard 1967 (183–7), which was written by Chen's daughter.
women to take part in the examinations for the Tsing Hua scholarships for study in the USA. She passed with flying colours and left China that same year.

After a preparatory year she enrolled in Vassar College, the famous women’s college. In 1919, she graduated with excellent results. She was the first Chinese woman to be elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society. She also secured a scholarship for the University of Chicago, where she obtained an M.A. in Western history one year later (in 1920). In Chicago, she studied Western literature as a minor.

By invitation of the afore-mentioned Cai Yuanpei, who was then carrying out major reforms at Beijing University, including the introduction of co-education, she returned to China. She accepted the chair of Western history at the university and thus became China’s first woman professor. By that time, she had already begun writing short stories and poetry in the vernacular, inspired by the ideas of Hu Shi, whom she had met in 1916 and with whom she would maintain a lifetime friendship. Her first short story, entitled ‘Yi ri’ 一日 (One Day), published in *Liu mei xuesheng jibao* 留美學生季報 (The Chinese Students Quarterly) in 1917, is the first modern Chinese short story. It precedes the publication of Lu Xun’s ‘Diary of a Madman’ by many months.

The story is an account of a day in the life of students at an American girls’ college, structured around a number of dialogues and relatively little narration. The main protagonists are all American girls, but there is also a minor protagonist called Miss Zhang, who patiently responds to the other girls’ questions and comments about her country and her people, such as “Is it true that you all eat dead rats?” or “Do Chinese houses have tables?” or “I know a boy whose name is also Zhang. He must be your brother.”

Perhaps because it is not a very remarkable or engaging story, ‘One Day’ has often been ignored by historians of modern Chinese literature, who usually bestow the honour of being the first modern Chinese short story on Lu Xun’s ‘Diary of a Madman’. In his study

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26 For an overview of gossip on the real nature of the relationship between Chen Hengze and Hu Shi, see Guo Xueyu 1967.

27 Chen’s story is discussed in Dooling & Torgeson 1998 and in Chung 2003. Other work by Chen is discussed in Larson 1998.

28 It is, for instance, not mentioned in the otherwise excellently documented Yang Yi 1993.
of modern Chinese fiction, Henry Y.H. Zhao mentions Chen Hengzhe's story in a footnote, justifying its exclusion from the main text as follows:

The first modern short story was "A Day" ("Yiri") by Chen Hengzhe, a girl student studying in the USA .... By 'modern short story' we mean not only a story written in the vernacular (as Chinese fiction had been written in the vernacular for a long time) but a story with distinctive new narratological characteristics. Chen's story certainly qualified, as it was totally free of any of the conventions of traditional fiction. However, the story is only a playful rendering of impressions of a girl student's life in Chicago University [sic] and it was published in a magazine with too limited a circulation. (Zhao 1995:33, note 4)

Zhao's last point is especially worth noting. Although The Chinese Students Quarterly was published by the Commercial Press in Shanghai, its editors and contributors, as well as, it seems, most of its subscribers, resided in the USA.29 As a result, the story did not make a significant impact on readers in China and went largely unnoticed until its republication in 1928 (see below), which explains why it has also escaped the attention of Republican-era literary historians and was not included in the fiction volumes of the Compendium of Chinese New Literature, which, after all, included only work from the period 1917–1927.

A similar fate was suffered, for less obvious reasons, by Chen Hengzhe's first vernacular poem (also one of the first attempts at vers libre by a Chinese poet), entitled "People Say I'm Crazy". Since this work was published in New Youth (in September 1918) and therefore must have had maximum exposure among readers in China, there can be no doubt whatsoever about Chen's status as China's first modern woman poet, a qualification usually reserved for Bing Xin 冰心, whose work, again, is considered more interesting and drew more attention than Chen's.

In her later life, Chen was better known as a historian and her Xiyang shi 西洋史 (History of the West) (1926?) is said to have been a best-seller.30 Chen Hengzhe, her husband Ren Shuyong 任叔

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29 I want to thank Daria Berg for helping me trace and copy the only issue of this journal available in the U.K.
30 I have not been able to find much information about this book, but the Beijing University Library holds a copy of the ninth edition, dated 1930, which seems to support the assumption that it sold very well. Chen also published a Wenyi fuxing
(i.e. the above-mentioned Ren Hongjun) and Hu Shi were all among Republican China’s most prominent liberal intellectuals. A slim volume of short stories, including all her early work, was published by the Crescent Moon Bookstore in 1928. It was entitled *Xiao yudian* 小雨點 (Little Raindrop) (Chen Hengzhe 1985), after one of her early stories. In the 1930s, she was one of the founders of and regular contributors to *Duli pinglun* 獨立評論 (The Independent Review) and mainly known as an essayist. She also published in English and was the Chinese delegate at a number of conferences of the Institute of Pacific Relations. After 1949, she opted to remain on the mainland, where she kept a low profile and did not publish any new work. She died in 1976.

*The mad woman*

Chen Hengzhe’s poem “‘People Say I’m Crazy’” becomes more than a statistic when read closely in its original context, the famous New Culture journal *New Youth*, and in comparison with Lu Xun’s ‘Diary of a Madman’, published a few months earlier in the same journal.\(^3\)

Below is a full translation of the poem. As it is a long poem, stanza divisions and line numbers have been added to facilitate references to certain passages in the discussion below.

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\(\text{xiaoshi} \)  文藝復興小史 (Small History of the Renaissance) with the Commercial Press in 1926.

\(^3\) Lu Xun’s story appeared in *Xin Qingnian* Vol. 4, No. 5 (May 1918) and Chen Hengzhe’s poem in Vol. 5, No. 3 (September 1918).
"People Say I’m Crazy"

Chen Hengzhe

In early June 1918, Vassar Women’s College held its 53rd graduation ceremony. I happened to be in hospital at the time. One day I had picked up a school journal and was reading the announcement for the grand graduation ceremony, as well as the joyful news of the reunion of the old students from fifty years ago, when suddenly the door to my room opened and an old woman of over seventy came in. She was gesticulating as she spoke to me. I listened to her attentively for more than one hour. It made me feel quite sad. Therefore I have written down the gist of what she said, as a background to that journal.

Hengzhe, mid-June, 1918

1 Ha ha! People say I’m crazy. They locked me up in here.
2 Fifty years ago, I also studied at Vassar. That’s why I came all the way over here, to watch the graduation ceremony of my little sisters.
3 I live in Lincoln, 1,500 miles from here.
4 Have you ever seen a lunatic?
5 Lunatics hit anyone and kick anything they see.
6 If I were a lunatic.
7 Look! I’d slap you just like that!
8 Now where was I?
9 Oh, I remember.
10 Didn’t I mention Lincoln?
11 When I was in Lincoln, my old classmate and I agreed to stay in the same hall when we got here.
12 So I immediately wrote to the school to apply and register.
13 Who would have thought that when I got here, our names were not even registered, not to mention our accommodation.
14 This was no big deal.
15 My classmate suddenly fell ill and they told me to be her nurse.
16 It’s a shame that I’d been suffering on a bus for days,
17 And that evening I spent yet another sleepless night.
18 The next day the doctor came,
19 Said I’d gone mad,
20 Took me over here.
21 Then they sent a cable to my son,
22 Saying I’d lost my mind and telling him to come straight away.
My son lives 1000 miles west of Lincoln, that’s 2,500 miles from here. It’s a shame that cable is going to scare him to death. And how could he come here straight away?

Ha ha! Do you want to sleep? I must be on my way. We’ll meet again on yonder side of the moon.

Oh! I suppose you know what this golden key means? I’ll be honest with you, When I was young, I was certainly not an average person. Forget about all that.

I remember that when I left Lincoln two days ago, countless relatives and friends were standing around my bus, They said: “You’re lucky to go East to Vassar. You must remember every bit of news, When you get back, we want to know all the details.” I said: “Of course.” How was I to know that my big news, Would be that I’d turned into a lunatic all of a sudden!

Tomorrow I’m going home. I suppose I’ll have to tell a lie or two. Otherwise, they’ll all laugh at me. Ha ha! People say I’m crazy. They locked me up in here.
Similar to many early modern Chinese poems, Chen’s poem is written in a very colloquial vernacular and in a form which appears to be completely free, in the sense that most of its lines are not of equal length and there is no consistently repeated metre or rhyme scheme, although line-ends are dominated by the sound li, especially in the opening and ending of the poem, constituting a free rhyme.

At first sight the poem seems to be nothing more than what it claims to be: a literal account of the speech of a woman in a hospital. A closer look at the structure of the poem, however, reveals a high degree of organization. Squeezed between the identical opening and closing lines are ten sections. Eight of these sections form four pairs, which are parallel in length and in meaning. Section 2 (lines 4–7) and section 8 (lines 29–32) both start with a question and contain information provided by the mad woman suggesting that she is not mad at all. (The ‘golden key’ identifies her as a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, to which Chen Hengzhe herself was later elected.) The three-line sections 3 (lines 8–10) and 7 (lines 26–28) represent more incoherent speech by the protagonist and suggest genuine madness, strengthened by the reference to the moon in section 7. The seven-line sections 4 (lines 11–17) and 9 (lines 33–39) provide background information about the madwoman, recounted in a straightforward, ‘sane’ manner, suggesting that her ‘madness’ might be temporary and caused by extreme fatigue. However, the parallel three-line sections 5 (lines 18–20) and 10 (lines 40–42), both starting with mingtian 明天 (translated as ‘tomorrow’ and ‘the next day’ respectively), immediately cast strong doubts on this interpretation, especially when read in connection with the central section (lines 21–25). Why did the doctor declare her mad? Why is she going home tomorrow, if her son has not arrived yet?

The fact that the poem itself has been so meticulously constructed by the author draws attention to the status of the introduction, which, though signed and dated by the author, can now be said to contain at least one lie. The author (or rather the narrator) has not just written down ‘the gist’ of what the madwoman told her, she has manipulated her speech, if indeed there ever was such speech. The introduction also hands us the reason for this manipulation: ‘to provide a background’ to the school journal that reported so enthusiastically on the Vassar graduation ceremony and reunion. The madwoman,
conveniently not too mad to explain what happened to her, drives home the message that there was another side to all the cheerfulness.

This is about as far as a conventional reading of the poem will bring us. The question remains, however, why Chen Hengzhe, or the editor of *New Youth*, thought that any Chinese reader would be interested in a critique of the organizers of an American school reunion, or in sympathizing with an old American madwoman. The answer to this question should, to my mind, not be sought in the text itself, but in the preceding pages of the same issue of *New Youth* in which the poem was published. In the Chinese journal, Chen’s poem is preceded by a long article by Hu Shi, based on a lecture given at Beijing Normal School for Women, entitled ‘Meiguó fùnǚ’ 美國婦女 (American Women). In this article, Hu presents a very sympathetic general picture of the American woman, considering her to be different not only from Chinese women, but also from European women. According to Hu, the difference lies in American women’s determination to be more than the stereotypical ‘good wife and mother’ (liangqi xianmu 良妻賢母 [sic]) and to ‘stand on their own feet’ (zīlǐ 白立). He claims that this difference is a result of education and goes on to quote statistics on American women’s participation in education, both as students and as teachers. He also introduces the most well-known women colleges in the USA, including Vassar.

At the end of Hu’s article, a short advertisement for ‘Women Studies Textbooks’ (*Nüxué yòngshū 女學用書*), being a series consisting of textbooks of ‘mathematics for women’, ‘algebra for women’, ‘geometry for women’, ‘chemistry for women’, ‘physics for women’ and ‘biology for women’ is conveniently located to support the claim for women’s education (*Illustration 12*). However, Chen Hengzhe’s poem on the facing page severely undermines, or at least complicates Hu’s plea. The reader is reminded of the fact that even an educated woman, nay, even an educated American woman, can end up mad.

Instead of presenting her more pessimistic view in an essay, or long article, as Hu Shi had done, Chen Hengzhe chose the literary approach. For intellectuals of this period, writing a literary text did not necessarily mean to engage in pure and independent aesthetic creation. Much of the literature they wrote contained the same messages as their other writings about contemporary social problems.
Attempts were clearly made, however, to convey the messages more indirectly in literary writing. Authors or narrators hid behind recorded speech, diaries and letters; characters were portrayed without comment; multiple interpretations were made possible. Instead of outlining the problems at hand in rigorous analytical detail, literary texts were supposed to provide an emotional or intellectual impetus, stimulating the reader to feel for or think about the plight of the fictional characters and thus grasp the implied message. As Marston Anderson pointed out in *The Limits of Realism* (Anderson 1990), certain ‘emotional impediments’ would often bar writers from complete loyalty to these principles. In most of these ‘realist’ narratives, the voice of the author would sooner or later ring through to make sure that the message reached the readers. Chen Hengzhe should be credited for avoiding such impediments in her poem, which persists in its ambiguity from beginning to end. It functions as a background, or as an ‘other side’, to an article in an American school paper, and to an article in the same Chinese journal in which it was published, but it does not offer a solution, nor a way out for the problem it observes. The sheer existence of the problem is dubitable, due to the unstable personality of the main protagonist. Though crudely written, this poem represents an intellectual kind of writing, aimed at making people who enjoy to think, think even more.

*The mad man*

Chen Hengzhe’s poem seems to owe much of its structure to Lu Xun’s famous short story ‘Diary of a Madman’, published in *New Youth* only a few months earlier. Lu Xun’s story also opens with an introduction in which the narrator distances himself from the rest of the text. Lu Xun’s story, too, consists of a number of sections, some of which are parallel or cross-linked, and which succeed in constantly upholding the reader’s doubt about whether the protagonist, the madman, is really mad or not. Interestingly, Lu Xun’s story contains one more section than Chen’s poem: the thirteenth section which constitutes the most famous ‘emotional impediment’ in modern Chinese fiction, the author’s voice coming through loud and clear, shouting ‘Save the children!’
Many commentators have pointed out that any attempt at interpreting ‘Diary of a Madman’ ends up in contradiction, due to the cleverly constructed introduction, which states that by the time the author gets his hands on the diary, the patient has already been cured and gone off to be an official somewhere. If the reader chooses to believe the madman’s message about the corruption of Chinese society, then how to explain his return to traditional ways as being ‘cured’? And how to explain his symptoms of true madness, depicted, as J.D. Chinnery (1960) has pointed out, along the lines of medical knowledge of the time? Theodore Huters (1993:276 passim) has remarked that most readers simply seem to ignore the complicated structure of the story, taking the message of social criticism at face value, thereby collectively acknowledging the fact that in traditional Chinese society those whose views differ from the norm are ‘mad’. This interpretation has in itself become a norm, from which, at least in Mainland China, for decades nobody was mad enough to differ. The only possible way out of the double bind would be an interpretation assuming (and why not?) that the introduction itself contains a lie, not told by the narrator but by the madman’s brother, handing the narrator the diary with a big grin, making up a story about his brother’s recovery and departure, whereas the poor boy has indeed been eaten.

The most well-known contemporary reactions to Lu Xun’s story, however, seem to take the message for granted while ignoring the messenger. Essays on chì rén de lìjiào 吃人的禮教 (‘the cannibalistic Confucian rites’) soon appeared in reaction to the story, nicely visualizing the difference between literary and non-literary treatments of the same subject referred to above. If we see Chen Hengzhe’s poem as a response to, or reception of, Lu Xun’s story, we can see that not all contemporary readers overlooked the artful structure of the story, nor its single flaw (the last line). Thus, even though Chen Hengzhe was definitely not a better writer than Lu Xun, she was at least a good reader of Lu Xun.

Unfortunately, however, it is very unlikely that Chen Hengzhe read Lu Xun’s story before she wrote her poem. The introduction to ‘People Say I’m Crazy’ is dated ‘mid-June 1918’. Assuming that this is not a lie, it means that Chen can only have read ‘Diary of a Madman’ if the New Youth issue in question, dated 15 May 1918, was indeed published on time. However, it most likely was not: Zhou
Zuoren, in his diary, mentions receiving his complimentary copies of this issue on 15 June 1918 (Zhou Zuoren 1983:203).

Another (remote) possibility is that Chen Hengzhe had access to Lu Xun's manuscript, finalized in April 1918, before it was published, for instance because the New Youth editor sent her a copy to comment on. In general, all instances of affinity and interplay between texts published in (the same issue of) the same journal treated by me in this chapter may have been the result of conscious editorial agency. It is, however, not the objective of my readings to suggest such conscious construction, but to bring out the variety of voices one encounters when reading journals of this period inclusively, rather than selectively. Even if the possibility of direct influence between Chen and Lu Xun is ruled out, I maintain that a comparative reading of both texts, in the context of their respective issues of New Youth, can still yield fruitful results. In this particular case, this method of reading has enabled me to add some fresh dimensions to common interpretations of Lu Xun's story.

The fact that Chen Hengzhe called her madwoman chizi 癡子, rather than kuangren 狂人 or fengzi 瘋子, can be simply a matter of idiom or dialect. However, it draws attention to another aspect of the reception of Lu Xun's story. Throughout the story, Lu Xun avoids usage of the character chi 癡 ('mad'), calling his madman alternatively kuangren and fengzi. However, the expression chi ren 吃人 ('eating people'), which features so prominently in 'Diary of a Madman', when written with the other chi, would become chiren 瘋人 ('lunatic'). This pun would render a playful aspect to Lu Xun's text, especially to the famous line in the introduction stating that "all language errors in the original diary have been left unchanged." It would also leave no doubt about the question of who the real 'madmen' in the story are, as the eating of people is now literally connected to insanity.

Just as Chen Hengzhe's poem gains in meaning when read in the context of the journal issue in which it was published, a full reading of 'Diary of a Madman' can also benefit from a look at the rest of the issue. Links can be laid, again, with an article by Hu Shi, based on one of his lectures, entitled 'Lun duanpian xiaoshuo' 論短篇小說 (On Short Stories). In this article, he tries to point out how

32 I am indebted to Glen Dudbridge, who suggested this possibility.
desperately China needs short stories that, unlike popular tales about "a certain man meeting a certain woman in a certain place", can present a cross-section of "a person’s life, a country’s history or the changes in a society" in "the most economical and most splendid manner" by focusing on concrete characters and events, instead of on tropes and stereotypes.

It can hardly be a coincidence that Lu Xun’s story was written within three weeks after Hu delivered this speech at Beijing University, nor can it be a coincidence that both the text of the lecture and the story appeared in the same issue of *New Youth*. The status of ‘Diary of a Madman’ is further accentuated by an addition in small print under the title: ‘Diary of a Madman (Fiction)’ (*Kuangren riji Xiaoshuo* 狂人日記（小說）). But supreme irony is created within the journal on the page immediately following the last page of the famous story. The first thing contemporary readers saw after having finished reading a scathing attack on the moral values expounded by the Chinese classics was a full-page advertisement for a book on the Chinese classics (*Illustration 13*).

Reading early modern Chinese literature in its original context, or rather *with* its original context, can be a very enriching experience, not only as an academic exercise, but also in the classroom situation. Journals like *Eyebrow Talk*, *The Pastime*, and *New Youth*, regardless of their very different styles and orientations, are products of culture and should be treated as such. They are hotbeds of ideas, of conflicts, of excitement and of humour, literally stringed together as works of collective creation in individual journal issues. To read and interpret works like this, any number of strategies and methods can and must be applied. The horizontal reading strategy presented in this chapter can complement established interpretations and enhance the overall impact, interest and value of a story or a poem. More fundamentally, however, this reading strategy acknowledges that, in most cases, single stories or poems cannot be independent units in the analysis. They cannot be called ‘texts’. Instead, the ‘texts’ that this reading strategy addresses are the journal issues themselves, with all their textual and visual content, as it confronted the historical reader at the time of reading. Horizontal reading thus situates itself in between more traditional methods of interpretation that place literary texts either in the context of other texts or in a general historical context.
Horizontal reading does both these things, but limits its scope to what is between the covers of a journal issue. In this chapter, most of my readings have been traditional close readings. There is no reason, however, why other approaches to reading (structuralist analysis or deconstruction, for instance) could not be applied to the same, or to other journal issues. It is not the method itself that is important, but the definition of text that underlies it.

In this chapter, the application of a single method to a number of very different journals has served to demonstrate that all of these journals, regardless of their current status in the canon of modern Chinese literature, are worthy objects of literary analysis. It has not been my intention, however, to efface or deny the significant differences in style between these journals, even if those differences were less pronounced during most of the 1910s. In the next chapter, I shall trace the emergence of radical distinctions and polarizations within the literary field, by examining journal materials related to the career of one remarkable individual.
CHAPTER FIVE

STYLES IN CONFLICT: LIU BANNONG AND THE FORMS OF NEW POETRY

Liu Bannong

Liu Bannong 劉半農 (Liu Fu 劉復; 1891–1934) was one of a number of New Literature writers who started their careers before the Literary Revolution of 1917, by contributing to commercial journals published in Shanghai. Liu spent five years on the Shanghai scene and published numerous translations and original works in Chung Hwa Novel Magazine, The Short Story Magazine, Xiaoshuo hai 小說海 (which also used the English title The Short Story Magazine), Xiaoshuo daguan 小說大觀 (The Grand Magazine), Xiaoshuo huabao 小說畫報 (Illustrated Novel Magazine) and Libai liu 禮拜劉 (The Saturday). He also published a number of (translated) books and co-translated the complete collection of Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories.1 In 1916, Liu responded to Chen Duxiu’s 陳獨秀 invitation to publish in New Youth. A year later, in October 1917, Liu joined Chen at Beijing University and embarked upon an academic career, gradually severing his ties with the Shanghai scene. Apart from a period of study in London and Paris (1920–1925), he taught at colleges in Beijing for the rest of his short life, establishing a solid reputation in the field of phonology. Throughout his life, he remained active as a poet, essayist and translator, publishing two volumes of poetry (Wafu ji 瓦釜集 (The Earthen Pot) and Yangbian ji 揚鞭集 (Flourishing the Whip), both in 1926, the latter containing his collected work from the period 1917–1925) and, shortly before his death, a two-volume collection of his essayistic writings (Bannong zawen 半農雜文 (Mixed Writings2 by Bannong; 1934)). A planned third volume, containing his translations, never materialized.

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1 Unless otherwise indicated, all biographical information is based on Bao Jing 1985 (3–10).
2 This unusual translation of zawen, normally rendered as ‘critical essay’, conforms to the author’s own explanation of the term in his introduction (Liu Bannong 1983, 1:6).
By his own admission, Liu’s transformation from a Shanghai journalist-littérature into a Beijing literary intellectual, which took place in the period 1916–1918, was not an easy one. In a 1917 letter to his close friend and fellow literary reformer Qian Xuantong, he described the process as one of ‘self-cleansing’ (xishua ziji 洗刷自己) and suggested that his regular contributions to New Youth constituted the best examples of the gradual changes that were taking place in him (Bao Jing 1985:136). When his ‘self-cleansing’ was complete, Liu set off for a prolonged period of study abroad. Before he left China, he passed through Shanghai, where he said goodbye to his former friends and colleagues on the Shanghai scene. It was during one of his farewell banquets that he spontaneously invented the term ‘Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies Fiction’ (yuanyang hudie xiaoshuo 鴛鴦蝴蝶小説), characterizing the style he had discarded with a convenient rhetorical label, which would gain and maintain remarkable currency in the study of modern Chinese literature for almost a century. That the label would have been invented by a man desperate to disclaim his prior association with the style it characterizes is in itself evidence of the high degree of interrelatedness of all styles of literary writing in this period. Liu Bannong’s experience, therefore, lies at the heart of the matter that this book has set out to study.

Liu Bannong’s self-cleansing mainly took place through studying, writing and translating poetry. In this process, Liu dealt extensively with questions of genre and of poetic form, and experimented with rhymeless verse and prose poetry. But as the term ‘self-cleansing’ indicates, it was not only Liu’s writing, but also his personality that underwent changes during this period, as he was literally caught between competing styles. Similar to my arguments about disassociation in Chapter Two, I shall argue in this chapter that, for creative intellectuals like Liu Bannong, joining in the Literary

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3 The term ‘journalist-littérature’ is used in Lee 1973 to refer to the members of the community of professional writers in Shanghai during the late Qing and early Republic, who laid the foundation for the modern literary scene (wenfan). The term ‘literary intellectual’ is used in McDougall and Louie 1997 to describe the members of twentieth-century China’s literary establishment, who maintain close ties with education and/or government and who promote the idea of literature as a socially relevant, non-commercial, intellectual activity.

4 For a brief overview of Liu’s overseas studies, see Zhao Yiheng 1999.

5 Cf. Wei Shaochang 1980 (127–9).
Revolution was more than just radically discarding old habits. It was, simultaneously, a self-conscious process of limiting one’s choice of new possibilities to those considered most suitable by the intellectual leadership of the Revolution.

In this chapter, I shall pay special attention to Liu’s translations of prose poems by Ivan Turgenev, four of which he produced in Shanghai in 1915 and two in Beijing in 1918. Apart from his poetry translations, I shall also take a brief look at Liu’s original poetry. Although Liu is usually considered a minor poet in terms of the critical standards that were established in later decades, it is precisely through studying such so-called minor authors that we can increase our awareness of the arbitrariness of those critical standards, and of the various alternative forms of understanding and appreciating poetry that were available to Chinese intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Proceeding in a chronological fashion, I shall start by taking a closer look at the Shanghai literary scene of the 1910s, where Liu Bannong started his career as a writer. Contrary to the previous chapter, where I discussed the journal literature of the 1910s in general, I shall now focus on questions of genre, which lay at the heart of Liu Bannong’s later experiments.

*Literary genres in Shanghai journals of the 1910s*

It is well known that the development of new printing techniques in the treaty-port city of Shanghai during the second half of the nineteenth century, coupled with the changing career interests of literati in the wake of the decline and ultimate abolishment of the system of civil service examinations, instigated an unprecedented publishing ‘boom’ and a concomitant growth of the market for literary products of all kinds. It is equally well known (and very obvious even from just looking at the titles of literary journals of the period) that writers and readers of the late Qing and early Republican periods shared an overwhelming interest in the fiction (xiaoshuo) genre. Reformers such as Liang Qichao were very attached to fiction for its supposed educational powers. Cloaking social messages in the form of fiction would, according to their way of thinking, guarantee the spread of these messages to a large non-literati audience and as such play a crucial role in social reform and national revitalization.
Many scholars have pointed out that reality was not so simple and that, by the 1910s, ‘reform fiction’ was on its way down and ‘entertainment fiction’ dominated the Shanghai scene. This situation is succinctly described by Lee and Nathan, as follows:

"The populist ideologies taken up by waves of elite intellectuals hoping to shape the mentality of the people have not entirely achieved their objectives. There remains a gap between populist ideologies and popular practices: in other words, populism remains at a considerable remove from popularity. The pressures of modernization in many ways invigorated rather than crushed popular culture. One way to deal with the anxieties of change [...] was to create for both writer and reader a fictional buffer zone between them and outside reality, and even an escapist haven when that reality became unbearable. The modern mass media gave the fiction-reading and movie-going public greater access than ever to this kind of solace. (Lee and Nathan 1985:392)"

Without discrediting the achievements of original fiction writers on the Shanghai scene, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, are open to a wide range of appreciations and interpretations, it is probably safe to say that many of the contributions to fiction journals of this period were translations from or reworkings of a variety of sources in Western languages and in Japanese. The translations, written in classical parallel prose, in the hybrid style known as baozhang wenti 報章文體 (newspaper style), or in plain vernacular (baihua), were usually very free and eclectic and did not always acknowledge their original sources. Apart from serving the purposes of providing ‘solace’ and entertainment, translations would provide readers with knowledge of the world outside China, often selected for its exotic value, and with points of comparison between China and other countries.6

The presentation of translated works of non-fiction as xiaoshuo was a regularly occurring phenomenon. This was due partly to the fact that journals initially only paid contributors of fiction, while the contribution of works in other genres remained not or hardly remunerated (cf. Chen Bohai & Yuan Jin 1993:70), and partly to the

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6 For a detailed discussion of translation methods and their underlying motives, see Wong 1999. See also Gimpel 1999, where it is pointed out that the selection of texts for translation in journals of this period was not merely determined by their entertainment value but also by their relevance vis-à-vis domestic political issues.
very broad way in which the term xiaoshuo was understood. This explains why Liu Bannong presented his first batch of translations of Turgenev's prose poetry, published in Chung Hwa Novel Magazine in July 1915, as fiction. In his introduction to the translations, he writes:

The Russian literary writer (wenxuejia 文學家) Ivan Turgenev is as famous as Tolstoy. Tolstoy's writings are mostly light and plain. His works are easy to read, therefore many people know him. Turgenev's work is exceptionally classical and compact (yi gujian sheng 以古健勝) and his language is less clear than Tolstoy's, therefore few people know him. If one compares the two, it is impossible to determine which of them is superior. Turgenev has published a total of fifteen volumes, containing both fiction and belles-lettres, but among his fiction there are very few short works. I have chosen four pieces from his complete works, entitled 'The Brother Begging for Food', 'Why Did the Earth Swallow My Wife? ', 'Beware of the Fool' and 'The Widow and the Cabbage Soup'. They are all late works. (Turgenev was born in 1818 and died in 1883. These four pieces were written between February and May 1878, when he was sixty years old.) Their style and language are painful and plaintive, and extremely moving. This is the best fiction I have ever read, so how could I not translate it and present it to the fiction writers of my country? (Bannong 1915a: I)

It is understandable why Liu chose the four poems mentioned for this publication, as they all share certain fictional qualities that are not present in all of Turgenev's prose poems. They all feature more than one character, they have a simple plot with developing tension and a closed ending, and they contain relatively little imagery or emotional involvement on the part of the narrator. Since Liu made no attempt to imbue his translations with poetic qualities, it seems certain that he was not aware of or not interested in their original genre designation, despite the fact that the texts are clearly identified as prose poems in the English translations by Constance Garnett (Turgenev 1897),
The translations are certainly not flawless, but major misreadings, seemingly resulting from differing cultural assumptions, appear in only one of the four translations. The poem in question is ‘Cabbage Soup’, which I present here first in the Garnett translation and then in an English re-translation of Liu’s Chinese version.

CABBAGE SOUP

A peasant woman, a widow, had an only son, a young man of twenty, the best workman in the village, and he died.

The lady who was the owner of the village, hearing of the woman’s trouble, went to visit her on the very day of the burial.

She found her at home.

Standing in the middle of her hut, before the table, she was, without haste, with a regular movement of the right arm (the left hung listless at her side), scooping up weak cabbage soup from the bottom of a blackened pot, and swallowing it spoonful by spoonful.

The woman’s face was sunken and dark; her eyes were red and swollen … but she held herself as rigid and upright as in church.

“Heavens!” thought the lady, “she can eat at such a moment … what coarse feelings they have really, all of them!”

And at that point the lady recollected that when, a few years before, she had lost her little daughter, nine months old, she had refused, in her grief, a lovely country villa near Petersburg, and had spent the whole summer in town! Meanwhile the woman went on swallowing the cabbage soup.

The lady could not contain herself, at last. “Tatiana!” she said … “Really! I’m surprised! Is it possible you didn’t care for your son? How is it you’ve not lost your appetite? How can you eat that soup?”

“My Vasia’s dead,” said the woman quietly, and tears of anguish ran once more down her hollow cheeks. “It’s the end of me too, of
course; it’s tearing the heart out of me alive. But the soup’s not to be wasted; there’s salt in it.”

The lady only shrugged her shoulders and went away. Salt did not cost her much. (Turgenev 1897:257–9)

Liu Bannong’s version reads as follows (comments in brackets appear in original, emphasis added):

THE WIDOW AND THE CABBAGE SOUP

A poor old widow in a peasant village had suffered the sad loss of her son, whereupon she spent her days swallowing her tears. Her son had been twenty years old and he had no brothers. He had worked the fields to serve his mother and was known throughout the village as a filial son. When he was to be buried, the female village owner (village owner: the lord of the village, i.e. the landlord of the peasants, the person who owns the whole village) heard about it and pitted her, so when she was done dining and powdering, she went to condole the mother. When she arrived at the door, she saw that helpless widow, standing in the middle of her small room, next to the table, with bent head. Her left arm hung down, motionless. Her right arm moved regularly up and down, in a steady rhythm. She held a spoon in her hand, which reached into a black pot. At the bottom of the pot was weak cabbage soup. The widow stirred it with the spoon, brought it to her mouth, swallowed it, spoonful by spoonful, as if it were a delicacy. Her face was dark and sunken, her eyes red and swollen. However her posture was grave and stern, as if she was in church. The village owner saw it and was very surprised. She thought: cabbage soup is coarse and unappetizing, no knowledgeable person could stand it. She bears such great grief, why would she eat that? (This is exactly the same as saying: “Why don’t they eat mashed meat?”) Thereupon she recollected that when, a few years ago, she had lost her nine-month-old daughter, she had been overwhelmed by sorrow and loneliness. She could not bear staying in her country villa near Petersburg and had moved to the city, where she could be in touch with a bustling atmosphere every day and finally, after a few months, she had felt somewhat relieved. Now this woman was staying in this dull room, the sight of which could hardly compare with her villa, how could she cope with it? Thinking of this, she raised her head and saw that the widow was still swallowing cabbage soup. She could not understand it, so she questioned her: “Old lady, looking at you surprises me. Is it possible that you are not sad about the loss of your son? Those who grieve must lose their appetite. How can you eat that soup? Your son was famous for being filial, is this how you reward him?” The widow felt admonished and could not defend herself. After a long silence, streams of old tears gushed forth from her suffering eyes and ran down her hollow cheeks. After a while she said
plaintively: "Please do not criticize me. My son Vasia is dead, my heart has been cast away from my body. My final days have come, what have I to live for? I haven't been able to drink a drop of water for three days. Today I felt a bit hungry and swallowed some cabbage soup, I know I shouldn't have bothered. But it's not true that I haven't lost my appetite. In the past, we could not afford salt and we ate tasteless cabbage soup. I am only able to eat it today because I flavoured it with salt to make it taste good." The lady, upon hearing this, shrugged her shoulders and went away. She said to herself: "Salt doesn't cost that much." Alas! This is how the lady condoled the widow. (Bannong 1915a:5–6)

Apart from the many small changes and additions, which are most likely due to a mixture of the need to explain and the urge to increase the number of words (Liu was mainly living off his writing and journal contributions were paid by the word), the section emphasized above shows that Liu was interpreting the text against a very different cultural background. As an urbanite writing for an urban readership, he was unable or unwilling to imagine that spending a summer in the big city could be perceived as a negative thing. As a result, he radically changed the content of the original passage.

Liu’s complete overhaul of the ending of the poem also appears to be an act of interpretation, in this case for a very specific reason. Liu’s comment in brackets shows that he associated the village owner’s hypocrisy with a story about Emperor Hui 惠 of the Western Jin 晉 dynasty (reigned 290–306), who is said to have responded to reports of famine among his people by asking: “Why don’t they eat mashed meat?” (hu bu shi rou 胡不食肉糜). Liu lets the village owner suggest to the widow that she eat something more delicate, not that she shouldn’t eat anything at all. The village owner’s exclamation “What coarse feelings they have…” consequently becomes, in Liu’s version, a comment on the ‘coarseness’ of the soup. As a result, the old widow ends up defending herself not by saying that the soup should not be wasted, but by arguing that her stomach can only cope with the soup because there is salt in it.

The language of Liu’s first Turgenev translations is a simple wenyan. In line with the contemporary preference for yiyi (‘meaning translation’, as opposed to zhìyì 直譯 ‘direct translation’), Liu seems to have looked for familiar expressions, turns of phrases

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12 See the entry for roumi (‘mashed meat’) in the Cihai 詞海 dictionary.
and idioms that roughly corresponded with the meaning of the English without offending established Chinese cultural and linguistic conventions. Whether or not the changes in meaning applied to his translation of the poem ‘Cabbage Soup’ were intentional, is a question that cannot be answered for lack of sources on the actual translation process. After he started writing for New Youth, however, Liu commented more elaborately on his translation practice, allowing for a more detailed discussion of the various formal issues he was dealing with.

Early contributions to New Youth: the ‘Lingxia guan biji’

It is not entirely clear why, of all the journalist-littérateurs in Shanghai, Liu Bannong would be asked by Chen Duxiu to contribute to New Youth, nor what made him decide to become so prominently involved in the journal. Evidence suggests a number of possibilities. First of all, Chen and Liu might have had a mutual acquaintance in Zhou Zuoren. Although Liu did not actually meet Zhou until after his move to Beijing, it is possible that they corresponded before then. Zhou and Liu were both regular contributors to Chung Hwa Novel Magazine. Liu, who was working for the Chung Hwa Publishing House (Zhonghua shuju 中華書局) at the time, may also have been involved in the editing of the journal. Moreover, Liu published translations of Greek mimes (niqu 擬曲) in Chung Hwa Novel Magazine, in response to a similar publication by Zhou.\(^{13}\)

Secondly, Liu must have had some academic credentials in the field of language and linguistics, or must have at least impressed Chen Duxiu with his style of writing before moving to Beijing, as his initial appointment at Bei Da in 1917 was as a teacher of Chinese language (guowen 國文) and grammar (wenfa 文法) for the university preparatory course (yuke 預科). Finally, one should

\(^{13}\) See Zhou Zuoren 1914 and Liu Bannong 1915b. I am profoundly grateful to Susan Daruvala for identifying the correct translation of the term niqu, as well as for pointing out that, according to the commemoration Zhou wrote after Liu’s death, the two never met before they arrived in Beijing. In the same text, Zhou claims that he had not heard of Liu before he read one of his contributions to New Youth. However, in view of the fact that Zhou published in Chung Hwa Novel Magazine, that Liu’s work was all over the pages of that journal and that both translated Greek mimes, this particular statement appears doubtful. Zhou’s piece is reprinted in Bao Jing 1985 (353–7).
probably not exaggerate the distinction between the early *New Youth*, published in Shanghai, and the various other literary and non-literary journals published on the Shanghai scene. In other words, Chen Duxiu was himself originally a journalist-littérateur and may well have had frequent contact with Liu Bannong. The similarity between the early *New Youth* and the fiction journals is further demonstrated by the fact that Liu’s contributions to *New Youth* in 1916 and 1917 were to some extent similar to what he was writing for other Shanghai journals. His choice of texts to translate remained unsystematic, based on private interest, on the availability of English texts, and on their entertainment value. However, his writings for *Chung Hwa Novel Magazine* and other journals used a large variety of language registers, including a very natural baihua, which he employed especially for his comical fiction (huaji xiaoshuo 滑稽小説). In contrast, his early contributions to *New Youth* are almost exclusively in classical Chinese, except, for obvious reasons, for the translation of dialogues in drama texts.

Another difference is manifested in the presentation of his translations, especially his poetry translations. When he published in *New Youth*, these frequently came accompanied by the original text, indicating that he was addressing a readership expected to know English, or that he was aware of a possible didactic value of his translation work. Since publishing foreign originals alongside Chinese translations was a hallmark of the *New Youth* style right from the beginning, the possibility of publishing his translations in this way may have been another reason why Liu was happy to get involved with the journal. His critical writings in these years were also frequently interspersed with English terms and concepts, showing that Liu was going through a period of intensive reading and study of foreign literature and literary theory.

Liu’s most regular contribution to *New Youth* before his move to Beijing was a column entitled ‘Lingxia guan biji’ 靈霞館筆記 (Notes from the House of Spiritual Glow). Each column consisted of one or more translations of texts from English books or periodicals. In his introduction to one of the earliest texts from this series, a full translation of the French national anthem, ‘The Marseillaise’, Liu explained his translation technique, which he claimed to be unique in China. After briefly discussing existing English translations of the
anthem, he continued as follows (words in italics appear in English in the original):

As for Chinese translations, I have seen two different ones. The first was written to fit the music and seemed quite forced. The second was in the form of a four-word old poem and suffered from some awkwardness. Moreover neither of them was a full translation. They cannot fulfill readers’ hopes. Since in our country there are many fewer people studying French than English, I have followed the method of *paraphrase*. I have directly translated the French into plain English prose and printed that underneath (the original text). Then, disregarding any crudeness, I translated it into Chinese and added that. However, since the Chinese and the French language are quite far apart and I was restricted by sound and rhyme *(yinyun 音韻)*, even though I strove to maintain the original meaning, I could not adhere completely to the sentences of the *paraphrase*. This is not only true for Chinese. For instance, the languages of Britain and France share the same origin. Three or four out of ten words are similar. But when it comes to translating poetry, one is often restricted by *syllables, rhyme, poetic forms* and *hiatus*, so that one cannot stick completely to the original. Therefore the method of *paraphrase* is promising. Unfortunately this method has not yet been established in translation circles in our country. (Liu Bannong 1917a:8)

The problems of poetry translation mentioned by Liu in the passage above are universally known. What is relevant here is that Liu refused to accept his prose translation or ‘paraphrase’ as the ultimate target of his efforts. He translated a bound-form original into prose, only to translate it back again into a (more or less) bound form. In some cases this proved to be possible without too many problems: “Contre nous de la tyrannie / l’etendard sanglant est levé” was paraphrased as “Against us by the tyranny *[sic]*, the bloody standard is raised” and, consequently, translated into a nice five-word couplet “baozheng yu wo di / xue qi yi gaoyang” 暴政與我敵。血旗已高揚。. In other cases, the transition went less smoothly: “Le jour de gloire est arrivé” (“the day of glory is *[sic]* arrived”) became a four-word couplet laden with classical references “jini heri / riyue chongguang” 今日何日。日月重光。 (what day is today / sun and moon are bright again (a stock image for ‘triumph’)).

A more extreme example of the same method can be found in a long article on ‘flower poems’ *(yong hua shi 詠花詩)*, said by Liu to be based on excerpts from a book called *Among Flowers and Trees*
with the Poets. Alongside his translation of Horace Smith’s (1779–1849) ‘Hymn to the Flowers’, which he considered difficult because of its religious imagery, Liu provided not only the English original, but also an English prose paraphrase. The Chinese translation, again claimed to be a ‘direct translation’, ended up predominantly in four-character lines, with added characters and phrases in brackets. The first stanza’s original, paraphrase and translation read as follows:

original

Day stars! that ope your eyes with morn to twinkle
From rainbow galaxies of earth’s creation,
And dew-drops on her lonely altars sprinkle
As a libation!

paraphrase

(O flowers that may be called) “Day stars”! that open your eyes with the morning to twinkle from the rainbow-coloured milkyway of the earth (made by various flowering plants), and that sprinkle dew-drops on the earth’s lonely altars as a liquid poured in honour of a deity.

translation

(陋爾群卉，)爾如明星。（明星于夜，）爾耀於日，晨光甫動，爾即開目，閃耀（向人。）有如大地之上，亦有銀河。（河具五色，）繽若長虹。又或朝露凝珠，（集於爾身。）（爾所在處，）遂如神壇。（神壇）幽靜，露珠圓潔。如酹以祀天神，（天神來格，）

(Liu Bannong 1917b:9)

The substitution of ‘libation’ in the last line of the paraphrase with ‘a liquid poured in honour of a deity’ conjures up the image of the zealous student slaving over dictionaries to make sense of a difficult text in a strange language. The rigour and tenacity documented in these articles are indicative of a shift towards more linguistic precision in his method of translation. This view is further supported by a look at some of the footnotes Liu added to his translations,

14 The book in question must have been Among Flowers and Trees with the Poets: or, The Plant Kingdom in Verse; A Practical Cyclopaedia for Lovers of Flowers, compiled by Minni Curtis Wait and Merton Channing Leonard (Boston: Lee, 1901). (Information taken from the Harvard University Library online catalogue.)
many of which discuss issues of grammatical structure, as in the following example, from Edmund Waller's (1606–1687) 'On the Rose':

original

Go lovely rose,
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows,
when I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

footnote

In the second line, the phrase "that... me" is an adjective clause. The word "that" should be read as "who". (...) In the third line, "that... knows" = "In order that she may know" and must be read in relation to the line "how sweet...".

(Ibid.:3; italicized words appear in English in the original)

Despite his increased attention to linguistic exactness, Liu seemed initially unprepared to accept a conceptual change concerning the distinction between poetry and prose, leaving him with no alternative but to present his translations in bound form. This became apparent in his famous essay 'Wo zhi wenxue gailiang guan' 我之文學改良觀 (My Views on Literary Reform), published in New Youth in May 1917, only four months after Hu Shi's call for literary reform and Chen Duxiu's consequent calls for a Literary Revolution.

Views on literary reform

Liu Bannong's long article presenting his views on literary reform starts with an attempt to provide a definition of 'literature' (wenxue). Typically, Liu claimed that the problem could only be solved by reverting to Western languages. Starting out from the distinction between normal writing and literary writing, he copied (in English) the following definition:

[Literature is] the class of writings distinguished for beauty of style, as poetry, history, fictions, or belles-lettres. (Bao Jing 1985:113)

Through an elaborate process of elimination, he ends up asserting that the only genres "with an eternal status and value in literature are
poetry and drama (shige xiqu 詩歌戲曲) and fiction and essay (xiaoshuo zawen 小說雜文)” (115). From this, he finally arrives at a formal subdivision of the concept of ‘literature’ into ‘prose’ (sanwen 散文) and ‘poetry’ (yunwen 韻文). The term yunwen (rhymed writing) already indicates the nature of the distinction. ‘Poetry’ in Liu’s definition includes only rhymed literary genres. However, as he proceeds to provide his concrete proposals for reform, a subtle shift appears. Apart from a plea for raising the status of the various local opera forms, Liu puts forward two fairly concrete proposals: first, to “eliminate the old rhymes and create new rhymes” and second, to “increase the number of poetic forms” (119).

When discussing the first point, Liu identifies himself directly with the movement for literature in baihua. He mentions “the vernacular new literature that we are proposing” (wubei zhuzhang zhi baihua xin wenxue 吾輩主張之白話新文學) and points out that writing in the vernacular has consequences for the concept of rhyme, since many sounds grouped together in the traditional rhyme tables simply do not rhyme, no matter in which dialect you pronounce them. Liu suggests three ways of tackling this problem:

1. Writers all rhyme in their own dialect and indicate below their work which dialect it is. This is really an unsuitable method. But present-day dialects do offer some support, so at least this is better than the old rhymes, which offer none.

2. Take the Beijing pronunciation as the standard and ask experts of the Beijing sounds to produce new rhyme tables, so that those who do not know the Beijing sounds have something to rely on. This is slightly better than the previous method, but still not ideal.

3. Hope that the gentlemen of the ‘national language research committee’ will produce a standard rhyme table on the basis of their investigations and spread it throughout the country. This is the best and the most beautiful. (120–1)

Similar to the aims of the ‘national language research committee’ (and later the ‘national language unification preparatory committee’, of which Liu became a member in 1919), which intended to establish a new standard for the Chinese language independent of any existing dialect, Liu’s aim for Chinese poetry appears to have been the introduction of a new standard rhyme table, which, like the old one,
would eventually bear no relationship to any form of the spoken language. It is all the more surprising in this context that in his proposals for increasing the number of poetic forms, Liu seems to distance himself somewhat from the idea that all poetry must rhyme. The following passage is worth quoting in full:

It is said that the stricter the rules for poetry are, the fewer the forms of poetry will be, and the more seriously the spirit of poetry will be restricted, leaving no hope for the development of poetics. Let us compare Britain and France. In Britain there are many poetic forms, including prose poetry (sanwen shi 散文詩), which has no restrictions of metre or rhyme. As a result, poets come forth in large numbers. There are even many long descriptive or extolling poems, with sections of more than 100,000 words, which are published as separate volumes. French poetry, however, has extremely strict rules. No matter which collection of poetry you look at, there is absolutely no one who dares to change the set metre or write a rhymeless poem (wuyin shi 無韻詩). For this reason, the achievements of poets in the history of French literature cannot compare with those of the British. (121)

It is unclear if Liu Bannong's usage of the term sanwen shi here really refers to the prose poem. He seems to have had extremely long works in mind and, moreover, the prose poem was never a popular genre in British literature. It is therefore more likely that Liu was referring to 'poetic prose'. As John Simon points out in his study of the prose poem in nineteenth-century European literature:

Indeed, the number of English masters of poetic prose is legion: Milton, Traherne and Taylor, Swift, Gibbon, and Burke, Carlyle, Newman, and a host of others. But you can count on the fingers of one hand the prose poets, and if you wanted to count the writers of great prose poems, you might almost as well keep that hand in your pocket. (Simon 1987:622–3)

It is worth noting that the early proponents of writing in 'the vernacular' were not all that interested in creating a direct link between spoken and written language. A few years later, for example, Liu Bannong would suggest introducing a separate character for the word ta when referring to a female person, i.e. the character 她, now commonly used for 'she'. He argued that using this 'female ta' was better than using yi (which was used in baihua writing before then), since yi was only used in spoken language in certain dialects. However, he added that the new ta had better be pronounced as tuo, to ensure distinction from the male variety (cf. Bao Jing 1985:194). It seems that for many who were involved in the baihua movement, what counted was the establishment of new standards for the written language, based only to a limited extent on the spoken language.
Equally surprising are Liu’s remarks about French poetry, which seem to refer to a situation from at least half a century earlier. Finally, his support of the rhymeless poem, which he was to put into practice a year later (see below), seems to be in contradiction with his definition of poetry and his suggestions with regard to rhyme. During his final months in Shanghai, Liu Bannong seemed to conceive of the proposals for a new literature as ways of modifying and correcting the old conventions, while simultaneously adding new ones. Although some of these new conventions, like the rhymeless poetry form, conflicted with his own definition of poetry, he did not appear to see this as a major problem, nor did he perceive the need for a more radical stance against tradition. This would change when he arrived in Beijing in late 1917.

Renouncing the past

Upon his arrival in Beijing, Liu Bannong first of all changed his style quite literally, as he assumed a new courtesy name or ‘style’ (hao 號), which still sounded the same (Bannong), but was written with a different character for nong (農 instead of 廳). Liu became a regular visitor at the Shaoxing huiguan 紹興會館, where Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren had their lodgings at the time. It is well known that in late 1917, in the wake of the Zhang Xun 張勳 insurrection, the meetings at the Shaoxing huiguan, which also included Liu’s close friend Qian Xuantong, led to a considerable radicalization of the content of New Youth. The Zhou brothers and their circle had grown convinced that only an all-out attack on persisting old customs could free people’s minds from the longing to return to the imperial past. As a result, the 1918 issues of New Youth (vols. 4 and 5) are probably the most lively and controversial of all. In March, Liu Bannong published his famous reply to the letter by ‘Wang Jingxuan’ 王敬軒, an apologist for tradition, who had purportedly attacked the New Youth writers. As later became known, ‘Wang Jingxuan’ did not exist and the entire exchange was a hoax, thought up by Liu and Qian Xuantong, whose

16 This can be further substantiated by referring to Liu’s essay ‘Shi yu xiaoshuo jingshen shang zhi gexin’ 詩與小說精神上之革新 (Reform of the Spirit of Poetry and Fiction), published two months later, in which he argued that the poetry reform he advocated was in fact a restoration of the ‘true’ poetry embodied by the Book of Odes and the works of Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 and Bai Juyi 白居易 (Liu 1917c:1–3).
correspondence of this period confirms their willingness to resort to destructive methods and to outright abuse to achieve their aims.\textsuperscript{17}

However, as Liu was cursing the past and its (real or fictitious) representatives, urging them to mend their ways, others were scolding him for similar reasons. As Lu Xun recollected in his obituary for Liu Bannong, published in 1934,\textsuperscript{18} scholars in Beijing originally considered Liu a shallow person and frowned upon some of the ‘decadent’ habits that he had ‘brought with him from Shanghai’. As Lu Xun put it: “We had to scold him a lot to rid him of those things” (hao bu rongyi cai gei women madiao le 好不容易才給我們罵掉了). That this recollection is reliable is demonstrated by a little page filler Liu published in New Youth in 1918, in which he mentioned that one of his poems had been criticized by Lu Xun as ‘old-fashioned and sentimental’ and that Lu Xun had called him ‘superficial’ (Liu Bannong 1918a).

Perhaps as a result of such harsh attacks on his person and on his Shanghai background, Liu continued during this period to renounce not only the past in general, but also his own past. When, in July 1918, he finally published his first essay in baihua for New Youth (Liu Bannong 1918c), it voiced disappointment with the decay into moral depravity of the Shanghai fiction scene. On a later occasion, in a reply to a letter from one of the readers of New Youth, he repeated that complaint, making an explicit connection between his Shanghai background and his translation work:

Naturally it is a shortcoming that New Youth publishes relatively little creative writing. However, the problem is not the quantity, but the quality of creative writing. To my mind, it is better not to have so much than to have much that is bad. Let’s take a step back and offer a comparison: three or four years ago, all kinds of fiction journals from Shanghai were extremely popular. Their content was generally half creation and half translation. Although most of the translations were famous works by Haggard and Conan Doyle, they were still more or less presentable (hai jiu jing keyi suande yizhong dongxi 還究竟可以算得一種東西). The creative half, however, started out as sentimental and romantic nonsense (feng hua xue yue, caizi jiaren 風花雪夜) and ended up as scandal writing (heimu 黑幕). Therefore if there is little

\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Liu’s letter to Qian Xuantong mentioned above.
\textsuperscript{18} Reprinted in Bao Jing 1985 (340–3). The piece can also be found in Lu Xun 1981 (6:71–5).
Despite their caution, most members of the *New Youth* group started publishing their own creative works in this year. Liu, too, began to publish his own poetry.

**Liu Bannong’s poetry**

Lu Xun’s obituary for Liu Bannong, mentioned above, displays a mixture of criticism and affection. Though he calls Liu ‘shallow’, Lu Xun adds, speaking metaphorically, that he prefers shallow waters that are clear to deep waters that are muddy. He praises Liu’s contributions to the New Culture Movement during the *New Youth* days, saying that he could always be counted on to join in the fighting against the various ‘enemies’, and that, unlike Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi, he never had any hidden agendas. Lu Xun emphasizes that, even though he and Liu lost contact in later years, he felt close to Liu in the old days, and that with his obituary he wishes to preserve the memory of Liu’s ‘past glory’ (*xianqian de guangrong*) (Lu Xun 1981, 6:73).

Although Lu Xun does not comment on Liu’s achievements in the field of poetry, it would seem that one could make use of his statements to assess the quality of Liu’s early original poems. For the development of New Poetry, Liu’s main achievement probably lies in the areas which he himself indicated as his primary concern: the creation of new rhymes and new forms. The following poem, which was among the first New Poems ever to be published (it appeared in *New Youth* in January 1918) and has since become an anthology piece, may serve as an example:

**SEPARATED BY A SHEET OF PAPER**

Inside the house is full of heat from the fire,  
The old master orders to open the window and buy some fruit,  
Saying: “It is not cold and the fire is too hot,  
Don’t let it scorch me.”

Outside the house lies a beggar,  
Clenching his teeth and shouting to the North wind: “I’m dying!”  
Alas the inside and the outside
Are separated only by a thin sheet of paper!

(Zhou Liangpei 1993, 1:101)

Apart from the humanist overtones, which are characteristic of virtually all of Liu Bannong’s poetry, the poem features a number of formal markers of the kind of modernity that the advocates of New Poetry sought to accomplish: lines of unequal length, end-rhymes based on modern pronunciation, incorporation of spoken language, and the typographical separation of poetic lines (one line per printed line, leaving big white margins on either side). Liu was also one of the first to experiment with rhymeless poetry. Moreover, in the collection *The Earthen Pot*, he published poems based on folk songs, written in a language approximating his local dialect.

During his studies in England and France in the early 1920s, Liu wrote a large number of prose poems. These poems are remarkable because they demonstrate that, unlike some of his contemporaries, Liu had grasped the differences between rhymeless poetry and prose poetry. The following poem, written in France in 1923, is a good example:

**AT THE MARKET IN PARIS**

At the market in Paris, a living rabbit is kept in a cage, above it is a row of dead rabbits, hanging upside down from metal hooks.

A dead rabbit hanging upside down from a metal hook, its skin only just stripped off; its breathing has already stopped, the meat on its back is still quivering ever so slightly, but that is its final pain.

A living rabbit kept in a cage, beautiful black and white fur, golden-red eyes, when you see it bend its head to eat grass, or turn its head to glance at the passers-by, it is nothing but a weak and submissive creature. Does it know pain? Ah! How are we, how are we to know!

(Liu Bannong 1993)

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19 His first rhymeless poem, entitled ‘Mai luobo ren’ (The Radish Seller), was published in *New Youth* in May 1918. For a partial translation and discussion of that poem, see Hockx 1994 (32).

20 During the extended debate over prose poetry between conservatives and reformers in 1921 and 1922, most of the reformers seem to have used the terms *wayun shi* and *sanwen shi* interchangeably. See Hockx 1994 (66–8). The contemporary critic Ya Xian, in his discussion of Liu’s poetry, also speaks appreciatively of Liu’s achievements in the prose poetry genre. See Bao Jing 1985 (388).
Although this is certainly not the greatest prose poem ever written, I believe it lives up to the norms of the genre in terms of its brevity, its typographical presentation (resembling that of a piece of prose and thereby distinguishing it from rhymeless poetry), the poetic quality of its language and imagery and the suspension, (at least until the last line, of what John Simon calls “the raisonné element that characterizes most prose and much poetry” (Simon 1987:4).

The weakness of much of Liu Bannong’s poetry lies indeed in his inability to suspend the element of reason indefinitely. This shortcoming was hinted at by Zhou Zuoren in his preface to Liu Bannong’s collection *Flourishing the Whip*. There is a famous passage in this introduction, often seen as Zhou’s most concise statement of his poetic principles, where Zhou admits his preference for symbolism (which he relates to the traditional Chinese poetic technique of *xing* 興) and his dislike of ‘reasoning’ (*shuo* 說理) in poetry. As the critic Zhou Liangpei points out, although this passage makes no direct reference to any of Liu’s poems, it can certainly be read as a mild form of criticism of Liu’s predilection for clear humanistic messages (Zhou Liangpei 1993, 1:99).

Despite these shortcomings, Liu Bannong’s contribution to the development of New Poetry was obviously an important one. His experiments with various forms and various registers of the *baihua* language helped pave the way for later, more successful poetic creations. Moreover, when it came to grasping the essence of the prose poetry form, he was clearly ahead of his contemporaries. Although this particular contribution to the prose poetry genre has been overshadowed by the fact that his prose poems written in the early 1920s were not published until 1926, his name and his work deserve a place in the history of the genre.

From a broader perspective, while acknowledging his relatively minor, yet not unimportant position in the canon of New Poetry, we should not forget that Liu’s experiments during the *New Youth* days originally seemed to lead him in a different direction than the one in which New Poetry eventually developed. His attempts, seen most clearly in his poetry translation practice, to preserve more of the Chinese poetic tradition than most of his fellow reformers were willing to preserve, offered some important and possibly viable alternatives for New Poetry. It is these alternatives that Liu was unable to develop, not because of any shortcomings of his own, but
because of peer pressure from people like Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren and others who associated them with ‘superficial’ Shanghai styles. In other words, Liu felt himself forced to operate within certain stylistic boundaries, some of which may not have suited his disposition, and it is only within those boundaries that his work came to display the weaknesses outlined above. Below, I shall return to Liu Bannong’s early translations in order to show how alternative avenues of development for him, and for New Poetry, were blocked off.

Conversion

In what is arguably the most famous issue of New Youth, namely the issue of May 1918, in which Lu Xun published ‘Diary of a Madman’, Liu Bannong published not only his first rhymeless poem (see above), but also a translation of a text identified as prose poetry, which he had found in an old issue of Vanity Fair, where it had been introduced as follows:

The following exquisite prose poem by the celebrated Rajut singer, Sri Paramahansa Tat, who is now in New York, was inspired by the charming and distinguished lady who crowns the existence of the great Buddhist scholar and art critic, Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, and who is at present singing in New York, while her husband is lecturing on Indian art and other matters. He is a member of the old warrior or Kshatriya caste, a Tamil of high rank and dignity, and a cousin of the Solicitor-General of Ceylon, the Honorable P. Ramanathan. His lady, Ratan Devi, has created a vogue for Indian songs, which she executes with utter naturalness and a most convincing charm. Bernard Shaw, W.B. Yeats and Sir Rabinranath [sic] Tagore have acclaimed her as the Isis revealer of the soul of India. If India be the tongue of Asia, surely Ratan Devi is the tongue of India. Her success in New York has been serpent-swift.21

One can imagine that the high praise by the likes of Shaw, Yeats and Tagore sparked Liu Bannong’s interest in this text, even though they had not praised the prose poem itself, but the singer who had inspired it. This fact was, probably unintentionally, obscured by Liu Bannong in his translation of the introduction, which states that Ratan Devi had actually sung the poem. The same misunderstanding is apparent in the title of Liu’s piece, which is made up of the first line of the poem:

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poem ("Wo xing xue zhong" (I walked in the snow)) and the subtitle
"Yindu gezhe Ratan Devi suo chang ge" 印度歌者 Ratan Devi 所唱歌 (A Song Sung by the Indian singer Ratan Devi).

However, much more relevant than these misunderstandings is the introduction that Liu Bannong himself added, and which comments on his new method of translation. Liu wrote:

Two years ago, I found this text in the American monthly *Vanity Fair*. I have tried to translate it in all orders of poetry (shifo ge 詩賦歌詞), but in each case I struggled with the restrictions of form and style (gediao 格調) and was unable to finish it. Now I have completed it by imitating somewhat the style of our forefathers who translated the sutras. I have changed the complex (quzhe 曲折) and subtle (weimiao 微妙) parts into direct expression. I am still not satisfied, however. I very much aspire to create a completely literal translation style (guan zhiyi zhi wenti 全直譯之文體), but since this is extremely difficult, please permit me to ‘experiment’ with it for a while. (Liu Bannong 1918b:433)

This passage aptly summarizes the difficulties experienced by Liu Bannong in his translation work. During the previous years, Liu had been searching for a writing style that would be suitable for translating this particular prose poem. The problem was that none of the styles of poetry writing familiar to him allowed him enough freedom from formal restrictions to be able to translate the poem more or less literally. His usage of the concept of *wenti* (‘style’), which combines notions of both *form* and *language*, made it difficult for him to conceive of those two notions independently. Therefore, as long as he was translating poetry into some form of *wenyan*, it had to end up in bound form, or if it did not, as in the case of his first batch of Turgenev translations, it had to be ranked under a different category (‘fiction’ instead of ‘poetry’).

At his wits’ end, Liu took to sutra translations as a model, perhaps because of the fact that this particular poem contained many references to Indian scenery. Although there have been many different styles of sutra translation in Chinese history, Liu apparently considered these styles to possess some common attributes. This
opinion may have been a popular one at the time and was also, for instance, expressed by Liang Qichao in his 1920 essay ‘Fanyi wenxue yu fodian’ 翻譯文學與佛典 (Translated Literature and Buddhist Sutras) (Liang Qichao 1988:81–134). Liang Qichao considered the ‘translation style’ (fanyi wenti 翻譯文體) that emerged in the course of many centuries from the practice of sutra translation to be a harmonious combination of ‘direct translation’ and ‘meaning translation’, of foreign and Chinese elements (105). He considered this style to be instantly recognizable to Chinese readers as something different from all other kinds of writing, partly because of differences in grammar, word order and the use of particles, partly because of the insertion of explicatory or repetitive passages, and partly because of its mixing of poetry and prose, which included rhymeless translations of poetic passages (128).

Liu Bannong’s translation appears to be indebted to sutra translation practice in a number of ways, as can be seen from the example below, in which I have provided an excerpt of the original English text and Liu’s Chinese translation:

**original**

Under the ray of the champak flower that was her face the Indian jungle dawned about me. Great banyans writhed like serpents in mysterious shrines. Suddenly the fierce and subtle scent of nargis smote me, and I knew that she was singing.

**translation**

乞百克花，即是此面，其光芒下，乃有印度森林，現我四圍，有大榕樹，懸空舞轉，如在秘密神座，作火花戲，忽有那及塞香，濃烈輕巧，撲擊我身；我乃覺知，比方歌唱。

Like those of many sutra translations, most of the sentences of Liu’s text consist of four or six characters, forcing him to cut up the much longer sentences of the original. As a result, as indicated by Liu himself in his introduction, the text is made significantly more straightforward. Moreover, Liu avoided the use of common wenyan particles, which is one of the characteristics mentioned by Liang Qichao. Finally, Liu chose to transliterate the names of unfamiliar objects, such as ‘champak’ and ‘nargis’, with existing Chinese characters, making it difficult for Chinese readers to understand the...
text without the help of footnotes, which he duly added. The adding of footnotes, arguably, again resulted in a simplification of the text, because many of these words will have appeared equally exotic and incomprehensible to the *Vanity Fair* readers of the English original, which has no footnotes. It is in line, however, with Liang Qichao’s observation that sutra translations usually contained explicatory passages.  

A final, unrelated, question raised by the translation is why Liu Bannong translated ‘serpent’ with *huohuaxi* 火花戲, which means ‘fireworks’. The answer can be found in the 1913 *Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, which gives as the third meaning of ‘serpent’: “a species of firework having a serpentine motion as it passes through the air or along the ground.” In the Chinese context, the association of a shrine or a temple with the lighting of fireworks is of course completely natural, and certainly more plausible than any association with snakes.

It is difficult to predict where Liu’s experiments would have led him after this, had he not chosen for an easy way out. The solution to his problems had been suggested already three months earlier by Zhou Zuoren, who was his friend and colleague, as well as the most influential literary theoretician of the *New Youth* group.

The new style

In the February 1918 issue of *New Youth*, Zhou Zuoren published a translation of one of Theokritos’s *Idylls*, under the title ‘Gu shi jin yi’ 古詩今譯 (*A Modern Translation of an Old Poem*). In his introduction to the translation, he made the following statements:

(1) Theokritos’s pastoral poems (*Eidyllion Bukolikon*) are ancient Greek poems from two thousand years ago. Nevertheless I have translated them into the vernacular (*kouyu* 口語). This is because I think they are good [poems] and I believe that they can only be translated by using the vernacular.

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23 Liu Bannong’s translations of flower poems, quoted above, may already have been influenced by the ‘sutra translation style’, since it resembles many of the characteristics put forward by Liang Qichao.

24 I consulted the online version of the dictionary at the following website: [http://humanities.uchicago.edu/forms_unrest/webster-form.html](http://humanities.uchicago.edu/forms_unrest/webster-form.html)
The best translation is no translation. If you want to translate, there are always two shortcomings, but I believe that these are actually the essence of translation. Firstly, it will not be as good as the original, because it has already been translated into Chinese. If you wanted it to be as good as the original, you would have to ask Theokritos to learn Chinese and do it himself. Secondly, it doesn't look like Chinese—like a well-sounding, readable text—because it is originally a foreign work. If it were similar to Chinese, it would be a load of nonsense with lots of random changes (wo suiyi huangai de hutuwen 我隨意亂改的糊塗文). It would not be a real translation.

(2) When you write poetry in the vernacular, you cannot use lines of five or seven syllables, and you need not use rhyme. All you need to do is to make your sentences accord with the length of breath (huxi de changduan 呼吸的長短). I have translated this poem using this method, in order to give it a try. This is my so-called ‘free verse’. [...] (Zhou Zuoren 1918:124)

Zhou Zuoren’s suggestions seem sensible enough, but when interpreted against the background of all that has been said above, it becomes clear that these statements by Zhou are more than just practical advice for translators. In fact, what Zhou is doing here is to lay the foundation for a new wenti, specifically to be used for poetry translation, with the following characteristics: vernacular language, foreign-looking, free form, and optional rhyme. Alternatives which would violate the specific configuration of form and language elements of this particular wenti are ignored or simply not observed. First, the possibility that the same result could be achieved in registers other than the actual spoken vernacular is denied as an item of belief (“I believe that they can only be translated by using the vernacular”). It is said that when one writes in the vernacular, one cannot (rather than ‘need not’) write five-syllable or seven-syllable lines. It is taken for granted that the distance between Chinese and foreign languages is so great that translations must sound awkward or un-Chinese. If a text reads well in translation, it must be randomly changed ‘nonsense’.25 The aggression inherent in the wording of the latter statement leads one to suspect that Zhou was not just repeating the old truism that ‘beautiful translations are not faithful’, but rather openly indicting a rivalling style, namely the ‘meaning translation’

25 Note that similar assumptions are not made for translations between foreign languages. Thus, the practice of translating, for instance, Russian texts through English translations remained perfectly acceptable.
practised in the Shanghai fiction journals, and earlier by, for instance, the famous translator Lin Shu.  

Zhou’s statements about translated poetry are quite commensurate with Hu Shi’s prescriptions for original poetry, voiced around the same time. This must also be the reason why Zhou makes the point that this is his free verse. In my view, all elements of the form/language configuration described by Zhou Zuoren, including the ‘un-Chinese’ look and sound of the poems, are equally applicable to the original poetry produced by the New Youth group and, to some extent, to twentieth-century Chinese New Poetry as a whole. Consider, for instance, the origins of 1980s ‘obscure poetry’ (menglong shi 朦朧詩) in what was called the ‘translation style’ (fanyi wenti 翻譯文體) of the 1950s. The leading obscure poet Bei Dao 北島 once described this style as “neither Chinese as known so far, nor a foreign language, but something in between” (Van Crevel 1994:36), thereby echoing not only Zhou Zuoren’s views, but even Liang Qichao’s assessment of the positive qualities of the ‘translation style’ practised by the sutra translators of many centuries before.

Returning to Liu Bannong, it is likely that Zhou Zuoren’s statements made him aware of a more fundamental change of style he needed to undertake. After all, all his previous poetry translations now seemed to fall within the realm of what Zhou called ‘not real translations’. Perhaps his translation of the Vanity Fair text was a last-ditch attempt to prove that there could be a ‘completely literal translation style’ based on some sort of pre-existing Chinese paradigm. However, Liu did not continue his experiments as promised. Instead, he switched to translating and writing poetry in rhymeless vernacular. The change of style was complete, and Liu Bannong returned to Turgenev.

In the September 1918 issue of New Youth, Liu published baihua translations of a number of poems, including two texts by Turgenev (‘The Dog’ and ‘The Reporter’ (Liu Bannong 1918d:234–5)). The translations are as good as literal; hardly any changes or additions

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26 For a detailed treatment of Zhou Zuoren’s criticism of Lin Shu and the style that he represented (the Tongcheng style), see Daruvala 2000 (70–2).

27 On a similar note, Zhou would later relate his famous original poem ‘Xiao he’ 小河 (Rivulet) to his readings in and translations of prose poetry by Baudelaire. Cf. Hockx 1994 (34 passim).
were made and no linguistic errors occur. Moreover, the texts are presented as prose poems, no longer as ‘fiction’, regardless of the fact that they bear no resemblance to any of the forms of poetry that previously existed in China. The translations were printed on the page from left to right, making them stand out clearly from the rest of the journal content. Though this method of presentation can be seen more often in New Youth in cases where the translation is printed alongside the original, these translations do not follow that pattern, as the English ‘original’ is not given. Unfortunately, no explanatory notes were added that could make us understand the reason for this form of presentation. With the perfection of his literal translation skills, and the acceptance of the new style, Liu obviously saw no further need to annotate his translations. Was his conversion complete?

Two years later, Liu Bannong wrote a letter from London to Zhou Zuoren, in which he summarized his new stance on translating poetry. He reiterated his adherence to the principle of direct translation, but argued that, in the case of translating literature, sometimes the meaning of a word could be sacrificed in order to reflect the ‘feelings’ inherent in the original. He rejected the possibility of maintaining the ‘sound’ or ‘tone’ (shengdiao 聲調) of the original, referring to Tagore’s choice to sacrifice prosody when he translated his own poems from Bengali into English. He equally rejected, however, any attempts to produce translated poetry containing aural features readily available in the target language, i.e. to do what he himself had tried so hard to do in the years before his conversion. But the letter shows that he did not yield fully to Zhou Zuoren’s demands. Although he did not say so outright, he clearly refused to accept the idea that translated poetry must sound awkward. A translator who was in touch with the shenqing 神情 (‘air’ or ‘manner’) of the original poem, he argued, should be able to come up with an appropriate tone for the translation. The long translated poem that accompanied the letter, however, was never published.

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28 Liu published part of the letter as an article in 1927 in Yusi 139 (July). It was also included in Mixed Writings by Bannong and is reprinted in Ya Xian 1977 (131–4).

29 Despite their disagreements, Zhou Zuoren appears always to have maintained a positive opinion of Liu Bannong. As late as 1949, in an essay entitled ‘Liu Bannong and the Saturday School’ (Liu Xuyuan 1994:384–6), Zhou Zuoren spoke...
Both John Simon, whose work on the European prose poem has been referred to above, and Donald Keene, in his introduction to *The Modern Japanese Prose Poem* (1980), emphasize that the translation of foreign poetry constituted an important precursor to the development of prose poetry, since both in France and in Japan it was customary to make poetry translations in prose. As we have seen, the Chinese case was different. Not only was foreign poetry in bound form often translated (if necessary through paraphrase) in traditional Chinese bound forms, foreign *prose poetry* was originally not recognized as poetry at all, and translated as if it were fiction. It was not until the advent of the New Culture Movement that traditional distinctions between 'prose' and 'poetry' began to be questioned, by theorists like Hu Shi and Zhou Zuoren, who established a new poetic style based on a specific configuration of formal and linguistic elements, which included a preference for free verse, rhymeless poetry and prose poetry, both in creation and in translation. There is no evidence to suggest that translation *preceded* creation in this case, except perhaps the poetic sutra passages translated into prose that were mentioned by Liang Qichao.

The new style suggested by Hu and Zhou was created, at least to some extent, to challenge the existing styles of the Shanghai scene, which I treated in the previous chapter as well as in the first part of this chapter. For someone like Liu Bannong, this meant that adopting this style was not entirely a matter of free choice, but part of an overall attempt to get rid of his 'Shanghai style', be it lifestyle or writing style, in response to peer pressure from his friends and colleagues in Beijing. Liu's style changes not only involved serious study, but also the explicit renunciation of his own background, as well as of some original ideas that could be related to that background, such as his original preference for poetry translation in *wenyan* and in bound form. Some of the alternative translation styles that Liu experimented with during his period of self-cleansing might have resulted in interesting compromises between 'faithfulness' and 'beauty', had it been practicable for him to continue with his experiments. On the other hand, his study and acceptance of the New
Culture style does seem to have provided him, at least from a Western perspective, with a deeper understanding of the prose poetry form.

Liu Bannong's own (prose) poems have never really satisfied critics. However, since most critical statements base themselves on the same aesthetic standards that forced Liu Bannong to relinquish his inclination towards viable alternative styles, the value of these statements is and will always be compromised. There is great historical significance in understanding Liu Bannong's conversion to the New Culture style, because it shows us that the New Culture Movement did much more than 'liberate' Chinese poetry from the norms of tradition: it replaced these norms with new, sometimes equally rigid or arbitrary boundaries that continue to dominate the way in which modern Chinese poetry is written and appreciated.

During the late 1910s, intellectuals in Beijing acquired the monopoly on the correct interpretation and understanding of modern Western high culture, which they 'translated' into a set of styles that came pretty close to the original thing, but nonetheless appeared awkward and un-Chinese. Although these styles obtained swift popularity throughout China, including Shanghai, during the 1920s, they always remained vulnerable to a nationalist or conservative reaction. In poetry, the predilection of the New Youth poets for free verse and prose poetry was repeatedly countered with a call for a return to 'national forms' and even nowadays, the extent to which New Poetry allowed itself to be severed from tradition and influenced by the West is lamented by many. The cultural status of New Poetry thus remained—and still remains—problematic. As the next chapter will show, however, the problematic status of New Poetry, in the 1930s, gave rise to both unexpected new experiments and violent critical clashes. My analysis of those events demonstrates that, regardless of its power over individuals like Liu Bannong, the New Literature paradigm was never the dominant form it is supposed to be within the modern Chinese literary field as a whole.
CHAPTER SIX

PERSONALITY IN STYLE: ABUSIVE CRITICISM AND
ZENG JINKE

The person of the author in Chinese literary criticism

In the previous chapter, I have worked towards a definition of style as a specific configuration of formal and linguistic elements. At the same time, I have noted how, in the particular case of poetic reforms in the late 1910s, such configurations were linked with other, broader intellectual preferences and lifestyles. As a result, authors like Liu Bannong were not completely free in their stylistic choices, but limited by the norms of the community with which they associated themselves. In this chapter, I intend to forge an even closer link between literary form, language and content on the one hand, and the person of the author on the other. I demonstrate this link by drawing on examples from literary criticism appearing in journals of the 1920s and 1930s. My main focus is on the pervasive custom of abusive criticism, because it brings out most clearly a widely held view according to which both writer and text were valid objects of interpretation and criticism.

The idea that reading literature is not just reading texts, but rather getting to know intimately the author of those texts, has a very long history in Chinese literary thought. It has been most succinctly described by Stephen Owen, commenting on the traditional Chinese view of poetry or shi 詩, as follows:

The shi is not the ‘object’ of its writer; it is the writer, the outside of an inside. (Owen 1992:27)

In his commentary on the essay ‘Lun wen’ 論文 (Discourse on Literature) by Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), Owen elaborates the argument further, saying that “the powerful intuition of personality in style was a historical fact and a deeply held value” (63). This is much more than just a common-sense observation that every author has his or her own style. What it means is exactly the opposite: that every style has its own author. The literary text is the medium through which author
and reader engage in high-level communication. Such communication is the essence of the literary experience. Literature is endowed with a social function that operates on the aesthetic level and that can also be performed by other, non-textual literary activities, such as holding poetry parties or organizing literary societies.

During the Republican period, some of the most popular Western literary theories that influenced modern criticism were equally concerned with the author, but from a very different perspective. In the 1920s, for instance, critics of leading literary groups of widely varying orientations (the Literary Association, the Creation Society, the Critical Review group) displayed strong interest in the naturalist criticism of Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–1869), whose method of inquiry was summarized by Literary Association member Zheng Zhenduo in 1922 in the following way:

[Sainte-Beuve] tells us that, when we research a work [...] we must have read the author’s entire oeuvre; moreover, we must research the author himself, and when we research an author, we must examine the author’s family, paying special attention to his mother. If he has brothers and sisters, children and grandchildren, we must investigate them closely as well. We must pay special attention to his ‘original environment’, i.e. the environment when he first entered the literary scene, when he wrote his first poem, story or essay; his friends and his contemporaries also need to be researched. We should also research the secular influences that he underwent, and we must view the author both through the words of his admirers and his opponents. When we draw together the results of all this research, then the truth will appear, and we shall be able to define this author’s special talent. (Xidi 1922:5)

Although both views quoted above are similar in their stress upon the relevance of knowledge of the author for a correct understanding of the work, they differ in their method of obtaining that knowledge. In the traditional Chinese critical ideal, the author is known primarily through the text; in naturalist criticism, systematic research on the author is carried out separately from textual research. The attraction of such presumably scientific methods for Republican-era critics is understandable. On the one hand, they endowed criticism with the authority and objectivity of Science, and helped support the establish-

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1 For a reference to Sainte-Beuve in the criticism of members of the Critical Review group, see McDougall 1971 (45). For a discussion of Sainte-Beuve by Guo Monu 郭沫若, the leading member of the Creation Society, see McDougall 1971 (240 passim).
ment of the literary field as an autonomous professional practice. On the other hand, however, these methods managed to fill a void, as the shared value system that previously enabled the ‘intuition of personality in style’ was gradually disappearing. While many readers and critics continued to view literature as a medium through which one could interlink with the minds of authors, their worry that the text provided insufficient information for a successful ‘mind melt’ created an increasing demand for biographical knowledge, not in order to construct an objective interpretation or analysis of the literary work, but to enhance aesthetic experience.

Naturalist criticism was only one way of meeting this demand. Another, more common way, practised by most editors of literary journals at the time, was to keep up a constant stream of information about both Chinese and foreign writers in sections called ‘Writers’ News’ (zuojia xiaoxi 作家消息) or ‘News from the Literary Scene’ (wentan xiaoxi 交壇消息). In the early 1920s, especially in poetry, it was even a common trend for poets to add footnotes to their poems to explain biographical references, as in the following lines by Huang Xichun (1923):

After the Double Ninth Festival

That was the most memorable day (note 1) --
Hurriedly it went past;
As if nothing was wrong it went past!
Mother, if she were able to speak,
What would she think of it?

Note 1: The fourteenth of the ninth month is my mother’s birthday.

It is not surprising, in this context, that critical articles and book reviews published during this period often focus, to varying degrees, on the personal life of the author. Some critics would even consider it an advantage if the author they were reviewing was a friend, and would see it as their responsibility to introduce that friend, and not just the friend’s work, to the readers. However, friendship was not

2 In poetry, the disappearance in modern times of the ‘bridge function’ of the text in the communication between author and reader has been most eloquently described by the poet Wu Xinghua (1921–1966). Cf. Yeh 1991 (14–15) and Hockx 1999b (223). The various responses from modern poets to the loss of an identifiable readership are discussed at length in Yeh 1991, Chapter 1.

3 An example of this type of criticism, involving the poet Xu Yunuo 徐玉諾 and the critic Ye Shaojun 葉紹鈞, is discussed in Hockx 1994a (77–82).
all that was reflected in author-oriented criticism. The attention for the person of the author usually increased significantly when the relationship between author and critic was one of (perceived) animosity. Denton observes that much literary criticism was tainted by "petty factionalism and narrow subjectivism", a phenomenon that he sees as resulting directly from "the social and political burden placed on it" (Denton 1996:19).

Any reader of Republican-era literary criticism cannot help but notice the frequency and ease with which critics allow themselves to employ ad hominem arguments, often of an abusive nature. There was a strong awareness of this phenomenon in literary circles at the time and many complained about the practice of ma 罵 or ma ren 罵人. Many, too, considered the phenomenon to be an age-old, inextricable part of literary practice, invariably quoting the opening lines of Cao Pi's 'Discourse on Literature': "Literary men disparage one another—it's always been that way" (wenren xiang qing, zi gu er ran 文人相輕。自古而然) (Owen 1992:58). Few who quoted the line, however, elaborated on the underlying reasons for the mutual disparagement among men of letters. Owen (59–61) explains the phrase as an attempt by Cao Pi to present himself as a 'sage' who rises above the minor and distasteful quibbles of common literati. Gálik (1980:65), following Guo Shaoyu (1994:50), considers it a statement of a poetics in which writers, in view of their specific talents or expertise, have more right to criticize other writers than common readers.

These two differing scholarly explanations mirror quite closely the ambivalence of Republican-era literary figures vis-à-vis abusive criticism. On the one hand, abuse was deplored and considered distasteful; on the other hand, virtually all literary figures of the time employed it regularly as part of their critical vocabulary. As a prominent characteristic of the style of Republican-era literary criticism, abusive writing merits more systematic attention than it has thus far received within the study of modern Chinese literary thought.4

4 Apart from Denton's short comments on factionalism, made in the context of his discussion of the form of literary criticism of this period, I am not aware of any scholarly treatment of the phenomenon in formal terms.
In the first part of this chapter, I provide a tentative categorization of the various types and styles of abuse that one comes across in materials from this period. This is followed by a discussion of some of the reasons for practising abusive criticism. The second part of the chapter is a case study, devoted to a number of incidents that took place on the Shanghai literary scene in 1933, in which various types of abuse are demonstrated, and their literary functions become apparent.

*Definition and forms of ma*

Judging by what its victims considered it to be, the term *ma* can mean many different things, ranging from strong criticism to vicious abuse. The object of *ma*, however, is invariably a person (a writer or another critic), not a text. A very general translation of *ma*, as used in modern Chinese critical practice, could therefore be 'personal attack', or *ad hominem* argument. In this study, for ease of reference, I shall frequently prefer the more common translation 'abuse'. In literary thought, the opposite of *ma* is *peng* 捧, an equally frowned upon, yet equally common type of criticism that praises authors or their work for personal reasons or personal gain.\(^5\)

*Ad hominem* criticism comes in varying degrees of subtlety. The most straightforward form of abuse is simple name-calling, as in the 1920s attacks by proponents of New Literature on the writers of entertainment fiction, who were commonly referred to by labels such as *wengai* 文丐 (beggars of letters) or *wenchang* 文娼 (whores of letters). A typical example of the style of such critiques is the following:

I think that the term 'whores of letters' is utterly correct. They are like 'whores', and not only because they pander to what society wants. Let me draw up a list: (1) whores only recognize money, the 'whores of letters' also know how to rake in the cash; (2) whores are skilful in social intercourse [*yingchou jiaoji* 應酬交際], and so are the 'whores of letters'; whores are extremely jealous of those colleagues whose

\(^5\) An example of *peng* is the way in which Zeng Jinke (see below) and other Shanghai literary figures promoted the poetess Yu Xiuyun 虞岫雲, the granddaughter (according to one source the daughter) of Yu Qiaqing 虞恬卿, the powerful chairman of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce and owner of the Xiandai shuju (Interview with Shi Zhecun, Shanghai, 24 October 1998).
business is going well, and plan to vilify them. The ‘whores of letters’
are also like this. That is why the likes of Happy Magazine, Red
Magazine, The Semi-Monthly, The Saturday and Week all appear at
the same time, while they secretly scheme against each other and try to
steal each other’s customers. (C.S. 1922)

As in the example above, name-callers were prone to use abusive
language throughout their critical writings. In some extreme cases,
abusiveness would even give way to vulgarity, as in the following
eample from the journal Huanzhou 幻洲 (Mirage). The critic attacks
Liu Bannong, who is consistently referred to as ‘the alien
academician Liu Bannong’ (Liu Bannong yang Hanlin 劉半儂洋翰林). ‘Alien academician’ is a denigrating reference to the fact that
Liu obtained his doctorate in France and the character nong in his
name is purposefully written with the character that Liu used when he
was still an entertainment fiction writer in Shanghai. In the passage
below, the Beixin 北新 Bookstore is scolded for allowing itself to be
persuaded by Liu Bannong to publish a reprint of an old book of
which the critic apparently disapproved:

Damn it (ta made 他媽的)! If you still don’t wake up, if you still
continue to get crazy and mess about (fafeng hunao 發瘋胡鬧) with
the alien academician Liu Bannong, publishing ancient books to rip
people off, then I’m really sorry, but the money we youngsters have to
buy books is limited, so we will be forced to thump your fucking (diao
鳥) bookstore. (Shanfeng Dalang 1927:457–8)

Criticism like this was routinely condemned by other critics, though
certainly not in the friendliest of terms, giving rise to the ‘sub-genre’
of abusive criticism about abusive criticism. Some examples:

If Mr Miao weren’t out of his mind (shenjingbing 神經病), he would
not behave so ridiculously. (Jingnong 1921)

Abuse is an expression of intense stirring of the emotions, while
criticism is something most rational and scientific. It is true that on
the current literary scene there are quite a few demons (wangliang 魍魎),
and quite a few degenerates (bailei 敗類), whom it is necessary to
criticize vehemently so as to drive them out and discipline them.
Abuse, however, has no effect on those people, whose minds are rotten
and whose nerves are smelly (tounao fuxiu shenjing zhangma 頭腦腐
朽神經癱麻). (Wang Jiaowo 1927:4)

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For this kind of senseless behaviour, a great mental effort is needed from the person who writes it, but the person on the receiving end simply laughs at it and thinks nothing of it, as if it were a mangy dog barking and chasing him on the street. Nobody likes to pay attention to children who were born retarded (xiantian de baichi haizi 先天的白癡孩子). (Bing 1922)

Dogs, preferably mad, provided the most common metaphors used by and for abusive critics throughout the period. Terms like ‘mad dog’ (feng gou 瘋狗), ‘crazy barking’ (kuangfei 狂吠) or ‘dog’s fart’ (goupi 狗屁) appear over and over again.'

Apart from referring to the person(s) being attacked with an abusive label, critics could also opt for less offensive ways of reference. In the famous debates between the Literary Association and the Creation Society of the early 1920s, Guo Moruo was often satirically referred to as ‘the talent’ (tiancai 天才), one of the key terms in Guo’s own critical terminology. A more scornful way of referring to a person would be to feign lack of knowledge of his or her full name. In the above-mentioned attacks on Liu Bannong, for instance, apart from being called an ‘alien academician’, Liu was also referred to as ‘Liu so-and-so’ (Liu mou 劉某). We shall come across this usage again later.

Another way of displaying one’s scorn for one’s target was to feign not just lack of knowledge of his or her name, but to openly admit that one had not, or hardly, read his or her works. This very common strategy of condemning what one does not know was employed especially in attacks on groups that were considered to operate outside the boundaries of proper New Literature, mainly the

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7 The abusive use of the canine species has by no means been limited to the Chinese context. In 1871, Dante Gabriel Rossetti attacked the critic Robert Buchanan (1841–1901) for abusing him under pseudonym, describing the efforts involved in unmasking such ‘stealthy’ critics in the following way: “It is necessary at times, I believe, for the guardians of public safety to search all kinds of unsavoury accumulations; and doubtless it must be an uncommon case for two dead dogs to lie there, one beneath the other. Were the hidden one conceivably wanted for some purpose of judicial evidence, the task of digging it out would not be a pleasant one; and more time would inevitably be lost than if the upper carcass, perhaps purposely paraded, happened to be the one required” (Freeman 2001). These and other passages from the original manuscript of Rossetti’s pamphlet ‘The Stealthy School of Criticism’ were never published for fear of the author being faced with libel actions against him (ibid.). The absence, at least to my knowledge, of literary libel suits, and presumably of the relevant legislation, must have been a significant reason why this type of criticism was so widespread in Republican China.
so-called ‘Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies’ writers. In some of the cases of this strategy that I have come across, the critics’ claims about not knowing the works are, in retrospect, demonstrably untrue. For instance, in one of his attacks on the entertainment writers for Literature Trimonthly, Ye Shengtao 葉聖陶, himself a former entertainment writer, claims never to have read the works of Bao Tianxiao, or a journal like The Saturday (Hua Bingcheng 1923). In other words, in criticizing literature that was considered to be outdated and immoral, one was not only allowed to scold, but also allowed to lie. Again, we shall see more examples of this below.

In order to be able to lie without being discovered, it was necessary, as in the case of Ye Shengtao above, to use a pseudonym that readers were not familiar with (although hiding behind a pseudonym when abusing people was somewhat frowned upon). This strategy was used by Mao Dun in his famous, mildly derogatory critique of the first issue of Creation Quarterly, written under the pseudonym Sun 損 (1922). The Creation Society members were surprised to find out, months later, that such a prominent editor and critic had been hiding behind a pseudonym to attack them. Mao Dun defended himself by saying that ‘everybody who knew him’ was familiar with this particular pseudonym, a defence that made little sense, unless it was employed to emphasize the fact that Guo Moruo and his friends were outsiders.

For the present-day reader, using the bound reprint of Literature Trimonthly, it is easy to leaf back to Mao Dun’s original piece and point out that, apart from using a pseudonym not known to readers outside his own circle, he had introduced himself in the opening lines of his article as someone who was not active in the ‘journal world’ (zazhi jie 雜誌界). Little wonder, therefore, that the Creationists did not suspect that ‘Sun’ was in fact the editor of The Short Story Magazine, the most prestigious literary journal of the time.9

Returning to the more strictly formal aspects of abusive criticism, it is worthwhile to note how Western-style punctuation helped develop the critical arsenal for ad hominem attacks. I am thinking

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8 For more examples of this strategy, see also Bärthlein 1999 (220).
9 References to the various sources mentioned here are given in Chapter Two, in the section on the Literary Association and the Creation Society.
here especially of the extremely widespread use of the question mark as an instrument of ridicule. Some random examples are as follows:

There is indeed a group of young American poets (?) who propose to do away with form, however those who possess real knowledge all denounce them as foolish. (Miao Fenglin 1921)

How is it that Mr Cheng, who knows so much about English literature (?), could make such a mistake? (Liang Zongdai 1923)

The derogatory question mark even makes frequent appearances in titles of articles, such as

‘Chinese Writers’ (?) Fundamental Misunderstanding of Literature’
(Xidi 1921)

or

‘Appraising (?) Poems (?)’
(Yisu 1926).

Another punctuation mark that could be put to good use in abusive criticism was the quotation mark. Its most obvious usage was to discredit terms employed by the opponent, using the quotation mark in the same way as the expression ‘so-called’. In other cases, the opponent’s exact words from some text were cited and then twisted or ridiculed. In Cheng Fangwu’s famous critique of early New Poetry, entitled ‘Shi de fangyuzhan’ (The Defence of Poesy), this technique is employed a number of times. Each time, Cheng quotes a few lines from an original poem and then adds his own mock commentary, such as in the following excerpt, where Cheng quotes a few lines from a poem by Yu Pingbo 俞平伯:

“Friend! They say you are stupid, is it true?”
A respectful answer,
“Yes Sir, I am indeed!”

and then comments:

Friend! They say that what you write is not poetry, is it true? A respectful answer, yes Sir, it is indeed! (Cheng 1923:6)

The above overview of forms and strategies of abusive criticism does not pretend to be exhaustive, but has touched upon what I believe to be the most common elements. Moreover, virtually all the elements listed above appear in the materials related to the case study
presented in the second part of this chapter. First, however, it is necessary to move beyond forms and definitions and delve into the possible functions of critics’ personal attacks on writers in Republican China.

Functions of ma

In modern European literary history, abusive criticism has often been the hallmark of the avant-garde. Presenting oneself as a defender of ‘real art’, criticizing the establishment for having squandered its allegiance to purely literary values, and therefore focusing one’s critique of the establishment on non-literary issues and couching it in personal or abusive terms, is a recognized strategy in the quest for symbolic capital. As I have argued elsewhere (Hockx 1999a), the literary field of twentieth-century China was characterized by the fact that pledging allegiance to the symbolic principle meant polarizing oneself not only against the economic principle (writing for money) but also against the political principle (writing for some collective non-literary purpose). Some of the earliest examples of abuse in New Literature practice can be described in these terms. For instance, attacks by critics belonging to the Literary Association on the Shanghai entertainment fiction writers highlighted, as we have seen, the commercial aspect of their practice. Around the same time, the Creation Society’s initial attacks on the Literary Association, which were discussed in Chapter Two, focused on the opponent’s alleged factionalism (dangtong fayi 黨同伐異), arguing that the Association valued allegiance to its collective more than allegiance to literature. In both cases, the attacking side placed itself in the avant-garde position, claiming superior knowledge of and devotion to literature, while the opponent was seen as the establishment which monopolized the means of literary production and distribution. However, whereas the debates between the Literary Association and the Creation

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10 The relevance of this analytical model for describing the underlying forces at work in twentieth-century Chinese literary practice was recently confirmed by Nobel Prize winner Gao Xingjian 高行健, who, in an interview with the German daily Die Welt, when asked what the Prize meant to him, replied: “With this prize it is recognised that I write neither to make money nor to serve a political power.” (Die Welt online, 14 October 2000, URL: http://www.welt.de/daten/2000/10/14/1014ku196390.htx)
Society eventually abated as the New Literature sphere developed and grew, the abusive criticism of entertainment fiction, or indeed any kind of literature deemed to cater too explicitly to a large readership, remained a stable element of modern Chinese literary criticism throughout the Republican period.

Apart from the commercial dimension, there was also a moral dimension to New Literature practitioners' disapproval of entertainment writing. After all, reaching a large readership as such was an ideal cherished by many groups within the New Literature community as well. Commercialism only became a serious problem in the eyes of some, and a target for attack if it was considered to be spreading 'old' moral values such as, for instance, a lack in scientific attitude, a lack of respect for the equality between the sexes, or a general lack of knowledge of the world outside China. However, as was the case in Chapter Two, where I discussed the invention of the term 'old literature' by the founders of the Literary Association, what is considered 'old' in this mindset is not necessarily that which belongs to the past, but rather that which contrasts so strongly with one's own values that one wants to relegate it to history.

In critical practice, these moral judgements were more often than not intertwined with aesthetic judgements and in fact the two seem hard to separate. In line with Stephen Owen's observations referred to above, these modern critics, like their traditional predecessors, seem to have strongly believed that the moral fibre of an author could be recognized in "the style or manner of the text" (Owen 1992:63). As a result, critical boundaries were drawn that precluded, both on aesthetic and on moral grounds, the continuity of, for instance, classical language and classical literary forms in modern writing. In poetry, as we have seen in Chapter Five, there was to be no free verse in wenyan, and no continued employment of classical Chinese prosodies in the way in which Western poets have always continued to use the sonnet.11 Seen from this perspective, New Literature is not synonymous to 'modern literature', i.e. it is not an indicator of any and all literature of the modern period, even though most histories of modern Chinese literature claim it to be just that. Instead, I would argue that New Literature of the Republican period was a ti 体 or

11 Note that it was alright, though, for modern Chinese poets to write sonnets, cf. Haft 1996.
'normative form' (cf. Owen 1992:592), i.e. one particular type of writing amongst other, rivalling types, and a type of writing that was meant to say something about the author’s commitment to a specific view of society and culture as a whole.

The characteristics of the normative form that was Republican-era New Literature are not easy to define. They do not just include aspects of (vernacular) language, (Europeanized) grammar and (progressive) content, but also other textual aspects, such as punctuation, and even contextual aspects such as the style of the illustrations or advertisements printed around the text, and in some cases even the price of the publication. They also contain non-textual aspects, aspects of habitus, as in the case, briefly discussed in Chapter Three, of the League of Left-Wing Writers attacking the Chinese Branch of the International P.E.N. not for any of its textual work, but for the fact that its members met during dinner parties.

Again, the critics writing for the journal *Mirage* provide us with some helpful, if extreme examples of how overstepping the boundaries of the normative form could lead to being abused. For instance, their first attack on Liu Bannong (Liu Fu 劉復) was a three-page tirade against the old-style binding of his poetry collection *Flourishing the Whip*, providing the opportunity for another pun on his name: *Liu Fu fugu 劉復復古*(Liu Fu restores the ancient) (Peihua nüshi 1926). Two issues later, a publication by Kang Youwei was attacked for its price in the following way:

> In the China Daily News I read an announcement of the publication of Kang Youwei’s *Zhutian jiang 諸天講* (Lectures on Astronomy): the price is 10 yuan, or 7 yuan for advance orders. Damn! Although I’ve never been to a brothel, I have heard people say that in the bottom-rate ones you can spend the night for six dimes, and in the top-rate ones for ten yuan. Lectures on Astronomy is the same price as a night in a top-rate brothel, what a wonderful brainchild (baotai 被胎) it must be! (Changhong 1926)

Reading through the journal *Mirage*, which was published from 1926 to 1928 and edited by Ye Lingfeng 葉靈鳳 and Pan Hannian 潘漢年, it becomes clear, however, that their intentionally vulgar criticism, for which they invented the label ‘New Liuomonism’ (*xin liumang zhuyi 新流氓主義*), literally ‘new hooliganism’) and which appeared in the second part of each issue of their journal, was not just the product of some moral outrage. It was, at the same time, a deliberate
avant-garde aesthetic statement. It went well with the daring creative writing, often containing frank descriptions of sex 12 and always beautifully illustrated by Ye Lingfeng, that was published in the first part of every issue of the journal. The ‘hooliganism’ of the Mirage writers was thus not only a means of confirming existing boundaries between what was and what was not New Literature, it was also part of an aesthetic stance that distinguished Mirage from other publications within New Literature: they abused the non-modern like everybody else, but they did so in their own, unique, ‘hooliganist’ way. Their aesthetic stance has been succinctly analysed by Leo Ou-fan Lee in Shanghai Modern (Lee 1999:255–67), and summed up in the following lines by Zhang Kebiao, also quoted by Lee:

People like us were “half neurotic,” indulging ourselves in the school of aesthetic beauty—one of the most fashionable artistic schools of the time. We espoused a style that is bizarre, grotesque, and self-contradictory, that seeks to transcend convention and mores and shock society. (267)

In general, as mentioned above, criticism was heavily influenced by the factionalism within the field of New Literature. Even an organization like the Literary Association, which once aspired to become a ‘union’ for all modern Chinese writers, developed a clearly factionalist critical practice. In the pages of its organ Literature Trimonthly, for instance, the vast majority of book reviews published were of works by members of the Association. 13 In smaller groups and publications this was even more the rule, since smaller journals were often specifically meant to promote the works of the members of a literary society or a circle of friends. The same critics who engaged in this practice would readily agree that it was unhealthy and that it led to many instances in which writers were being abused or promoted not because of their writing but because of their ties with a certain network. In a 1923 article for Literature Trimonthly, the Literary Association member Yu Xiangsen 余祥森 complained openly about the two opposite critical styles of 马 and 滥, 12

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12 Already in its second issue, the journal called for contributions to a special ‘Body and Soul’ issue, which was clearly meant to contain mainly writing about sex.

13 This statement is based on my reading of the first four years of the journal (1921–1925). It may have changed its course after 1925, however, since during that period it was no longer directly linked to the Literary Association, as explained in Chapter Two.
characteristically drawing another boundary—and making another ad hominem argument—by saying that any critic employing these styles should be considered “a criminal within the New Literature movement” (Rensheng 1923).

Apart from critical judgements being steered by membership of societies or networks, they could also be affected by critics’ relationships with particular publishing houses. As we have seen in previous chapters, many New Literature figures, especially in Shanghai, were employed by publishing houses or involved in self-sponsored publishing ventures. It is hardly surprising, then, that the critic Wang Jiaowo 王姣我, writing in 1927 for the journal White Dew, would utter the following complaint in an article entitled ‘Zhongguo jinshi de wenyi piping’ 中國近時的文藝批評 (Recent Literary Criticism in China):

[Critics] are never willing to review earnestly the books published by their own publishing house. And what is even more detestable is when they write criticism in words expressing mutual jealousy or loathing—rather than debate. (Wang Jiaowo 1927:3)

It is characteristic for the ambivalent attitude towards criticism of many literary journals of the time that the same issue of White Dew in which Wang Jiaowo had called for less abusive and more text-oriented criticism contained a number of ad hominem writings, most notably a short, insulting editorial about the woman writer Chen Xuezhao 陳學昭 (1906–1991). Chen was accused of self-promotion by having her picture published in one of the tabloids. Below are the title and opening lines of the piece, in which we also re-encounter the abusive use of the question mark:

Xuezhao? Woman writer? Advertising!

Graceful and slender, delicate, floating on air, a picture of the profile of a Western-style, celebrity-style, Shanghai fashionable woman-style Chinese woman writer (?) has appeared in the prostitute-like (jinühua 妓女化) magazines and pictorials...

Summing up, it would appear that, in Republican China, abusive criticism served at least two important functions. Firstly, it helped to erect and maintain boundaries between rivalling styles and normative

14 ‘Tianshangqu’ 添上去 (Additions), Bailu 6:46. As we shall see below, there are other examples from this period of critics automatically assuming that publishing pictures of woman writers, even when alongside their works, is a commercial ploy.
forms, especially between New Literature and other types of traditional and modern writing. This function served to confirm the values that writers and readers of New Literature had in common, and thus preserved some sort of intimacy or linkage within the New Literature community at large.

Secondly, abusive criticism helped draw attention to the aesthetic programmes of New Literature groups and their difference from other groups, often leading to rigid factionalism. Factionalism also gave rise to the opposite style of (self-) promoting criticism. Ambivalent behaviour often resulted from this function, as the values involved clashed with other, equally seriously held values about the status of the text. On the one hand, factionalist criticism was constantly condemned by all sides. On the other hand, however, collective loyalties remained strong. As a result, person-oriented and text-oriented criticism would often appear side by side.

Naturally, there were also other motives underlying abusive criticism, especially in the 1930s, when political ideologies began to influence literary production. The case study that follows below shows how, in a famous critical attack on the writer and editor Zeng Jinke, mechanisms described above merge with elements of the political reality of the time, to create an even more complex literary debate.

Zeng Jinke and The New Era

It is somewhat of a mystery how Zeng Jinke arrived on the literary scene in Shanghai, since biographical materials for the earlier part of his life are relatively scarce. In the late 1920s, he emerged in Shanghai as the manager of a short-lived publishing house called the Malaya Bookstore (Malai shudian 马來書店). In the summer of 1931, he founded Xin shidai yuekan 新時代月刊 (The New Era Monthly), published by the newly established New Era Bookstore. Although Zeng Jinke seems to have been in charge of the entire operation of the New Era Bookstore, it was owned by a successful salt-merchant by the name of Kang Longji 康隆吉, whose portrait adorns one of the early issues of The New Era, with a caption explaining that he was general manager of the publishing house.15 By the 1930s, publishing

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15 See j. 1, no. 6 (December 1931) of The New Era.
had become a very profitable business in Shanghai, and most of the successful publishing houses were owned or funded by business tycoons who often had ties with the Nationalist government.  

But the almost immediate success of *The New Era* was due to much more than simple financial backing. Zeng Jinke’s introduction to the first issue announces contributions by two of the most popular New Literature authors of the time: Ba Jin and Zhang Ziping. These two authors are now commonly seen as representing two very different, almost opposed, literary styles. However, Zeng appears to have been on good terms with both of them. He frequently quotes from correspondence with Ba Jin, or recounts meetings with him, in later issues of *The New Era.*  

Zeng himself was a regular contributor to the journals associated with Zhang Ziping. Before long, *The New Era* published works by the majority of well-known authors on the Shanghai scene. *The New Era* also attracted authors associated with literary circles in Beijing, including Shen Congwen and rising stars like the poets Zang Kejia and He Qifang. The core contributors to the journal, however, were the same figures from literature and art circles who also frequented the Tea Talk and P.E.N. meetings. *The New Era* contributed significantly to establishing the public image of these writers, and of writers in general, not only by keeping its readers informed of their recent works, but also by providing extensive information on their personal lives in a monthly section in the back of each issue called ‘Wentan xiaoxi’ (News from the Literary Scene). This section of *The New Era* was usually some ten pages long and would contain a few dozen items. Below is an excerpt from the first issue of *The New Era*:

**21. Ninth Meeting of the International P.E.N.**

The ninth meeting of the International P.E.N. is currently being held in The Hague. The Chinese P.E.N. had originally asked Dr Xie Shoukang to attend, but because Dr Xie is back in China for a holiday, Guo Zixiong has gone over instead.

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16 For instance, the Xiandai publishing house, which published *Xiandai* (Les Contemporains), the leading literary journal of the 1930s, was established with the capital of Yu Qiaqing (see note 5 above) (Interview with Shi Zhecun, former editor of *Les Contemporains*, 24 October 1998).

17 In a picture in j. 3, no. 5/6 (December 1932) of *The New Era*, Ba Jin is shown participating in one of the Tea Talk meetings, seated next to Zeng Jinke.
22. Pan Jienong preparing to travel to Beiping

Pan Jienong 潘子農, the editor of the journal Zhankai 展開 (Launch), arrived in Shanghai from Nanjing a few days ago. It is said that he intends to travel to Beiping soon.

23. Sound and Colour stops publication

According to Shao Xunmei, the semi-monthly journal Shengse 聲色 (Sound and Colour), published by the Crescent Moon Bookstore, has resolved to stop publication.

24. Zheng Zhenduo still not going North

Two months ago, Zheng Zhenduo, the editor of The Short Story Magazine, was rumoured to be travelling to the old capital again; however, until now he still has not departed. According to our source, he has not yet gathered the necessary travel expenses, and perhaps will not leave for the time being.

25. Shao Xunmei hosting a simple meal

A few days ago, the poet Shao Xunmei hosted a simple meal at his home. Among the guests were Liu Na’ou 劉吚鷓, Shi Zhecun 施赭存, Dai Wangshu 戴望舒, Zhang Ruogu 張若谷, Zeng Jinke, Yuan Muzhi 袁牧之, Pan Jienong, Dong Yangfang 董陽芳, Xu Kepei 徐克培, Ma Yanxiang 馬彥祥, and the artists Zhang Zhenyu 張振宇 and Cao Hanmei 曹涵美. The poet’s wife, Ms Cheng Peiyu 楊佩玉, also helped to entertain the guests. After dinner, the guests ate lots of watermelon. When Xu Zhimo, Xie Shoukang and Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 arrived, the feast was already finished.

26. Gu Zhongyi intending to do physical exercise

The translator and dramatist Mr Gu Zhongyi 顧仲彝 always puts tremendous zeal, effort and perseverance into his scholarly work. Recently he has been teaching more than twenty hours at China Public School, Fudan University and Jinan University, whilst continuing to translate famous works of world literature and travelling to drama troupes in many places to act as director. Afraid that this excessive work-load is likely to damage his health in the future, he is said to have resolved to purchase tennis rackets and dumb-bells and other such fitness equipment. Starting from the second half of this year, he will exercise for a number of hours a day, so that his body will become stronger, and his spirit fuller, day by day.

27. Li Zanhua desperately needing a spouse

The editor-in-chief of the Modern Times Bookstore, Li Zanhua 李贊華, possesses delicate features, white teeth and red lips, is a man of many talents and has an admirable character. It is said that he is
currently in urgent need of a suitable spouse and is constantly having his friends provide introductions, urging them to "realize this wish within the shortest possible time!""

Columns like these give a good indication of the extent to which literary figures had become objects of interest for a much wider audience than merely the intellectual elite. On the other hand, they also indicate that knowledge of writers’ lives was considered necessary background knowledge for appreciating their works. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, ‘Writers’ News’ sections were common in many New Literature journals: Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰 ran one in The Short Story Magazine in the 1920s; Shi Zhe had his ‘Yiwen qingbao’ 藝文情報 (Art and Literature Intelligence) in Les Contemporains; and even a specialized publishing journal like Zhongguo xin shu yuebao 中國新書月報 (China New Books Monthly) (1930–1932) devoted much space to news about writers. Although self-styled high-profile journals, like The Short Story Magazine and Les Contemporains, tended to limit their news to foreign literary scenes (copying, no doubt, from similar gossip columns in Western journals), in all journals the news reported is often of a personal nature and has little to do with the work of the author in question. Compare, for example, the following entry from the first issue of Les Contemporains:

Recent News about G.B. Shaw (2 items)

(1)

The veteran British writer G.B. Shaw recently took his first-ever trip on an airplane, in Cape Town, South Africa. He commented that this had been the first time in 75 years (Shaw is currently 75 years of age) that he had felt excited. Mrs Shaw accompanied him on the trip. Shaw solemnly stated that he had no intention of travelling extensively in South Africa, nor did he want to visit Victoria Falls, because he had “already seen it on film.”

(2)

As Shaw boarded a ship in Cape Town to return to London, he stated that the South African black people were not only superior to the country’s white people in terms of behaviour and moral fibre, but that they were also more intelligent. During his stay in South Africa, he had not encountered a single simple-minded native, but he had

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come across quite a few white weaklings without a semblance of intelligence; therefore the future for them was hopeless. He only made an exception for the Dutch population, who seemed more intelligent and hard-working than the other white people. However, as long as they would not get rid of their bibles, they, too, could not be expected to make much progress.\textsuperscript{19}

The personality-based view of literature, though rooted in traditional Chinese cultural dispositions, found a specifically modern and popular corollary in 1930s Shanghai, in the form of media interest in authors’ private lives, tabloid journalism, and self-promotion. Although Zeng Jinke was skilful in dealing with these aspects of literary practice, it is important to emphasize that he and others in his group had more in common with the New Literature community than with any other literary communities. They certainly perceived themselves as practitioners of New Literature, and were initially perceived as such by others in the field. They had no interest in or associations with, and were at times critical of, the people and publications of popular literature. The way in which Zeng Jinke criticized one such publication, the then recently founded journal \textit{Hongye} (Red Leaves), edited by Xu Xiaotian \textsuperscript{20} is not very dissimilar from the typical criticism of popular literature that we find in all New Literature journals.

What kind of journal is \textit{Red Leaves}? The facts will tell us. \textit{The Saturday} and \textit{Red Rose} were silly journals, so \textit{Red Leaves} will surely be even sillier. The reason why it can exist and why it sells is that there are still many silly people in society: some businessmen, old wives and concubines, as well as some young gentlemen and misses, hoodlums and prostitutes. Those people are rooted in a certain era, so they love to read journals that are rooted in the same era. It is not surprising that they call \textit{The New Era} a silly thing. So who is silly and who isn’t? Justice will prevail in the end.\textsuperscript{21}

There were other ways in which Zeng Jinke’s style of running \textit{The New Era} conformed with the seriousness that characterized the New Literature working style. Perhaps the strongest point of the whole enterprise was his very professional attitude towards the running of

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Xiandai} j. 1, no. 1 (May 1932): 175.

\textsuperscript{20} Xu Xiaotian (Xu Zehua, 1886–1946?), after his involvement with the 1910s journal \textit{Eyebrow Talk}, discussed in Chapter Four, continued to be an active editor of and contributor to journals throughout the Republican period.

\textsuperscript{21} See the editor’s postscript in \textit{Xin shidai yuekan} 1:5 (December 1931): 165.
the journal. Already in the first issue, he promised that *The New Era* would come out on the first of each month without any delays. This was the kind of promise made by countless new journals at the time, but one which very few indeed were able to keep. Zeng, however, did keep his promise, turning *The New Era* into one of the most consistently appearing, and one of the longest-lived journals of the early 1930s. Zeng cleverly kept reminding his readers of this considerable achievement in various editorials he wrote throughout the period.

Zeng also seems to have had an excellent sense of the balance between literary and political forces needed to gain recognition within the New Literature community, i.e. he took care not to associate himself with any political party or institution, but he did express concern for pressing political matters. For instance, he stated quite clearly in the opening editorial of the first issue that *The New Era* had no political background and would not serve the purposes of any 'ism'. However, in the fourth issue (November 1931) he opened with a short comment on the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, blaming the Chinese government for their policy of non-resistance and calling upon all Chinese citizens to unite and fight back. He immediately added an apology to his readers for breaking with his principle of 'not talking politics', expressing the hope that they would understand and agree, which I am sure many of them did.

In short, Zeng Jinke was a very skilful editor, who turned *The New Era*, with its attractive mix of serious and slightly less serious content, into a leading literary journal. Zeng, however, was himself also a writer and he used his journal for relentless promotion of his own work, which he was churning out at an incredible speed. After his first collection of short stories, which he claimed to have written after joining the Chinese P.E.N branch (see Chapter Three), Zeng published five more collections of fiction, two collections of new poetry, one collection of *ci* lyrics, and two volumes of essays, within the space of exactly two years. His most successful work (both in terms of sales figures and audience response) was probably the

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22 Five *juan* of six issues each were published between August 1931 and December 1933. Two more issues appeared in January–February 1934. The journal was shortly revived in 1937. Each issue was over 150 pages, some special issues even over 300 pages. As far as I know, of the 1930s literary journals only *Les Contemporains* and *Lunyu* (The Analects) had a longer life-span.
sentimental poetry collection *Ai de sanbuqu* 愛的三部曲 (Love Trilogy), which he claimed to be based on a real, sad love affair. Zeng himself, however, appeared most proud of his essay collection *Jinke suibi* 今可隨筆 (Jinke’s Random Jottings), because it was published by the prestigious Beixin Bookstore and came out almost simultaneously with new collections by Lu Xun and Bing Xin 冰心. Not only did Zeng publish most of this work in his own journal, he was also in the habit of printing raving reviews of his own collections, sent in by sympathetic friends and readers, to which he would then respond with great modesty. A typical example is his statement in the May 1933 issue of *The New Era* that he would no longer publish any reviews of his own work—a statement that came appended as a postscript to five positive reviews of his collection of lyrics, *Luohua* 落花 (Fallen Flowers). 23

*Unknown authors, women writers and the aesthetics of friendship*

Zeng Jinke also capitalized inventively on the debate about Unknown Authors, referred to in Chapter Three. In the same opening editorial for the first issue of *The New Era* in which he proudly announced contributions by many leading authors of the time, he emphasized that his journal would always welcome work sent in by Unknown Authors. A number of letters-to-the-editor published in the next issue demonstrate how grateful many of his readers were for this acknowledgement. Zeng soon made good on this promise by announcing an ‘Unknown Authors Special Issue’, which appeared as Volume 2, No. 1 in February 1932. He also promised prizes for the best contributions sent in for this issue. When the issue came out, a considerable number of Unknown Authors were published, but the ‘first prize’ was not awarded, a clear indication that Zeng intended to be serious about the aspect of literary quality so central to the whole debate. The special issue also contained a dozen or so articles by well-known writers commenting on the problem. Interestingly, quite a few of these commentators, including Zeng himself, applied the label ‘Unknown Author’ to themselves, which is another good illustration of its symbolic potential. In his opening comments to the special issue, Zeng Jinke wrote:

23 *Xin shidai yuekan*, j. 4, no. 4/5 (May 1933): 289.
I am not a famous person, nor have I ever wanted to possess fame, although I certainly do not lack ways of ‘becoming famous’ and have also had opportunities to ‘become famous’. I published quite a few works, but my works are as unknown as I am. Naturally I am still an Unknown Author, if I am allowed to call myself an Author at all.

(Zeng Jinke 1932:1)

In the same piece, Zeng mentioned that his works and the journals he published had been frequently criticized, but that those who abused him in the past, much to his surprise, never pointed out what exactly was wrong with his works. To complicate matters even further, one of the journals in which he was scolded was a publication called *Wuming zuojia zhoukan* 無名作家 週刊 (Unknown Authors Weekly).\(^\text{24}\)

Shortly after he brought out his ‘Unknown Authors Special Issue’, Zeng Jinke announced the establishment of a new journal, *Wenyi zhi you* 文藝之友 (Friends of Literature and Art), edited by a society he founded, called the Friends of Literature Society (*wenyou she* 文友社). Every issue of that journal contained a special section, called ‘Women de quantou’ 我們的拳頭 (Our Fists), in which Unknown Authors sought out shortcomings in the works of Known Authors. Zeng Jinke managed to run and publish both journals for a year or so, despite the fact that many of the Known Authors writing for *The New Era* were attacked in *Friends of Literature and Art*. All this confirms the impression that, by the 1930s, the epithet of Unknown Author had come to represent much more than just the newcomers in the literary field but was instead a coveted and contended source of power and recognition.

It is of course possible to regard all these attempts to discover new talent as nothing but a commercial ploy, aimed at creating the illusion that anyone could be a writer, with the ultimate goal of selling more magazines. However, invitations to Unknown Authors to contribute can be seen in so many magazines of the time that I believe there was a serious concern about the lack of successors to the famous ‘May Fourth’ generation, as well as about the prolificness of writers like Ba Jin and Shen Congwen (and the resulting uneven quality of their writing). Finally, I also detect a certain anti-élitism (for lack of a better word) among some members of the Shanghai literary

\(^{24}\) Unfortunately I have been unable to consult this journal.
community. As we have seen in Chapter Three, many literary figures (especially, but not exclusively, in Zeng Jinke’s circle) found great pleasure and satisfaction in getting involved in literature with a group of good friends, encouraging those who did not previously write to make their debuts as authors. Similarly, Unknown Authors contributing to their journals or salons were all seen as potential friends, reminding one of Confucius’s famous dictum *junzi yi wen hui you* 君子以文會友, translated by Arthur Waley as “the gentleman by his culture collects friends about him” (Waley 1949:170).

Older New Literature writers such as Lu Xun and Mao Dun, who had founded their careers on the opposition to ‘writing for money’ and ‘writing as pastime’, were suspicious of these ideals, and in their later attacks on Zeng Jinke they would often ridicule Zeng’s style by preceding every personal name with the phrase *wo de pengyou* 我的朋友 (my friend). They were similarly suspicious of attempts by Zeng, and by the Tea Talk group, to involve large numbers of women in their activities.25 This had already become clear in the debate over the ‘Women Writers Issue’ (*Nü zuojia hao* 女作家號) of the journal *Zhen mei shan* 真美善 (Truth, Beauty and Goodness). This special issue, which was edited by Zhang Ruogu (1903?–1960?), came out in February 1929 and sold 3,000 copies in one month, and another 10,000 in the following two years.26 The special issue included works in various genres (mainly modern but also including classical poetry) by more than twenty women writers, including famous ones such as Bing Xin, Lu Yin, Wu Shutian 吳塑天 and Bai Wei 白薇. Every contribution went accompanied by a picture of the author in question, and it was this slightly frivolous touch which, among other things,

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25 This did not mean, however, that women writers were identified as a special category of Unknown Authors needing extra encouragement. Although there were quite a few women writers among the contributors to Zeng Jinke’s special issue for Unknown Authors, the category itself was presented as genderless. I am grateful to Jeesoon Hong for drawing my attention to this distinction.

26 Xu Naixiang and Qin Hong (1988:329) are very specific about Zhang’s date of birth, which they give as 29 September 1903, but give no date of death. Chen Yutang (1993:450) dates Zhang as 1904–?. The only source mentioning a date of death for Zhang (i.e. 1960) is the 1996 reprint of his novel *Yiguo qingdiao* 異國情調 (Exoticism), which gives 1905 as date of birth.

27 For the sales figure of the special issue, see its colophon. I am indebted to Hanno Lecher of the Library of the Institute of Chinese Studies at Heidelberg for providing me with a copy of this source.
sparked criticism from New Literature puritans, not unlike the criticism of Chen Xuezhao encountered above. As Zhang Ruogu pointed out, most of the criticism was aimed at him personally, accusing him of selling sex for commercial gains, or, according to some, for personal favours from the women involved. Most critics apparently claimed not to have bothered to read the contents of the special issues.

Zeng Jinke from time to time encountered similar accusations. He, too, gave ample space in his journals to works by women writers. As was the case with the male members of the Tea Talk group discussed above, Zeng was inclined to draw attention to the gender of these writers, in sometimes ambiguous manners. On the one hand, Zeng was renowned for the way in which he promoted the poetess Yu Xiuyun, the granddaughter of the rich comprador Yu Qiaqing (the owner of the Xiandai publishing house), whose name often appeared in his ‘Writers’ News’ columns, always preceded by the honorific nü shiren 女詩人 (‘The Poetess’). Her work also takes up the opening section of a collection entitled Nü pengyoumen de shi 女朋友們的詩 (Poems by Lady Friends), edited and published by Zeng in 1932, under the pseudonym Yunshang 雲裳. On the other hand, one of Zeng’s ‘random jottings’ exhibits the following, much less flattering view of women writers and their works:

A friend told me: “One lady is romantically involved with a certain writer, another is married to some poet, and before long, they have all become ‘women writers’!” It is the same as when a woman becomes involved with a capitalist or marries a millionaire, and they are immediately pervaded with the stench of filthy lucre.

Who can guarantee that the works or translations by Miss So-and-so are really written or translated by herself?

Women are rarely able to write good texts, but texts written by women always easily get the opportunity to be published, and they easily become famous. (Jinke 1931)

28 For Zhang Ruogu’s overview of the debate, which includes a list of some thirty reviews of the special issue, see Zhang Ruogu 1929. Later in 1929, Zhang founded a journal called Nü zuojia zazhi 女作家雜誌 (Women Writers Journal), which folded after one issue. (Information obtained from Peking University Library online catalogue.)

29 For confirmation that Yunshang is indeed Zeng’s pseudonym, see Zeng Jinke 1933 (187–8).
Although passages like this were probably meant to be ironic, or possibly even flirtatious, it is not surprising that critics would question Zeng’s morals, and call him a ‘frivolous youngster’ (qingbo shaonian 輕薄少年). The critical attacks did not really take off, however, until Zeng began to promote a literary genre—the lyric—that was equally associated with frivolity, and it is in this context that the functions of abusive criticism and the concept of normative form can be made eminently clear.

The liberation of the lyric

In February 1933, The New Era published a special issue devoted to the time-honoured poetic genre of the lyric. The genre had been making something of a come-back, especially among the participants in the Tea Talk meetings and in the work of Zhang Yiping. The ‘movement for the liberation of the lyric’ (ci de jiefang yundong 詞的解放運動), proudly announced and openly led by Zeng, was an attempt to breathe new life into the genre by employing modern language and subject matter, while still writing according to the traditional prosodies. Whatever the merits of these ideas may have been, they soon became irrelevant to the critical debate, which came to centre exclusively on the following new lyrics by Zeng Jinke:

新年詞抄

[...]

畫堂春

一年開始日初長，客來慰我凄涼。偶然借酒本無妨，打打麻將。
都喝乾杯中酒，國家事管他娘。樽前尤幸有紅妝，但不能狂！

趨運算元

東北正嚴寒，不比江南暖；僞國居然見太平，何以「中原」亂？
「全會」亦曾開，救國成懸案；出席諸公盡得官，國難無人管！

[...]

30 I should add that most present-day reference works and overview histories of modern Chinese literature also limit their treatment of Zeng Jinke and his journal to this one poem and the ensuing incident. No matter what one thinks of Zeng’s own writing, this dismissive treatment by literary historians is deplorable, because it has led to the almost total neglect of his journal, The New Era, and its important position on the literary scene of the early 1930s.
NEW YEAR LYRICS

[...}

(to the tune ‘Spring in the Ornate Chamber’)

A new year is beginning, the days are getting longer.
Guests arrive to comfort me in my despondency.
There is nothing wrong with having some diversion for a change.
We play some mah-jong.
We all drink up the wine in our glass.
Affairs of the state, who gives a damn?
In front of the wine-vessel there are red dresses, what great fortune!
But we must not lose our heads.

(to the tune ‘Song of Divination’)

Winter is harsh in the Northeast.
Not warmer than here in the South.
Even the puppet state is at peace.
So why are the ‘Central Plains’ in chaos?
‘Parliament’ has already convened.
Saving the nation has become an unsettled question.
The lords in session all get official titles.
Nobody cares about the national crisis!

The topic of the poem is clearly the political situation that had arisen after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. If both poems are read together (as they should be in the ci tradition, which often works with contrasting pairs of poems), the correct patriotic stance of the author is, in my view, obvious. The first attack on the poem, and on Zeng, appeared only a few days later in the China Daily News supplement Ziyou tan 自由談 (Free Talk). The attack was indeed unrelated to any political stance and clearly targeted elements of style.

This first critic was Mao Dun, writing under the pseudonym Yangqi 陽秋 (1933). His review of the special issue of The New Era, in which Zeng’s poems had appeared, was written as a mixture of satire and abuse. The critic pretended to be in total awe of the special issue, which had been lent to him by ‘my friend’ Li Liewen 黎烈文 (the then editor of Free Talk). He claimed to have read it from cover

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31 The English translations of the two tune-titles are taken from Appendix A in Chang & Saussy 1999.
32 This, too, has been totally obscured by most later reference works and histories, which tend to quote only the first poem.
to cover, whilst burning incense and drinking tea, in the presence of his wife. This description, I presume, is a satirical reference to the entertainment practices and themes that were traditionally linked with the origins of the *ci* genre, about which more below. Emphasizing the unseemliness of a modern journal publishing classical poetry, Mao Dun added a sarcastic ‘(!)’ to the title *The New Era*. He pretended especially to admire the above-mentioned poem by Zeng Jinke (referred to as ‘Mr Zeng XX’). Unable to maintain the satire near the end of his review, Mao Dun switched to direct abuse, closing his piece with a doggerel poem in which he addressed Zeng directly, in lines such as the following:

The ‘era’ is new but you hold on to the old,
Who gives a damn, who gives a damn!

「時代」新了你守舊，管他娘呢管他娘！

The review illustrates well, I think, the idea of normative form and how it links text and author. For Mao Dun, certain formal aspects of the style and language of Zeng’s poem were sufficient to trigger associations with an entire lifestyle that fell outside the boundaries of modernity, that was both conservative and immoral at the same time, and therefore did not deserve serious textual criticism, but only satire and abuse.

Zeng Jinke’s rejoinder, published in the March 1933 issue of *The New Era*, is written in an equally ambivalent critical style. He, too, used an unfamiliar pseudonym, "based on Mao Dun’s pen-name above, namely Yangchun 阳春. The opening pages of the four-page rejoinder, an open letter to Li Liewen, refrain from abusive arguments, as ‘Yangchun’ points out that anyone would welcome serious criticism of the ‘liberated lyrics’ and the underlying ideas, but that he fails to understand why *Free Talk* would publish such a malicious review. Closer to the end, however, he loses control and inserts the following highly abusive passage:

Mr Liewen! Perhaps it was because your beloved wife recently died of an illness, so that you were in low spirits, failed to pay proper attention, and published the manuscript of ‘your friend’ just like that. However, this is going to harm your publication. Your beloved wife’s soul up in

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So unfamiliar in this case that it has never been positively identified as his pen-name. Comparing the language and style of the piece to other writings by Zeng, however, I am quite positive that he was the author.
heaven surely also hopes that you do a good job in editing Free Talk..." (Yangchun 1933:53)

Zeng, in his rejoinder, also referred to the fact that Free Talk had previously been an entertainment literature organ and therefore still had a ‘bad reputation’ (literally ‘lingering bad smell’ yichou 遺臭), and that it was up to Li Liewen to change that. He ended with another reference to Li’s deceased wife, stating that he hoped she would “bless and protect” him and help him to edit his supplement a bit better.

It is not surprising that the Free Talk critics were provoked by this rejoinder. Throughout March 1933, six more reviews of Zeng’s liberation of the lyric movement appeared in Free Talk, some of them with added postscripts by ‘Yangqiu’. There also appeared one amusing reaction by Lu Xun, a short piece entitled ‘Qu de jiefang’ (The Liberation of the Ballad), being a satirical imitation of Zeng’s poem, which did not attack Zeng, but rather, like Zeng’s poem, commented on the Manchuria crisis. Half of the reviews contained statements to the effect that the reviewer had not read the special issue, but only the poems cited by Mao Dun in his original review. One of the reviewers making such a statement was in fact Mao Dun himself, this time using his well-known pseudonym Xuan 玄 (1933), even though in his previous review he stated that he had read the issue from cover to cover.

Other techniques of abuse mentioned above were employed in these six reviews, such as the following: a question mark in references to Zeng and his circle as ‘writers (?)’ or ‘lyricists (?)’; mentioning only the last name (‘Zeng so-and-so’ or ‘Zeng XX’); a pun on Zeng’s name, based on one possible meaning of Jinke (‘enough for now’); or abuse by quoting his own words (especially, of course, the phrase ‘who gives a damn’). The critics cannot be denied some creativity. For instance, when one of them straightforwardly referred to Zeng’s poems as ‘farting’ (fangpi 放屁),

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34 Li Liewen’s wife died after having given birth to a child in January 1933, as is evident from a small editor’s announcement in Free Talk of 20 January 1933 and a short emotional piece written by Li and dedicated to his wife, published in Free Talk of 25 January 1933. In the first of these two texts, Li asks his readers to understand that his mind is not really with his editorial work and mistakes might occur. Presumably it was this humble statement that made Zeng Jinke feel he could criticize Li Liewen for publishing Mao Dun’s article.
‘Yangqiu’ was quick to comment that he now understood the meaning of the fang in their jiefang 解放 (liberation), leading to yet another critic referring to the poems that Zeng ‘farted’ (ta fang de shi 他放的詩) rather than wrote.

Not all of the reviews employed this kind of abusive rhetoric. Some of the critics took up ‘the issues’ with Zeng as he had requested, pointing out plagiarism of traditional poetry in his lyrics and those of his colleague Zhang Yiping, who had recently published a collection of lyrics. The most perceptive and serious review of all, also the last one in the series, was written by Cao Juren 曹聚仁, who did not use a pseudonym. Cao pointed out that Zeng’s statement that his liberation of the ci 词 was a necessary follow-up on Hu Shi’s 1917 liberation of the shi 詩 was critically untenable, because the lyric, as a genre of poetry/shi, was part of what Hu Shi had liberated. Instead, Cao argued, by writing lyrics containing vulgar language like Zeng had done, he was taking the genre back to its folk-song origins, thereby restricting rather than enlarging its literary potential. Cao’s conclusion, however, made it clear that he considered any revival of the lyric, in whatever form, to be in conflict with the demands of modern times: the genre had had its moment of glory, and there was no reason to unearth its already buried remains (Cao Juren 1933).

The attacks of the Free Talk critics on Zeng Jinke’s special issue on the liberation of the lyric were, in my view, not related to any particular political conflict, even though most Free Talk writers were leaning towards the left, while Zeng may have had some ties with the Guomindang authorities. There are certainly no references to politics whatsoever in any of the reviews. Instead, I believe that the style of criticism and the issues raised prove that the attacks were occasioned by what was perceived as the conservative and vulgar nature of Zeng’s poems, i.e. by moral-aesthetic issues triggered by the form and language of his infamous ‘New Year Lyrics’, most especially by the line “Affairs of the state, who gives a damn?” and by the reference to ‘playing mah-jong’. Paradoxically, though, the perceived transgression of the boundaries of decency reverberates strongly with

35 The sources indicate that his collection, entitled Kan yue lou ci 看月樓詞 (Lyrics of Moon Watch Mansion), was published in 1932 by the Women’s Bookstore (Niizi shudian 女子書店), which was co-managed by Zhang’s partner, Wu Shutian. However, the collection is not listed in Jia Zhifang 1993.
This observation only serves to emphasize the ambiguities inherent in these reviewers’ responses. They were clearly thrown into confusion when confronted with writers or texts that could not be fitted easily into existing categories and flaunted the boundaries between New and Old, between élite and popular, and between author and subject. As a result, their response was a mixture of facile dismissal and attempts at serious criticism.

**Aftermath: a turn to the political**

Most histories of modern Chinese literature, if they mention Zeng Jinke at all, tell us that his reputation was irreparably damaged as a result of the *Free Talk* reviews of his lyrics and that, soon afterwards, he was forced to withdraw from the literary scene. This is not true. In fact, the attacks on his person initially caused Zeng to become, if anything, more active than he had been before. After a few months of preparation he founded, in the summer of 1933, the journal *Wenyi zuotan* 文藝座談 (Literature and Art Forum). He also founded a society of the same name, which was to meet fortnightly for dinner. In the first issue of the journal, Zeng commented on the fact that the P.E.N. branch meetings had stopped, and described his new society as being of a similar nature. He listed the founders of the society, which included, apart from familiar names linked with the Tea Talk and P.E.N. meetings, Zhang Ziping and even the famous traditionalist writer Hu Huaichen 胡懷琛 (1886 – 1938).

Each issue of *Literature and Art Forum* counted only sixteen pages, and the editing and printing do not come across as particularly professional. Part of the content of the journal was devoted to attacks...
on the League of Left-Wing Writers, especially on Lu Xun, more about which below. At the same time, however, the journal also contained a few relatively objective discussions of socialist literary theory and even of Soviet literature, written perhaps with the aim of challenging the Left League's monopoly on these topics. Of the four issues that appeared, the most substantial is the third, a special issue on authors' lives, with contributions by, among others, Zhao Jingshen, Zang Kejia, and Lu Yin. The latter appears to have been a member of the group, as she can be found in a picture of a meeting of the society printed in the February 1934 issue of The New Era.  

The postscript to Lu Xun's essay collection Wei ziyou shu 假自由叢書 (Writings of False Freedom) (Lu Xun 1981, 5:152–88), published in October 1933, contains a very long (re)construction of public literary events from that year, containing many long quotations from various Shanghai papers. Lu Xun asserts that Zeng Jinke's launch of the journal Literature and Art Forum in July 1933 was an attempt to engage in a collective counter-attack on the Free Talk writers, which may explain why Zeng on this occasion joined up with Zhang Ziping and Hu Huaichen, both of whom had also been repeatedly maligned in the pages of Free Talk.

To support his claim, Lu Xun singles out the article 'Neishan shudian xiaozuo ji' 內山書店小坐記 (Record of a Short Visit to the Uchiyama Bookstore) by a certain Bai Yuxia 白羽遐, possibly another pen-name of Zeng Jinke. In the article, the owner of the Uchiyama Bookstore, a close friend of Lu Xun's, was accused of being a Japanese spy, implicating Lu Xun by association. The next piece Lu Xun quotes is a reaction to Bai Yuxia's article by a certain Gu Chunfan 谷春帆, possibly another pen-name of Mao Dun, published in Free Talk. Gu severely scolded Zeng Jinke for 'threatening and hurting people', 'creating harmful gossip' and 'betraying his friends'. This was, perhaps, the first time that a political aspect entered the discussion, though not an ideological one: by associating Lu Xun with the illegal activity of spying for the Japanese, for which one could well be arrested by the authorities, Bai Yuxia had introduced an element of terror into the literary debate.

39 I have only seen the first three issues, but reference works claim that a fourth issue did appear.
41 If the picture in question was a recent one, it means that the society may have continued to meet long after the journal folded.
Gu also referred to Zeng Jinke’s quarrel with another Shanghai writer, Cui Wanqiu.\(^4\) Lu Xun explains that there were two reasons for this quarrel: firstly, Zeng Jinke had published parts of a letter from Cui as a preface to his own collection of poems; secondly, Zeng had apparently published a ‘Writers’ News’ item in a small Shanghai paper in which he mentioned Cui’s address and his political affiliation, which, according to Lu Xun, could have gotten Cui arrested and was done on purpose to terrorize him.

Gu Chunxia’s article further criticized Zhang Ziping and called for ‘banning’ (quzhu 驱逐) both Zhang and Zeng from the literary scene, claiming that they were ill-behaved men of letters (wenren wuxing 文人无行). Lu Xun, in two essays commenting on the concept of ‘ill-behaved literati’ (Lu Xun 1981, 5:176–8 and Lu Xun 1981, 8:354–6), made it clear that he did not wish to include either Zhang or Zeng in the category ‘men of letters’. Instead, he suggested, they belonged to a category of former men of letters who had already changed careers (wenren gaihang 文人改行). The second of the two pieces contains a particularly vicious attack on the two, lacking much of Lu Xun’s usual satire, which is perhaps an indication of the extent to which he had been angered. Lu Xun wrote that Zhang and Zeng had reverted to racketeering, having realized that their ‘masturbation fiction’ (shouyin xiaoshuo 手淫小說) and ‘who gives a damn lyrics’ (guan ta niang ci 管他娘詞) were eventually not going to take them much further in their quest for fame and money.

Both Literature and Art Forum and The New Era responded with a number of articles abusing Lu Xun and calling him ‘a mad old dog’. Lu Xun published at least two more essays\(^5\) in which he ridiculed Zeng Jinke. In the first of the two pieces he even linked him (without evidence) to the Guomindang and to political assassinations. Around the same time (summer 1933) Zeng Jinke, attacked from all sides and apparently no longer interested in fighting back, published a state-

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\(^4\) On Cui Wanqiu, another forgotten writer of this period, see Wu Fuhui 1995 (68–9).

ment announcing his retreat from the literary scene,\textsuperscript{43} although he continued to edit \textit{The New Era} until February 1934.

Zeng did indeed disappear from the scene for many years. In 1937, he briefly attempted to revive \textit{The New Era}, and after the War of Resistance, he returned as a contributor to the post-war \textit{Lunyu} 論語 (The Analects), edited by his good friend Shao Xunmei 邵洵美. One of his first contributions to that journal, published in 1947, was a piece about his love of the game of mah-jong, which started out with a short overview of the debate about his lyrics.\textsuperscript{44} In a paradoxical twist, he elaborated on the political content of his infamous ‘New Year Lyrics’, divulging for the first time that the line “In front of the wine-vessel there are red dresses, what great fortune!” had been a positive reference to the Soviet Union (Zeng 1947:372)! When Zeng wrote this piece, he himself was already in Taiwan working for the Guomindang government. He stayed in Taiwan after 1949 and once again became active on the literary scene, editing a number of journals and at least one collection of poetry (Zeng Jinke 1953).

\textit{Normative form, politics, and the literary field}

Instead of drawing the seemingly obvious conclusion that Zeng Jinke, despite putting up a brave fight, was eventually bullied into silence by the literary establishment of the senior generation, I would like to put forward two details that might shed a different light on the events described above. Firstly, judging by Zeng Jinke’s various articles about the debate, including some of his contributions to \textit{Literature and Art Forum}, and his final public statement, his decision to leave the literary scene was more likely a result of his quarrel with Cui Wanqiu. Zeng had considered Cui a friend, and felt betrayed when Cui started attacking him.\textsuperscript{45} This took place shortly after the first issue of \textit{Literature and Art Forum}, in which Cui is still listed as co-founder.

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\textsuperscript{43} There are various versions of this ‘Zeng Jinke qishi’ 曾今可啟事 (Announcement by Zeng Jinke). The longest I have seen was published on the back cover of \textit{Wenyi zuotan}, j. 1, no. 3 (August 1933).

\textsuperscript{44} I am grateful to Susan Daruvala for helping me obtain a copy of this article.

\textsuperscript{45} Whether or not Cui, who was later confirmed as a Guomindang intelligence agent, had acted this way in order to ingratiate himself with Lu Xun, remains unknown. According to Lu Xun’s diaries, he exchanged a few letters with Cui around this time, but none of those letters have been reprinted.
had been published. Only days later, Zeng published his first announcement that he was planning to leave the literary scene (cf. Lu Xun 1981, 5:175–6).

Secondly, months before Zeng Jinke silenced himself, the *Free Talk* critics had also silenced themselves. In May 1933, the supplement openly abandoned its provocative stance (which is why Lu Xun spoke of ‘false freedom’), and announced a return to ‘talking about wind and moon’ (*tan fengyue* 談風月). As a result, Lu Xun’s first attack on Zeng Jinke was actually never published, leaving only three published attacks, all from around the time that Zeng was already considering throwing in the towel. In other words, the politicized aftermath of the debate was but a short-lived excess, remembered mainly because of Lu Xun’s writings and their impact on later historiography. The main substance of the debate over the Liberation of the Lyric revolved around moral-aesthetic, not political issues. Moreover, the debate did not lead to the downfall of Zeng Jinke, which was brought about mainly by a simultaneous, personal conflict.

No matter how much anger Zeng Jinke caused Lu Xun and others with his attempt to use the political situation to settle literary scores, it was, after all, he himself who damaged his reputation and felt forced to withdraw from the literary scene, showing that even during the politicized era of the 1930s, political forces rarely reflected directly onto literary practice. Most of all, however, the case of Zeng Jinke, as well as the other examples of *ad hominem* criticism discussed in this chapter, have shown us the deep ambivalence present in critical practice of the Republican period. As much as critics deplored factionalism and abuse, they never shied away from practising it themselves. When abuse was practised in an attempt to ‘ban’ unwanted influences from the literary scene, the attacks by critics like Mao Dun were often as tasteless and vulgar as the objects of attack were considered to be. Perhaps the most striking feature of many of the examples discussed above, but especially of the case of Zeng Jinke, is that some of the attacks appear so totally unnecessary. For the present-day reader, at least, it is difficult to understand why it was not possible for the *Free Talk* critics to simply ignore Zeng’s Liberation of the Lyric, or to dismiss it only on literary and not on personal grounds. I have argued that such a response was unlikely, because it clashed with the notion of normative form as a constella-
tion of style, language, context and personality, any of which, including the personal, could be valid objects of literary criticism. This lingering traditional notion co-existed, at times clashed with, but was never fully replaced by imported notions considering criticism predominantly a textual affair.

What the case of Zeng Jinke has also shown is that, by the 1930s, alternative styles representing more of a mixture of modern and traditional elements, not unlike some of the experiments carried out by Liu Bannong in the 1910s, continued to resist the New Literature paradigm. In recent studies of Shanghai culture of this period (especially Wu Fuhui 1995 and Lee 1999), this aspect has received little attention. These scholars’ focus has been almost exclusively on authors such as the ‘New Sensationalists’ and Eileen Chang, whose work can be fitted relatively easily into a broadly defined canon of New Literature. This chapter, however, has identified a group of cultural figures and activities that do not fit into any of the binary oppositions established by critics and scholars of New Literature since the late 1910s.

People like Zeng Jinke belonged neither completely to New Literature nor to any of its two main opposites—old literature and popular literature, which, in the minds of many New Literature critics, often amounted to the same thing. What the above overview has also made clear is that these figures played a much more prominent role in modern Chinese cultural life than is nowadays assumed. When they clashed with the Left League, therefore, this was not a straightforward case of holders of symbolic power (like Lu Xun) putting some relatively powerless figures (like Zeng Jinke) in their place, similar to the way in which Lu Xun had scolded Liu Bannong out of his bad habits more than a decade earlier. Instead, it was an even-handed confrontation between two equally viable aesthetic alternatives, from which no clear ‘winner’ could emerge at the time.

Finally, the fact that politics played a minor role in these debates, despite the tense and polarized political situation in 1930s China, bears testimony to the power and prestige of this remarkable literary field, which was able to accommodate so many different styles and positions. In the next, final chapter, we shall see how the autonomy of the field was confirmed in the face of a much more direct form of political intervention: government censorship.
CHAPTER SEVEN
THE POWER OF WRITING: CENSORSHIP AND THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF LITERARY VALUE

Censorship and literary production

In the preceding six chapters, I have traced the development of the modern Chinese literary field in terms of its practices and forms of organization, its types of publication and its individual stylistic alternatives. Throughout I have been trying to maintain a comprehensive perspective, emphasizing the simultaneous presence of different types of writing and writers within a larger literary community, characterized by its, on the whole, professional approach to publishing. The previous chapter has already provided evidence of the power of this community, in terms of its ability to withstand or redirect political influences. Its main focus, however, was on distinction and conflict within the community. In contrast, this chapter will pay more attention to the basic values and beliefs that held the community together in the face of direct attempts at political oppression, launched by the Nationalist government in the 1930s. Since censorship is a difficult topic to study, some introductory comments on the relationship between censorship and literary production are in order.

Under the influence of developments in post-structuralist literary theory, which, among other things, emphasizes the complex relationship between literature and power, the phenomenon of literary censorship has been receiving much attention. Many scholars have tended to adhere to a very broad notion of censorship, one which includes self-censorship and phenomena that might also be placed in the category of 'taboo'. In such an approach, censorship becomes an omnipresent social force that is an inextricable part of literary creation, and state censorship is merely an extreme case of a universal phenomenon. In terms of methodology, this approach tends to favour the traditional 'close reading', and attempts to determine which parts of the text emerged out of the author’s unwillingness to
transgress certain barriers, whether state-imposed, society-imposed or self-imposed.

A more discerning view is presented in Annabel Patterson’s *Censorship and Interpretation*, a study of early modern English literature with regard to censorship (Patterson 1984). Patterson asserts that in certain periods or under certain regimes, state censorship can be a central part of literary practice, differing from the various ‘normal’ restrictions (restrictions due to social norms) on literary production. Patterson claims that in English literature, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries comprise such a period and that the threat of censorship led authors to employ, increasingly often, a technique she calls ‘functional ambiguity’. This technique was eventually accepted and recognized by readers and even by the censors themselves, and exerted a lasting influence on literary language.

In the introduction to his history of literary censorship in Germany, Dieter Breuer also opposes the relativist approach and suggests that a workable notion of literary censorship should only include what he calls the ‘authoritarian control of writers’ (Breuer 1982:13–14). Breuer quotes a 1968 study by Ulla Otto, which sets up a framework offering various possibilities for categorizing forms of censorship:

1) distinction based on the time of censorship:
   a) censoring of manuscripts before publication (*Vorzensur*)
   b) censoring and/or sanctioning after publication and distribution (*Nachzensur*)
   c) repeated censoring before every new printing (*Rezensur*)

2) distinction based on the legal system:
   a) *preventive censorship* (an entire genre is forbidden until one work belonging to it is allowed to be printed)
   b) *prohibitive censorship* (an entire genre is tolerated until one work belonging to it is banned)

3) distinction based on the censoring (legislative) power:
   a) church censorship
   b) state censorship
4) distinction based on executive power (esp. in wartime):
   a) military censorship
   b) political censorship

5) distinction based on measure of formality:
   a) formal censorship: censorship laws, official blacklists, postal censors, etc.
   b) informal or structural censorship: censorship upheld by certain powerful groups in society and carried out by means other than legal power. (19–20)

Though Breuer defines censorship as the authoritarian control of writers, this categorization of what he calls the ‘technical aspects of censorship’ only deals with the literary work. Therefore, I should like to add a sixth distinction, namely that between person-oriented and work-oriented censorship. This distinction is relevant to the object of study (1930s China), for it has been claimed that certain writers (e.g. Guo Moruo or Lu Xun) were themselves blacklisted. Thus their names could presumably not appear in print, and they were constantly forced to invent new pseudonyms.

Problems of studying censorship

In an article on ‘Censorship and Self-Censorship in Contemporary Chinese Literature’, Bonnie S. McDougall points out that the biggest problem for those wishing to study the effects of literary censorship is its invisibility. If it is carried out well, it leaves little trace. Especially if censorship takes place before publication, one can hardly come to an objective judgement about the exact amount of text which has been changed or cut, unless one has access to the original manuscript or to the censor’s report. If neither of these is available, usually the only source one has is the testimony of those involved, for instance the writers themselves, whose judgement may be exaggerated or prejudiced (McDougall 1993). This is a problem that I too encountered when doing research for this chapter. Other than the various legal documents, especially the 1930 Publishing Law and the 1934 censorship regulations for books and periodicals, the one source on literary censorship and blacklists that is most often quoted or referred to in this context is a text by Lu Xun, who can hardly be called an impartial onlooker. Other sources I used, such as
various articles in the professional publishers’ journal Zhongguo xin shu yuebao 中國新書月報 (China New Books Monthly), were equally partisan, though, as will be shown, certainly more straightforward and reliable than Lu Xun’s comments. A second problem was brought about by more specific historical circumstances: the Nationalist regime was succeeded by one that also practised censorship, therefore authors seldom had the opportunity to restore the original content of works that suffered from censorship in one way or another.1 I shall therefore be unable to support my arguments by elaborate comparisons between censored and uncensored versions of literary publications.

Finally, as was recently pointed out by Stephen R. MacKinnon (1997), the principle of government censorship in itself was not necessarily unacceptable to modern Chinese intellectuals. Their primary concern seemed to be with how censorship was being carried out and by whom. The following remarks, from a 1937 English-language publication by Lin Yutang 林語堂, are telling in this respect:

The worst features of present censorship are its lack of intelligence, its anarchy, and its over-sensitiveness. A study of the censorship situation reveals the fact that at least we must have on the censorship board men who understand their job—in other words, trained and professional bureaucrats, who are at least one degree more bearable than unprofessional bureaucrats—that is, people who understand something of the world situation and the world press, the workings of news agencies, and above all, what is good for our country. At least, in the suppression of literature, they should know where Tolstoy and Maeterlinck stand and have a smattering of knowledge of modern schools of thought, as librarians should know the system of book classification. (Lin 1937:175–6)

In the face of these problems, I thought it advisable to begin by looking at actual censorship regulations under Nationalist rule. This will be followed by an investigation into the censorship situation in Shanghai in the mid-1930s, when, for a short period of time, literary publications were subject to a separate system of censorship.

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1 According to Lee-hsia Hsu Ting, a notable exception is the 1938 Lu Xun quanjí, in which some passages that had originally been censored were underlined. See Ting 1974 (87). Ting identifies nine such passages in this twenty-volume edition of Lu Xun’s collected works. I have checked these and found only six of them to be demonstrably related to government censorship.
There can be no doubt that the Nationalist government's attempts to control literary creation constituted, at least to some extent, a form of authoritarian control over writers. These attempts therefore qualify as literary censorship in the strict sense proposed by Breuer. However, they were also the result of a wish to set up a sound legal system for the registration of publications and the protection of copyright that would be comparable to the legal system in other countries. The 1930 Publishing Law (chuban fa 出版法), which governed the entire publishing industry including literary publishing, laid down clear definitions of the concepts 'author', 'editor', 'publisher', and 'distributor' and outlined the rights and duties of the people in those positions. Distributors were given the responsibility for submitting two copies of each publication to the Ministry of the Interior. Distributors of newspapers and journals were further required to apply to the Ministry in writing no later than fifteen days before the publication of the first issue and to state, among other things, whether or not they intended to publish articles pertaining to 'political events' (Article VII). If the distributor failed to do so, a fine would be assessed. Publications were not allowed to print material "aiming to sabotage the Nationalist Party or the Three People's Principles; aiming to subvert the national government or damaging the interests of the Republic of China; aiming to sabotage public order; violating norms of decency" (Article XIX). The author, the distributor, the editor and even the printer of such publications could be sentenced to more than one year of imprisonment or labour camp or a fine of less than one thousand yuan.

This last provision constitutes a straightforward example of post-publication censorship. It was obviously anticipated (or known from experience) that certain unwanted publications were going to appear on the market. This is indeed very likely to have been the case, for there was no pre-publication inspection of books; for periodicals, the law only stipulated pre-publication inspection on the basis of a statement of principle, not of actual content. Upon registration, the

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2 A contributor to China New Books Monthly argued that the 1930 Publishing Law was virtually a carbon copy of similar Japanese legislation (Lanruo 1931:2).
3 The text of the law is reprinted in Zhang 1957. For an English translation see Chao 1931 (107–14).
distributor would be issued a number to be printed on the cover of the journal. Most post-1930 literary journals carry such a number in small print on the back cover; some of them even reprinted the official registration document. The fact that the number is the same for every issue confirms my impression that pre-publication censorship of periodicals was carried out only once.

If we try to position this law in Otto’s scheme, we might conclude that the Nationalist censorship system, as laid down in the 1930 Publishing Law, is first of all an example of formal censorship, since it clearly has a legal basis. Furthermore, it seems to be a mixture of Vorzensur and Nachzensur; the distinction depends on whether the publication was a book or a periodical. It seems that the control of periodicals was largely left to the postal censors: if they spotted a number on the cover of a magazine, they would have to let it pass. One wonders what happened to those journals that were distributed before registration was finalized. I have seen a number of journals whose covers bear the phrase “we are in the process of registering”. It is not unlikely that this was a clever way to avoid being censored, at least temporarily. After all, it should be kept in mind that this law applied to all publications, not just literary publications, and that it is therefore likely that the publication permit was sometimes not ready within the designated period of fifteen days. The Detailed Rules of Enforcement (shixing xize 施行細則) added to the law in 1931 made the censorship system even more complicated and probably less effective. For instance, it stipulated that distributors of books should send in two copies of each book prior to distribution but also fill out a form on which a summary of the book’s contents should be given. One may speculate that many censors based their judgement on the summary rather than on the whole text.

The conclusion could be that during the early 1930s, censorship rules were easy to evade, especially for journal editors and distributors. However, it was the bookstores (often attached to publishing houses) that seem to have paid the penalty for this relative laxness, since they were often the victims of police raids and were closed down for shorter or longer periods when they were found to sell forbidden books or journals that had managed to circumvent pre-
publication censorship. The disadvantages of the system, especially for publishers, were discussed at length in the pages of *China New Books Monthly*, a professional publishers’ journal that was established shortly after the new Publishing Law came into effect.

**China New Books Monthly and publishers’ pressure groups**

The *China New Books Monthly* first appeared in December 1930. Its contents consisted of articles on current affairs related to publishing, book reviews, the ubiquitous ‘News from the Literary Scene’ section and a monthly catalogue (*mulu 目錄*) of new books and journals that had appeared in print. The catalogue was divided into a number of subject categories, one of which was ‘literature’, which was further subdivided into genres.

Already in its second issue, the *Monthly* apparently fell victim to censorship. In this issue, which also contained the full text of the recently promulgated Publishing Law, a number of advertisements for politically innocent publications had been *pasted over* the text of advertisements for books by Lenin and about socialism. The editorial office had put pink stamps on the borders of the pasted parts to indicate its approval of the change. The stamped text read: “Illegal to sell. Printed in error.” (*jinzhi famai wudeng 禁止發賣錯誤*). In the copy of the issue that I saw, it was still fairly easy to lift the edges of the pasted text to see what was underneath. Some other advertisements for books mentioning Lenin or socialism had not been covered, presumably because these books contained negative or critical views of their subjects. In the books and journals catalogue in the same issue, certain titles had been blackened out and made partially unreadable. The only literary title that had been thus treated was the journal *Caoye zhoukan 草野週刊* (Grassland Weekly), the nowadays little-known organ of the Shanghai-based Grassland Society, which published a mixture of sexually explicit and politically extremely nationalist writing.°

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° This curt description of *Grassland Weekly* is based on a sketchy impression obtained from an incomplete set of this journal, held in the Shanghai Library. The key figure of the society was a certain Wang Tiehua 王鐵華, about whom I have been unable to find any more information. The catalogue in *China New Books Monthly* 1:4 (March 1931) lists three fiction titles published by the Grassland
In the next issue, the *Monthly* reprinted on its inside cover a document issued by the Shanghai municipal government, indicating that the journal had been registered in accordance with the Publishing Law. In the twelfth and last issue of the first volume of the *Monthly*, an overview of its first year was published, which made it clear that the changes made to the second issue had not been the result of government interference, but of self-censorship. In January 1931, the Huatong Bookshop (*huatong shuju 華通書局*), which published the *Monthly*, had been raided by police, together with six other bookshops in the international concession. Books claimed to be counter-revolutionary were confiscated, and the then manager of the bookshop, Yu Xiangsen (a former Literary Association member), was arrested. Yu’s case stayed in the courts until October, and it was only after an appeal to the supreme court in Nanjing that he was released. The crossing out and pasting over of parts of the January 1931 issue of the *Monthly* had been a direct result of these events. This example confirms my above-mentioned assumption that publishers and bookshops were the main victims of the loopholes in the new publishing regulations.

Many issues of the *Monthly* contain articles discussing the merits and demerits of the censorship system. Moreover, the *Monthly* always promptly announced any changes to the regulations, both on a national and on a local level. It would often reprint the full text of relevant legal publications and copy the relevant registration forms. Here I shall discuss two articles, published in April 1931 and in early 1932 respectively, which stand out for their relatively comprehensive critique of Guomindang censorship. The first article, by a certain Li Dinghe 李鼎龢, is entitled ‘Duiyu shubao jiancha de woguan’ (My Views on Censorship of Books and Journals) (1931). Li starts out by stating unequivocally that he is a supporter of censorship; and that he is happy that the authorities are protecting the publishing world against the ploys (*ansuan* 暗算) of the Communists. Immediately after that, however, he reminds his readers of the importance of the principles of freedom of the press.

Society, entitled *Hunqian xiaoshuo* 婚前小說 (Premarital Fiction), *Zizi de canhai* 姊姊的殲骸 (Sister’s Corpse) and *Xiangwen* 香吻 (Fragrant Kiss).

The issue in question (2:1) is dated January 1932, but as is explained on the inside cover, it did not actually appear in this month, because of the January 28th incident and subsequent fighting going on in and around Shanghai.
and freedom of speech and states that, in most countries, censorship has either been abolished or turned out to be ineffective. Li predicts that the new Chinese censorship system is bound to fail as well, for two reasons. Firstly, the system is not thorough enough: foreign publications are not checked, nor are Leftist publications by ‘famous people’. Secondly, the system is not sufficiently comprehensive, as different regions and different government and party organs apply the rules in their own way. Li calls for the establishment of a special censorship institution, which should be an academic institution, made up of people who are able to distinguish serious research from propaganda, who would provide speedy censorship decisions based not merely on the title, but on the content of a publication, and who would keep detailed records of their decisions. Li warns that, already, corruption has been creeping into the system, as some censors have been confiscating best-selling publications, only to re-sell them clandestinely to their own advantage, while other censors have been taking bribes in exchange for publication permits. Li ends by urging the government to prevent the emergence of a ‘literary prison’ (wenzi zhi yu 文字之狱).

Li Dinghe’s article provides an early indication of the publishing world’s willingness to accept censorship, as long as it was done properly and systematically. The article also demonstrates, however, that the publishing world, especially in Shanghai, could and would be vocal in its opposition to unfair or inefficient censorship practices. This aspect was discussed in the second article under discussion here, by a certain Lin Xuan 林巖 (1932). Lin’s article was a reaction to an event that took place in December 1931, when the Shanghai publishing world submitted a petition to the plenary session of the First Central Committee of the Guomindang, calling for the abolishment of the Publishing Law. The full text of the petition is quoted in Lin’s article, as well as in another article in the same issue of China New Books Monthly, by a certain Yiyue 一嶽 (1932). Yiyue’s article also explained how the petition movement had come about. On 22 December 1931, a letter signed by five major Shanghai publishing houses (Yadong, Guanghua, Beixin, The New Era (cf. Chapter Six) and Kaiming) had been circulated among all Shanghai publishers, inviting them to attend a ‘tea talk’ meeting in the afternoon of that same day. Representatives of forty-nine Shanghai
publishers attended the meeting and all signed the petition. Although the text of the petition was couched in calls for freedom of speech, freedom of publishing and human rights, the main complaint of the publishers was not of a principled but of a practical nature. They argued that the current censorship system was taking up too much time, leading to unacceptable delays in publication. They also argued that the rules were too complicated and that they were applied differently in different regions, leading to uncertainty about what exactly was and was not allowed, with publishers in constant fear of being fined or arrested. For these two reasons, they called, eventually in vain, for the abolishment of the 1930 Publishing Law and the 1931 Rules of Enforcement.

In his article, Lin Xuan joins in the criticism of the law, but disagrees with the calls for its abolishment. Lin argues that the law provides legal protection to publishers, but that it needs to be adapted in certain places to make it more efficient. Lin, too, complains about the long delays in censorship decisions, noting that the Publishing Law does not stipulate a time limit for the authorities to approve a publication. He believes that the new rules regarding pre-distribution censorship, as laid down in the Rules of Enforcement, will only make matters worse, and lead to great losses for publishers. However, Lin also takes a more principled stance when arguing against the very aims of the censorship system:

If book manuscripts were examined with the purpose to establish their scholarly accuracy or inaccuracy (xueshu zhi zhengwu 學術之正誤), that would be a most effective method. If the objective is to prevent "the advocacy of ideologies which are incompatible with the Three People’s Principles or of proposals which are detrimental to the National Revolution", then we dare not agree with it. Unfortunately, when our government issued the Publishing Law, it went the wrong way and instead of emphasizing the former it leaned towards the latter. For publishers of books in the social sciences, this truly means that

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8 The forty-nine signatories are all listed in Yiyue’s article. Strangely, neither Yadong nor The New Era is among them. No explanation for this is given. Yiyue’s article also mentions that it had originally been the petitioners’ intention to publish their text in the newspapers as well, and that each donated ten yuan for this purpose, but that ‘for some reason’ this plan was dropped and the money was returned. Again it is not explained what the reason was. The proximity of these events to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and the attack on Shanghai in January might have something to do with it. Another, somewhat ironic possibility is that the newspapers were unable to publish the text for fear of censorship.
Although Lin does not say so explicitly, he seems to agree with Li Dinghe’s argument that censorship should be carried out by individuals with sufficient academic knowledge to be able to appreciate the value of scholarly book manuscripts. The example of the social sciences is very pertinent, since it was in this field that discussions of various political and social systems, other than that advocated by the Guomindang government, would be produced, without necessarily aiming to propagate those systems. In the early years of the censorship system, then, literary works constituted but a minor concern, both for the authorities and for the publishers opposing them. Clearly, neither the political significance nor the commercial value of literature was sufficient to lend it a more prominent place in these discussions. In 1934, however, the censorship of literature suddenly took centre stage, and the literary community was able to show that, even though its political and economic capital may have been limited, it was in abundant possession of symbolic capital, allowing it to counteract most efficiently the authorities’ intentions.

Changing the rules of censorship: Shanghai 1934

In 1934, an incident occurred in Shanghai, which is recorded in a long postscript to Lu Xun’s essay collection Qiejieting zawen erji 且介亭雜文二集 (Random Essays from the Qiejie Pavilion, Volume Two) (Lu Xun 1981, 6:448–65) and later reprinted and annotated in Zhang Jinglu’s 張靜蘆 Zhongguo xiandai chuban shiliao 中國現代出版史料 (Materials on the History of Modern Chinese Publishing). The incident has to do with an often mentioned blacklist of literary works from 1934 and sheds much light on the balance of power between political, economic and literary forces, as well as on the difficulties involved in studying censorship.

On 19 February 1934, the Shanghai branch of the Nationalist Party received an order from its national headquarters to raid the city’s bookshops and confiscate all titles on a blacklist of 149 literary
works. Of these 149 works, eighty were original works by Chinese authors, fifty-five were Chinese translations of foreign literary works, and fourteen were compilations of works by various authors. As Lu Xun recalls, quoting at length from the 14 March Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury (Damei wanbao 大美晚報), the incident caused confusion in the Shanghai publishing world since the titles on the list included some works that had been in circulation for years and other works that had been submitted to and approved by the Shanghai censors. A hastily formed United Association of Chinese Writers and Publishers sent a delegation to the Shanghai Party branch, which consequently notified the Party headquarters and agreed to have the works on the list re-censored. In late March or early April of the same year, this action led to a decision by the Party centre which reversed the verdict on thirty-seven of the works on the list on the grounds that these works were romance novels or works from before the (1927) revolution. The re-censoring further permitted the publication of twenty-two other works on the list, on the condition that certain changes be made. Of the remaining ninety works, sixty remained permanently forbidden. Thirty of those had already been forbidden under the censorship law but had nevertheless reached the bookshops. The sixty permanently forbidden works consisted of thirty-eight originals, seventeen translations and five compilations. The thirty titles that were only temporarily forbidden (“in view of the serious situation in the campaign against the [Communist] bandits [jiaofei 剿匪]”) are not given by Lu Xun, nor in Zhang Jinglu’s notes. From the available information, however, it seems that the re-censoring that took place was unmistakably work-oriented and not person-oriented, as some works by Lu Xun, Guo Moruo and other supposedly blacklisted writers were taken off the list, while other works remained on it. There was only one writer for whom almost every work remained censored, Jiang Guangci 蒋光慈, but he had died three years earlier, so even if this was the only example of ‘person-oriented’ censorship, Jiang did not suffer the consequences.

Lu Xun’s account of the incident was written almost two years later, on the last day of the year 1935, and not published until after his death, in July 1937. Like the postscript to his collection Writings

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9 A small number of titles on the list were not in themselves literary but were written or translated by well-known literary figures, such as Zhengzhi jingjixue pipan 政治經濟學批判 (A Critique of Political Economics), translated by Guo Moruo.
of False Freedom, quoted in the previous chapter, this text consists for the most part of copies of newspaper clippings, to which the author added satirical comments. Again, Lu Xun’s ostensibly ‘objective’ account of the affairs of the day was in fact meant to attack some of his personal enemies, making it evidently unsuitable as a source for historical research, even though many scholars, following Zhang Jinglu, have used it as such. In this case, the subjective nature of Lu Xun’s account is more cleverly veiled than in his attack on Zeng Jinke. It can be proved, however, that his description of the consequences of the 1934 blacklist incident are not only highly opaque, but in some respects misleading. Lu Xun wrote:

In this way, the case of the large number of forbidden books was more or less concluded and the publishers did not open their mouths again. However, there remained a difficult problem: the publishers were bound to continue printing new books and journals, and therefore there would always be the danger of being raided, censored and even shut down. This danger would first of all harm the interests of the publishers and therefore a remedy needed to be found. Shortly afterwards (bu duo jiu 不多久), a rumour went through the publishing world...really only a very faint rumour... (Lu Xun 1981, 6:460)

Lu Xun then goes on to recount the story of a big meeting, taking place on ‘a certain day’ in the ‘aftermath’ (shanhou 善後) of the incident and attended by government officials, publishers and editors. At the meeting, says Lu Xun, ‘a certain journal editor’ suggested adopting the method of pre-censorship of manuscripts of journal articles and books. If the authorities were to check and, if necessary, change manuscripts before publication, they could be sure that all that was published was legal and that publishing houses would no longer run the risk of financial losses as a result of government intervention. After a few sneers at the ‘certain editor’, Lu Xun concludes by saying that ‘on a certain day’ a new institution was established in Shanghai: the Central Books and Journals Censorship Committee (Zhongyang tushu zazhi shencha weiyuanhui 中國圖書雜誌審查委員會).

Lu Xun’s account raises many questions. First of all, it seems unlikely that a journal editor would be most worried about the blacklist incident in which, after all, no journals were involved. Further inquiry shows that Lu Xun purposefully misconstrued the chronology of events. By first describing the 1934 blacklist incident,
then saying that ‘shortly afterwards’ a rumour went through Shanghai, and finally using the term shanhou (‘in the aftermath’), he suggests that the meeting of officials, publishers and editors took place after the incident. He is careful not to mention the exact date. In fact, that meeting took place almost six months before the incident and is described in detail in a letter Lu Xun wrote to Yao Ke 姚克 on 5 November 1933 (Lu Xun 1981, 12:254–60). In that letter, he also mentions the name of the ‘certain journal editor’, namely Shi Zhecun 施蛰存, then editor of Les Contemporains. As Lydia Liu has pointed out (1995:220), one must “marvel at Lu Xun’s foresight” when he writes in this letter that he is sure this measure will be adopted by the authorities. On the other hand, one also wonders why, more than two years later, he would want to mislead his contemporary readers (who, unlike present-day researchers, had no access to Lu Xun’s correspondence) into thinking that the meeting was in any way related to the blacklist incident. One may speculate that Lu Xun’s article was part of his private feud with Shi Zhecun (mentioned in the same letter to Yao Ke). Lu Xun wanted to portray Shi in a negative light by making it seem as if Shi had collaborated with the Nationalist authorities out of cowardice, but he was clever enough not to give names, since his account was only based on hearsay. Moreover, one may assume that Lu Xun was perfectly aware of the power of his rhetoric. For Shi Zhecun, the fact that he was not named and could therefore not retort without first having to admit that he was the ‘certain editor’ must have been even more difficult to stomach than any straightforward accusation would have been.10

Zhang Jinglu, who included Lu Xun’s piece in Materials on the History of Modern Chinese Publishing, published in the PRC in the 1950s, provided careful notes on the historical context, but added

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10 Shi Zhecun did comment on the censorship system in an essay written in June 1934, before Lu Xun’s piece. This essay, entitled ‘Shuji jinzhi yu sixiang zuoqing’ (The Banning of Books and Leftist Thinking) was later included in Shi’s 1937 essay collection Dengxia ji 檯下集 (Under the Lamplight), but unfortunately deleted by Shi from the 1994 reprint of that collection. In the postscript to the reprint (Shi Zhecun 1994:141), Shi explains that he considered the piece, which “complained about the banning of books”, to be devoid of any actuality and therefore decided to leave it out. Since I have been unable to consult the original collection, I do not know the exact content of the article, but some passages from it are quoted in a footnote to another Lu Xun essay, see Lu Xun 1981 (46).
only a single short comment to the passage above, namely a reference to Lu Xun’s letter to Yao Ke, which was not yet publicly accessible at the time. In 1933, Zhang Jinglu himself was manager of the Xiandai publishing house. It is highly unlikely that he would not have been present at the meeting described above. It is understandable that he would not want to divulge this information in the 1950s. However, even in Zhang’s 1938 autobiographical publication Zai chubanjie ershi nian (Twenty Years in the Publishing World), he remains silent about the entire episode. He does not mention the establishment of the censorship committee or any other incident involving censorship during this period, which he refers to as the heyday of the Xiandai publishing house (Zhang 1938:151).

Given that Lu Xun’s account of the period is tainted by personal preoccupation and Zhang Jinglu’s annotations are incomplete, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which agents in the literary field were instrumental in refining the Nationalist censorship rules for literary works. Zhang Jinglu’s silence on the subject, like that of others who were involved (Shi Zhecun, Zhao Jingshen), suggests that the establishment of the censorship committee was not simply a repressive governmental measure, but rather the result of negotiations and interactions. As we have seen above, the idea of establishing such a committee was already raised by contributors to China New Books Monthly shortly after the promulgation of the Publishing Law, although they were more concerned about social science publications than about literature. Nevertheless, the physical presence of the censors on the Shanghai literary scene must have changed the nature of the government control of writers.

**The impact of the Censorship Committee on the Shanghai literary scene**

The Central Books and Journals Censorship Committee, officially installed on 25 May 1934, was an experimental institution which operated only in Shanghai and consisted of seven censors, who were
They were commissioned to read and, if necessary, edit and change the manuscripts of every work of literature or social science to be published in book form or in a periodical. It was the first and only organ in the country that was specifically involved in literary censorship. Its ‘method of censorship’ (see Zhang Jinglu 1957:525–7) makes clear that the Committee aimed at complete pre-publication censorship. Works meant for publication were to be sent in in manuscript form and only to be typeset after the censors had made their changes. The advantage (from the censors’ point of view) of this system was that the changes were thus invisible, although Lu Xun complained that the censors’ changes sometimes rendered his sentences non-grammatical or nonsensical. As in the old system, books or journals that were approved obtained a registration number, which can be found on the back cover of most Shanghai journals from 1934 and 1935 and on the colophon page of book publications.

For writers, editors and publishers, there were some distinct advantages attached to the new censorship system. First of all, there was the reduced risk that censorship would result in punishment or conviction, for only those works deemed completely unfit for publication would be forwarded by the committee to the central authorities. It was well known what kinds of works were not appreciated: anything that was critical of the Nationalist government, especially of its policy towards Japan and anything that purported to be ‘proletarian literature’ (puluo wenxue 普羅文學). It is highly unlikely that any writer would confront the censors with anything completely unacceptable. On the other hand, the censors were apparently reluctant in considering a work as such. Again, it is Lu Xun who provides the evidence, in a letter to Zhao Jiabi 趙家璧 in which he complains that a piece of his was still published after the censors had removed as much as three-fourths of its content (Lu Xun 1981, 12:618). Even in cases in which a manuscript was deemed completely unacceptable for publication, as in the case of Xiao Hong’s 蕭紅 Shengsi chang 生死場 (The Field of Life and Death), this did not always result in personal danger to or


12 See Lu Xun’s preface to Xiao Hong 1935. See also Goldblatt 1976 (42).
persecution of the author. In some cases, such works were consequently printed and distributed on a small scale without going through official channels. This is also how Lu Xun published some of his collections of essays during this period (cf. Lu Xun 1981, 12:611, 620).

A second advantage of having a small group assigned to censor Shanghai’s literary production was the possibility for a variety of deals. As Lydia Liu has documented in her investigation into the making of the *Compendium of Chinese New Literature* (1935), writers with connections within the Guomindang, such as Mu Shiying 穆時英, could play a key role in these deals, arranging for certain publications to be approved in exchange for one of the censors getting his own work published by the publishing house involved (in this case Zhao Jiabi’s Liangyou 良友 Company). As Leo Ou-fan Lee notes, Lu Xun wrote to Xiao Jun 蕭軍 in November 1934 that he considered Shanghai censorship to be lax compared to that of the rest of the country (Lee 1978:178). Although Lu Xun was not specifically referring to literary censorship in that passage (cf. Lu Xun 1981, 12:563), it is possible that in other areas of China, with the 1930 Publishing Law in effect and no special committees for literary censorship, censors were stricter and networks of writers and publishers less influential. It might also be that censorship outside Shanghai was simply more chaotic and that the smaller number of regulations and institutions gave more opportunities to semi-official organizations like the Blue Shirts to raid bookshops and carry out intimidation and other racketeering practices. In other words, the situation in 1934, in terms of regional differences in the application of the censorship laws, appears to have been similar to that lamented by the contributors to *China New Books Monthly* in 1931 and 1932.

In another section of his biography of Lu Xun, Leo Ou-fan Lee notes that after 1933 Lu Xun “had more chances to write for the public press—albeit under pseudonyms” (Lee 1978:144). This seems not to be completely true. Lu Xun did use the name Lu Xun\(^\text{14}\) on a...
number of occasions in these years. The same is true for virtually all the known Leftist writers, whose names one comes across in the large commercial literary journals of the time. Even if they do not always appear as contributors, at least they do appear in advertisements for their books.

Using a pseudonym, however, did significantly increase a writer’s safety. This became apparent during the famous ‘New Life Incident’. This incident led to the conviction of the special Shanghai censorship system’s only legal victim, Du Zhongyuan 杜重远. Du was not a literary writer but the editor of a politically oriented journal, the weekly Xinsheng 新生(New Life). In May 1935, the journal published the article ‘Xianhua huangdi’ 閒話皇帝 (Chatting about Emperors), by a certain Yishui 易水 (1935). The article, portraying monarchs from various countries, contained a passage describing the lack of actual political power of the Japanese emperor. Because the issue carried an inspection number, the censorship committee had apparently cleared its contents for publication. The Japanese consul in Shanghai protested and demanded that the persons responsible for this ‘lese majesty’ (as the English-language pro-Japanese newspapers in Shanghai soon called it) be punished. The censorship committee, in a shrewd attempt to save its own skin, convinced Du Zhongyuan that he would only be mildly punished by the courts if he were to admit that he had published the piece without the censors’ permission. Du conceded and was sentenced to more than one year and two months of imprisonment. The author of the article in question escaped punishment, because, having used a pseudonym, he could not be traced. This detail highlights the fact

15 Exact information on which pseudonym Lu Xun used to sign which publications during this period can be found in Sun Yong 1982. In a December 1934 letter to Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun, Lu Xun noted that he was even getting specific requests from publishers to use the name ‘Lu Xun’ again, now that the censors had publicly stated that they only looked at content, not at authors’ names, when carrying out their work. The letter also shows, however, that Lu Xun remained highly cautious and suspicious towards the censorship system (Lu Xun 1981, 12:621).

16 A full description of the incident, its context and its aftermath can be found in Coble 1991 (213–21). I am grateful to Rana Mitter for generously sharing his materials and knowledge on Du Zhongyuan with me.

17 Nowadays, it is known that this author was Ai Hansong 艾寒松 (1905–1975). Cf. Lu Xun 1981 (5:420, note 8).
that the censorship procedures did not stipulate any need to state the real name of the author of each contribution to a journal.\textsuperscript{18}

To sum up, it seems that the new censorship system, for as long as it lasted, did indeed bring about the improvement hoped for by publishers and editors when they negotiated their deal with the authorities: as long as the censors did their work well, nothing that the publishers and editors published in literature or the social sciences carried any personal risk for them. At least in Shanghai, this would ensure more or less unproblematic distribution of books and journals. What happened to publications distributed in other areas of China remains uncertain, for these publications had to pass local institutions of post-censorship. The ‘approachability’ and (in some cases) corruption of the censors, their apparent reluctance to forward censored materials to higher authorities, and their lack of interest in authors’ identities, continued to make authors the least likely persons to suffer the legal (or physical) consequences of censorship. Speaking strictly in terms of material production and strictly confining my argument to the Shanghai literary scene, it can be concluded that the establishment of the censorship committee provided more safety and stability to literary producers than the previous censorship system did. Statistics (see Appendix B) show no significant decrease or increase in the publication and circulation of literary books and journals in the period 1934–1935.

The impression one gets from the statistics is confirmed by research done by Wu Fuhui 吳福輝 (1996). Wu’s statistics concerning literary journals of the 1930s show that censorship and government repression did not influence the life-span of journal publications. Wu shows that of the thirty-six large literary journals of the 1930s, twenty-three folded within one year, but these included both Leftist journals and pro-government journals. Similarly, of the thirteen journals that lasted for more than one year, some, like \textit{Wenxue} 文學 (Literature) and \textit{Yiwen} 譯文 (Translation), were well

\textsuperscript{18} See regulation no. 3 (Zhang 1957:526). The manuscript sent in for censorship must be accompanied by a statement including (a) the title of the manuscript; (b) the number of pages and appendices; (c) the name and address of the applicant; and (d) the name and address of the editor. In the case of journal publications, the applicant was more likely to be a representative of the publishing house or editorial board than the author. This meant that before publication authors were ‘safe’ no matter what name they used. They remained ‘safe’ after publication if they did not have their real name or a known pseudonym appear in print.
known for their progressive leanings. Wu concludes that economic and financial factors played a decisive role in determining the success or failure of literary journals and that publishers were willing to risk censorship and banishment of Leftist publications because there existed a ‘market’ for them (Wu 1996:212). If the quantity of material production was thus little disturbed by censorship, it is important to look at any changes in symbolic production. First, the position within the literary field of the censors themselves should be identified.

Censors as agents within the literary field

The censors’ coming to Shanghai does not seem to have changed the dominant power relations within the literary field of 1930s China. Instead of representing a strong authority and threatening the literary field from the outside, the censors came to occupy a position inside the literary field. Their profession was understood to require some knowledge of literature and some skill in writing; some of them indeed had (or had had) literary aspirations. Consequently, power relations between them and other agents within the field were determined, at least to a certain extent, by the laws of the literary field itself, i.e. by symbolic rather than by political standards. In trying to convert their political capital into symbolic capital, some censors put themselves in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis the ‘recognized’ literary producers. This relationship can be detected in Zhao Jiabi’s recollection of his dealings with the chief censor Xiang Deyan. After Zhao had visited Xiang Deyan and learned that his plan for the Compendium of Chinese New Literature would be approved if his publishing house agreed to publish Xiang’s short story collection in the Liangyou Literary Series, he reported back to his superiors:

The next day, I reported back to the managers and we all had a good laugh. We had seen through his [Xiang’s] little game all right! But this Xiang Deyan did not only want profit but also recognition. How could I include his work in the Liangyou Literary Series? Later he demanded, through Mu [Shiying], that we publish his ‘masterpiece’ under the

19 Zhu Zishuang (pen-name Pulu 樸廬), especially, wrote essays and poems, which were later collected and published. See Xu Youchun 1991 (187).
name Jiaoren 鮫人 and the title Sanbai bashi ge 三百八十個 (Three Hundred and Eighty of Them) and that it need not be included in the series, but it had to be in hard cover. [...] The conditions we put forward were that there would be no discussion about including Lu Xun and that [after submission] the entire manuscript of the Compendium must be given preferential treatment, without being intentionally fussy. (Zhao Jiabi 1984:177)

Clearly, Zhao and his superiors considered asking for bribes to be an acceptable mode of behaviour for a censor and even a source of amusement. However, the censor's literary demands, though backed by his authority and therefore difficult to refuse completely, were considered unacceptable. Bestowing on him the symbolic honour of being included in the famous Liangyou series simply could not be discussed, even if it would mean having to change or postpone the Compendium project. Xiang Deyan eventually seems to have accepted the inferiority of his own work and settled for the second best alternative. Although Xiang's position made it easier for him to obtain mobility within the field (in this case from the position of 'aspiring author' to that of 'published author') than it was for agents who were not backed by government authority, the complete lack of any symbolic production (reviews, etc.) derived from his collection of short stories shows that his efforts were largely in vain.

Even if a censor showed no interest in publishing his own work, his double position as both a creator and a destroyer of literary works could still be criticized by other agents in terms of symbolic capital. The censor was often seen as someone involved in literary production who violated autonomous literary principles. Lu Xun suggested that the censors' 'cutting and pasting' was so wilful because they were only filling quotas (Zhang Jinglu 1957:198–200). Lin Yutang, in the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter, seems to complain about the censors' habitus. Even in Lee-hsia Hsu Ting's 1970s study of censorship in Republican China, the lack of specific literary knowledge of the censors is singled out for criticism. In her summary of pre-war Republican government censorship, she writes:

Middle school graduates who had no love for literature often meddled with the manuscripts of good writers, but their tampering was not openly known until after the disappearance of the Censorship

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I have seen no references to women censors.
Commission in 1935. Unacknowledged deletions or corrections by clumsy censors often marred the originals. Sometimes half a sentence would be deleted, leaving the other half meaningless; or censors might insert revisions in bad Chinese or at variance with the author's meaning. (Ting 1974:87)

What is especially striking about this type of criticism is that both Lin Yutang, from the contemporary perspective, and Ting, in hindsight, voice their critiques in the context of a general discussion of the influence of censorship in all areas of publishing and journalism. Yet these two critics single out censorship of literature and the violation of literary texts by unintelligent, unliterary individuals as the most insidious example of repression of freedom of speech. Through their discourse, they confirm the autonomous, symbolic value of literature. Being involved in literary production, even as a censor, is considered to require field-specific knowledge, and this knowledge the censors under discussion are accused of lacking. As a result, a censor's tampering with a literary text becomes a symbol of oppression, despite the fact that there was, in comparison to other fields, little direct oppression taking place within the literary field. In contrast, the blacklists of books and journals in the social sciences were many times longer than the literature blacklists, and the pre-publication censorship of newspaper articles was much stricter and established much earlier than that of literature.21

**Literary autonomy and state authority**

Discourse concerned with the outside infringement on a presumably autonomous literary practice already played a major role in reports on the deaths of the so-called 'Five Martyrs of the League of Left-Wing Writers'. While a total of twenty-three Communist Party members were betrayed to the Nationalist authorities by their own leadership and executed in 1931, the five victims who had been

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21 According to Lu Xun's letter to Yao Ke, mentioned above, the pre-publication censorship system for literature was suggested by Shi Zhecun with reference to the system of newspaper censorship which existed at the time. The articles from *China New Books Monthly*, discussed above, also clearly suggest that censorship of non-literary works was a much greater cause of concern for publishers. For a more detailed treatment of press censorship, see Lin 1937 and Ting 1974.
engaged in literary activity were placed in the spotlight of attention (cf. Hsia 1968:163–233 and Wong 1991:100–12). Although their deaths were the direct result of their presence at a political meeting and were not in any way related to their authorship, these martyrs are time and again referred to in discussions about Nationalist censorship in general and Nationalist censorship of literature in particular. This interpretation emerged almost immediately after their deaths, both in League journals and in reports written for Western publications. The deaths of the five young writers are described, in the first and only issue of the journal *Qianshao* (Vanguard; April 1934), as a blow to ‘proletarian revolutionary literature’, rather than to the ‘proletarian revolution’ in general. A Western commentator, Malcolm Cowley, presented the argument even more explicitly:

Twenty-four [sic] Communists were present; five of them [...] were writers [...]. The oldest of the five was twenty-nine, the youngest twenty-one. They were, in a sense, the flower of their generation. [...] That was five months ago, but the campaign of extermination against Chinese writers still continues. (My emphasis. Originally published in *New Republic*, July 1931. Quoted in Hsia 1968:167–8.)

The (posthumous) position of the martyrs in the literary field, however, is as ambiguous as that of the censors.

Just as political authorities’ violation of literary texts was considered by Lin Yutang and others to be more disturbing than that of any other kind of text, the authorities’ violation of literary persons was given much more attention by commentators than the simultaneous arrests and executions, for the same reasons, of eighteen other persons. Both in the discussions about text censorship and in discussions about the martyrs, a very basic view of literature as an independent, non-political, culturally valuable activity seems to underlie the arguments that are made. According to this view, the symbolic value of literature lies in its being more than ‘just’ writing and more than ‘just’ politics. It has independent significance and autonomous, symbolic value.

There is of course a strategic aspect to all of this. The above-mentioned view provided critics of the Nationalist regime with a

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22 See for instance Liu 1995 (226), where it is claimed that the deaths of the five martyrs led directly to the establishment of the Censorship Committee in Shanghai in 1934.
powerful argument: the regime is bad because it tampers with literature. This argument could be and was used strategically by political critics who themselves were certainly not opposed to censorship and tampering with literature. However, this is not the point. If such strategic uses of literature occurred, then the ‘users’ apparently believed in the symbolic power of literature and its capacity to challenge or support political causes in its own way. People like Lin Yutang and probably also Lu Xun, who was never completely at ease with the idea of a strictly utilitarian literature, shared, supported, and advocated this belief because it was in their interest to do so. It was also in the interest of editors, publishers, critics, people teaching literature in schools and universities, and, perhaps, in the interest of some censors. In the 1930s, the Shanghai literary field was not a site where ideologies or parties clashed in exactly the same way as they were clashing in the political or military arena. It was the site of clashes and allegiances among agents in possession of some economic and political capital, but much more symbolic capital, who shared a basic belief and interest in the value of literature, even if they disagreed about everything else.

**Refraction**

The conflict between state authority and literary autonomy in 1930s China exemplifies the process that Pierre Bourdieu, in his theory of social fields, calls ‘refraction’. According to Bourdieu, sociologists of literature, especially those of Marxist persuasion, too easily accept the idea that literary events can be analysed as direct ‘reflections’ of larger social forces. Bourdieu argues that relatively independent fields, such as the modern literary field, are able to make outside forces undergo changes once these forces enter the field because these forces are affected (‘refracted’) by the field’s autonomous principle(s), which function as ‘prisms’ (cf. Bourdieu 1996:220).

In 1930s China, the Nationalist Party’s attempts to annihilate communism in Chinese society, their so-called ‘campaign against the bandits’, and the resistance to these activities, are not simply ‘reflected’ in literary practice but filtered and refracted by the laws of the literary field itself. The ‘campaign against the cultural bandits’ (wenhua weijiao 文化圍剿), as it was sometimes called, was time and again frustrated by literary principles. When 149 books were
outlawed in 1934, the authorities were told to look at the contents of the works, rather than at the names of the authors. When pre-censorship was introduced, some censors turned out to be eager for literary recognition and therefore bribable, yet others were insensitive, which led to complaints even from those, like Lin Yutang, who had no overt political interests. Moreover, authors in possession of much symbolic capital, like Lu Xun, would be able to make their influence felt and publish their works through channels other than the official ones.

It must have been painful for literary writers to find out that their works had been published in abbreviated and/or mutilated form, especially when the changes were made by a censor who displayed interest not in the writers’ artistic intentions but only in their (supposed) political intentions. The problem was especially acute for those writers who did have political intentions and chose to accomplish the goals of these intentions through literature because they felt this would add power or poignancy. This is another example of ‘refraction’, and it is typical of the literary views of many of the Leftist or left-inclined writers of the 1930s. These views are discussed below.

*Leftist literature, censorship and Xiao Hong’s ‘Hands’*

The refraction of politics through literature, the Leftist view of literature, and the problem of censorship all play a prominent role in the story ‘Shou’ 手 (Hands) by Xiao Hong. ‘Hands’ was first published in April 1936 in the first issue of the journal *Zuojia* 作家 (Writers), a commercially run literary journal published by the Shanghai Journal Company under the directorship of Zhang Jinglu.23 The journal was founded after the worst period of censorship had passed and thrived on the publication of works by such popular writers as Lu Xun (using that name) and Ba Jin 巴金. Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun were also regular contributors.

‘Hands’ is the story of a working-class girl, Wang Yaming 王亞明, who is sent by her father to pursue an education at an élite girls’

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23 The founding and development of this very successful company, which published, distributed and sold hundreds of periodicals, is discussed at length in Zhang Jinglu 1938.
school. Despite her zeal, Wang Yarning continually fails to make much progress in her education. She is soon ostracized by her classmates, not because of her poor performance in class, but because of her speech, appearance and habits. Throughout the story, the focus of attention is on Wang Yarning’s hands, which have a strange black colour. For this reason, she is looked down upon not only by the other girls, who consider her ‘dirty’, but also by the hypocritical principal, who does not allow her to take part in morning exercises, for the teacher is afraid that Wang Yarning’s black hands might attract the attention of foreign passers-by and blemish the school’s good reputation.

The story is recounted by an I-narrator who also studies at the school and is the only one who sympathizes with Wang Yarning to any extent. It is also the I-narrator who finds out why Wang Yarning’s hands are so black. In her longest monologue of the story, Wang Yarning explains that she comes from a poor family of dyers. After her mother passed away, she and her sisters helped her father to dye cloth, in order to eke out a living. There was only enough money to send one child, Wang Yaming, to school, and her father was counting on her to return to teach her sisters. As she tells this story to the I-narrator, Wang Yarning bursts out in tears; she feels ashamed for not doing well in school, when her family is suffering to afford her education.

At the end of the story, Wang Yarning is sent away from the school. Her performance has been too poor to allow her to take part in the examinations. Her father comes to fetch her and they leave together. The narrator is watching them from upstairs as they walk away, and leaves the reader with a clear ‘Leftist’ image:

After passing through the gate they headed off into the distance, in the direction of the hazy morning sun. The snow looked like shards of broken glass, and the further the distance, the stronger the reflection grew. I kept looking until the glare from the snowy landscape hurt my eyes.  

It is easy to visualize this scene of two people immersed in the colour red. The message of the story is obvious: the working class’s attempts to improve its status within the existing social system, for

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24 Translation by Howard Goldblatt, quoted from Lau, Hsia & Lee 1981 (464). The story is also translated in Xiao Hong 1982 and Lau & Goldblatt 1996.
instance through education, are doomed to fail, and only a socialist revolution can bring about real change.

There is much to say about the way in which the author delivers her message in this story in terms of style, description, and especially the ambiguous role of the narrator. In the present context, however, what is especially worth noting about the story is that Wang Yarning’s first inkling of awareness of the fact that her family’s plight is caused by class conflict occurs only after she has read a work of literature. The first time she discusses literature with the narrator, Wang Yarning asks whether or not the narrator has read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. She then asks the narrator to lend her a book to read during the holidays; the narrator hands her a copy of the Chinese translation of Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*. Wang Yarning is deeply moved by this novel, especially by a part in which the character Marija collapses in the snow. It is this reading experience that causes Wang Yarning to enter the long monologue mentioned above, which starts out as follows:

“Marija is a very real person to me. You don’t think she died after she collapsed in the snow, do you? She couldn’t have died. Could she? The doctor knew she didn’t have any money, though, so he wouldn’t treat her…..*haw haw.*” Her high-pitched laugh brought tears to her eyes. “I went for a doctor once myself, when my mother was sick, but do you think he would come? First he wanted travel money, but I told him all our money was at home: [begged him to come with me then, because she was in a bad way. Do you think he would agree to come with me? He just stood there in the courtyard and asked me: ‘What does your family do? You’re dyers, aren’t you?’ I don’t know why, but as soon as I told him we were dyers he turned and walked back inside.” (Lau, Hsia & Lee 1981:463)

Even though she ‘doesn’t know why’, in this passage, Wang Yarning, by comparing her own fate to that of a character from a novel, has grasped a simple truth, essential to class analysis: the doctor would not treat her because he knew she had no money. None of the things that happened to her in the school before, no matter how clearly she was being teased and ostracized, caused such a strong reaction in her. Only literature was able to do this, and it did this in its own special way, by not just presenting the message or teaching the lesson, but by *moving* the reader to awareness. This, I would argue, represents the basic view of literature of many of the Leftist or left-inclined writers: by filtering a social or political message through literary
language, narration and imagery, readers might respond to this message more strongly than they would if it were presented in a different manner.

These high expectations about the power of literature were certainly not completely unfounded. Xiao Hong was probably aware of the fact that the publication of Upton Sinclair’s novel *The Jungle*, which describes the life of a worker in the Chicago meat-packing industry, in 1906 led to a government investigation and to actual improvement in the working conditions of the Chicago meat-packers. In the China of the 1930s, however, Guo Moruo’s 1929 translation of *The Jungle* (Chinese title: *Tuchang* 屠場) had been banned since 1934. The title appears on the list of 149 forbidden works as well as on the list of works that remained banned after the re-censoring. The official reason for the ban was that the book belonged to a category of books which “propagate proletarian literature, incite class struggle or undermine Party and state authorities”.

Contemporary readers of Xiao Hong’s story were probably aware of the fact that Sinclair’s novel was forbidden literature in their country. If those readers also had some knowledge of the content and context of Sinclair’s novel, this may have added an extra dimension to their reading. It may have alerted them to the fact that Xiao Hong was writing under censorship conditions that made it impossible for her to present her message more directly. Sinclair was able to be very direct in his novel by making his main protagonist, Jurgis Radkus, convert to socialism in the end and by directing his social criticism at one specific capitalist institution, the meat-packing industry in Chicago. Although the message of ‘Hands’ is just as clear, the object of its social criticism is much more general, and no solutions are offered. The story achieves its political effect by literary means: the inter-textual reference to *The Jungle*, Wang Yaming’s emotional response to it, and the concluding ‘red’ image. The ‘reflection’ of the morning sun in the snow is, on a different level, a ‘refraction’ of ideology through imagery. Whether the author wanted to write like this or whether censorship forced her to do so is a question that must remain unanswered.
Difficult as it may be to imagine a repressive regime that does not strongly repress or harm literature, this appears to have been the case under Nationalist rule. Compared to censorship and repression in other areas, Nationalist censorship of literature was characterized by a certain amount of respect for the laws of the literary field, especially in the power relationships between literary producers and literary censors within the literary field. All through the 1930s, the Chinese literary field remained strongly independent. The vast majority of writers, including those that were politically inspired, maintained the belief that literature possessed a politically neutral element which contained symbolic value and ought not be violated for political reasons. As long as representatives of political power did not establish themselves in a more powerful position within the field, in which case they could have effectively told literary writers what to write and how to write it, and as long as political power could not be automatically converted into cultural power or vice versa, literary production was not significantly restricted by censors, nor, for that matter, by Leftists. For political reasons, those violations that did take place have been exaggerated, especially after 1949, in order to strengthen a more general, that is, not specifically literary, antipathy against the Nationalist government. The following statement from Tang Tao’s textbook history of modern literature is a typical example:

The Nationalist reactionary government also banned works of revolutionary literature, destroyed progressive literary institutions, etc. In February 1934 alone, almost 150 literary works were banned. The works that were confiscated and altered by the Nationalist censorship institutions were even more numerous. [...] During the entire period of the second domestic revolutionary war, the situation was what Lu Xun pointed it out to be at the time: “The revolutionary literature of the proletarian class and the revolutionary toiling masses are suffering from the same kind of repression and murdering, they are fighting the same battle, sharing the same fate...” (Tang Tao 1982, 2:15)

Such exaggerations and inaccuracies sometimes find their way into the work of Western scholars, as in the following remarks by Frederic Wakeman:
Attacks on movies formed, of course, part of a larger effort of censorship that deeply affected the cultural life of Shanghai’s Chinese residents, who constituted a newspaper-reading population of about 300,000 people. In February 1934 the Guomindang banned 149 books in Shanghai and forbade the circulation of 76 magazines including *The Dipper* and *Literature Monthly*. During that year there were 2,709 Public Security Bureau cases forbidding “reactionary works” and more than 25 bookstores were threatened with closure because they sold the works of Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Mao Dun and Ba Jin. In June 1934, just after the New Life Movement began to wind down, a law made it compulsory for publishers to submit all manuscripts for books and magazines to a special committee for inspection before they could be printed. (Wakeman 1995:239–40)

Like Tang, Wakeman lumps all incidents involving censorship together around the date February 1934, which is especially conspicuous in this case, for *The Dipper* and *Literature Monthly* actually folded in 1932. Like Lin Yutang, he describes censorship as a ‘blow’ to the entire newspaper-reading population, but he reverts to literature (in this case the names of literary journals and writers) for his specific examples. The resulting image is one of extreme cultural repression.

As I have shown, statements like this stem from values and strategies of the literary field of the 1930s and can be related to the autonomous view of literature prevalent at the time. If critics seem to agree nowadays that the period 1930–1936 was more productive and lively and, in terms of literary output, qualitatively better than the preceding decade, then all agents and actions within the literary field, including censors, censorship and those complaining about and resisting censorship, had their share in bringing that about. As long as one is aware of the existence of social fields and of the possibility of refraction, one can give credit where it is due without having to change one’s judgement on the Nationalists, their ideology, or their overall policy. If, however, one insists on seeing Nationalist rule as equally repressive in all fields, then one will have difficulty explaining the flourishing of modern Chinese literature during the 1930s.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

In Howard S. Becker's study of artistic communities, quoted in Chapter One, art worlds are described as worlds of collective activity. Without such activity, based to a large extent on established conventions and modern market mechanisms, most works of art would never be able to enter into the public realm. Moreover, once they do arrive in that realm, other forms of collective activity ensure that they are read, watched or heard, interpreted, analysed and assigned value. In the literary world examined in this study, these acts of material and symbolic production were often carried out within little microcosms of collective activity. Literary societies generated them and literary journals contained their results. Although certain conventions were similar to all groups and certain values shared by them, their activities also engendered considerable distinctions. This plurality was caused, first and foremost, by the fact that in the period under review here the entire cultural world was undergoing tremendous changes.

Unlike the art worlds described by Becker, this literary world, despite the increasing impact of professionalization, shared only a relatively small number of conventions, as the market for literature had not yet settled down into fixed production patterns. Different views of literature, different ways of meeting as a literary society, different regional, social or political backgrounds all could have a profound impact on the presentation of literary works. They might determine whether a literary publication, usually a journal, would be self-sponsored, plain and cheaply printed and distributed only among members, or professionally marketed, backed by major advertisers, glossy and richly illustrated and distributed nation-wide. Neither of these two extremes would provide an automatic indication of the literary value of a publication.

Virtually all of these groups and publications were engaged in competition for symbolic capital. For most of the period, this competition was fairly even-handed, regardless of how unfair the strategy of the Unknown Authors, described in Chapter Three, would
sometimes make it out to be. However, the representatives of styles more continuous with tradition generally appeared to be somewhat more relaxed and assured of their cultural superiority, and to attract the largest readership. In comparison, the more anti-traditional styles often displayed the aggressive behaviour typical of those whose position was not yet established. These latter styles ended up being canonized and have been at the centre of our thinking about modern Chinese literature for many decades. This study, based on empirical and historical evidence, suggests that there is no need for this canon, or these styles, to occupy such a central position, neither as a positive value, nor as a negative example. A much richer understanding of the literary practice of this period can be obtained if it is perceived in relational terms and various styles are taken into account simultaneously.

To arrive at such a relational understanding, it is certainly not necessary to apply, as I have done, a sociological approach to literature. Similar contributions can and should be made by scholars more experienced in working with actual literary texts, or applying other methods of analysis and interpretation. Essential to this is an awareness of the need for proper documentation. This may be an extremely basic point to make, but I believe that this study has shown that there is a need for scholars of Republican-era literature, especially those outside China, to go back to the materials. Looking at the topics of this study, it is remarkable how few of them have been touched upon before in English-language scholarship on modern Chinese literature. Although it is common knowledge that literary societies were major literary phenomena of this period, none of the societies dealt with here, not even the hugely famous and well-documented Southern Society, has been the topic of a book-length study, or even a full-length article. Similarly, although it is well known how important journals were in constituting literary identities (names of journals were often used by readers and critics to identify 'schools', such as the Crescent Moon school or the Les contemporains school), there have been no monographs in English on any of the major Republican-era journals, with the sole exception of Denise Gimpel’s study quoted in Chapter One. Important groups like the Tea Talk group and the Chinese P.E.N. have hardly been touched upon even by scholars inside China, and Zeng Jinke has become totally anonymous, even though his name appears with great
frequency in virtually all journals of the 1930s. The latter fact is especially remarkable, given the great amounts of attention given to the Shanghai scene recently by many scholars. This shows that the 'rehabilitation' of literary works and figures previously marginalized by political forces inside China is being carried out on the basis of literary criteria that continue to disadvantage the traditionalist styles.

It should be noted, moreover, that what I now call traditionalist styles were, by and large, styles that were active within the overall definition of New Literature, in the sense that they used the modern vernacular, did not mechanically copy classical forms and did not advocate any form of rigorous cultural conservatism. This points at a significant limitation of my own documentation and opens up further areas for research. A truly comprehensive, relational representation of Republican-era literature must include discussion of the continued use of classical languages and forms. It must also include treatments of commercial journals like the mid-1910s journals I have looked at in Chapter Four, since that style of writing and publication, too, continued with considerable success in the 1920s and 1930s. In short, there remains a huge amount of materials to be unearthed, especially in the form of literary journals, as well as other journal publications devoted to cultural and artistic life.

More research also needs to be done on the issue of canonization, for instance by looking more closely at what was going on in literary education in this period. It is possible that the impression I have obtained from looking at literary practice, namely that the anti-traditional styles were somewhat on the defensive, will have to be modified if educational practices are studied. Assuming that the anti-traditional forces were strongly present in (higher) education, the basis for their later canonization may have been laid in this period after all, but this needs to be examined and proved. In short: this field is in need of construction, not deconstruction.

In this study, I have not followed a chronological perspective, nor do I claim to have given complete coverage of any of the phenomena with which I have dealt. There are a number of important societies and journals that I have not touched upon at all, most notably perhaps the Crescent Moon group mentioned above. My selective approach reflects to some extent the complexity of the literary world of this period, a complexity which makes it easier to write about contin-
gencies than about stable factors. Nevertheless, there have been a few stable elements in my discussion that are worth reiterating here, as I believe they carry a wider importance for the study of modern Chinese literature, not only of the Republican era, but also of later eras.

First and foremost, this study has argued that there is a considerable extent of continuity with tradition in the literature of the Republican period. This continuity is evident not so much in the texts produced, but in the social context in which they were produced. The pervasive habit of working in literary societies, shared by all producers regardless of style, indicates that literature continued to be seen as a social activity, supporting a sense of community among members of the same group, just as had been the case with the traditional she and hui. This sense of community was continuously strengthened by the frequent publication of a society’s journal or newsletter. Journals also functioned to draw in readers as welcome members of literary groups, by keeping them informed of the group’s activities, sometimes even going as far as to publish members’ correspondence, and by allowing ample space for letters to the editor.

Just as traditional literati, attending a she or working in a hui, may have felt a further sense of community with the literati community as a whole, so did the communal sense of members of modern societies extend to wider circles. Many journals, representing different groups and different styles, published news or gossip columns, keeping readers abreast of what happened on the literary scene in China, and worldwide. This wider sense of community also surfaced in response to government encroachment on literary practice in the form of censorship, as we have seen in Chapter Seven.

Modern Chinese writers’ fondness for working in societies and publishing in journals has had a number of aesthetic consequences, some of which linger up to the present day, and some of which pose important challenges to supposedly universal literary theory. First of all, we have seen how frequent publication, partly imposed by the journal format, partly required to sustain the sense of community and partly due to economic necessity, was an important characteristic of this practice. Almost all modern Chinese writers have been (and still are) extremely prolific. Moreover, this prolificness has generally not harmed their recognition and status within the literary field. In other words, the literary world described in this study is not ‘the economic
world reversed' posited by Pierre Bourdieu. As a result, one might speculate that methods of analysis and interpretation based on the assumption that literary works are highly crafted, self-reflexive products created over a long period of time, when applied to these particular works, run the risk of misrepresenting their original aesthetic value.

Similarly, as argued in Chapter Four, text-oriented approaches based on the practice of book publication and the necessity of individual authorship, tend to miss the point when applied to the journal literature of this period. There is a need to develop different methods of reading that can do more justice to the notions of text and authorship that are reflected in journal publications. Moreover, this is not a need that is unique to the study of modern Chinese literature. Journal publications play a role in virtually every modern literary field in the world and need to be addressed much more frequently and systematically by literary theory.

The sense of community and even friendship between members of a literary society and between authors and their readers was valued especially, as Chapters Two and Five have shown, by those within the New Literature community who more consciously advocated the continuity between traditional and modern literary styles. For the members of the Tea Talk group, aesthetic pleasure resided in the notion of 'sophisticated entertainment', combining literary and artistic production with social gatherings with people one considered friends. For Zeng Jinke, who perhaps most successfully combined traditional values with the modern print medium, friendship was central to the literary experience.

Zeng Jinke's critics argued vehemently against his attempts to resurrect classical forms of writing, especially the song lyric genre. In doing so, they displayed great ease in crossing between textual criticism and personal abuse. For them, the forms of writing Zeng selected were inseparable from the kind of person they believed him to be. As had been the case with Liu Bannong's critics more than a decade earlier, Zeng's critics attempted to erect stylistic boundaries that prohibited certain creative combinations of form, language, content and behaviour. In doing so, they were themselves indebted to a very traditional notion of style as normative form (ni). In the final analysis, most literary figures in Republican China, regardless of which camp they belonged to, appear to have shared a fundamental
aesthetic conviction, which already had a long tradition in China: that
text and author complement each other and one cannot be understood
without the other.

It is my impression that this fundamental conviction has remained
important in Chinese literature throughout the twentieth century and
is, perhaps, more prominently present than ever at the beginning of
the twenty-first. For instance, the value of friendship or personal
acquaintance in literary production is confirmed by most
contemporary Chinese authors and critics I know, who will openly
discuss ways in which they have helped or encouraged friends or
family members to join the literary community, for instance by
writing friendly reviews of their work. Conversely, it is not unusual
for beginning authors looking for publishers (or translators) for their
work, to be able to present a prospectus of exceedingly positive
reviews of their work, published by acquainted critics or academics
in various journals or newspapers.

The practice of *ad hominem* criticism, based entirely on the
conviction that work and author are one, can once again be perceived
all around the contemporary Chinese literary scene. And once again,
the scene in Shanghai appears to be the place where original
combinations of literary writing and commercial publication are
flaunting established normative forms. A good example is the outrage
displayed by established writers and critics with regard to the
publication of well-packaged literary products such as Wei Hui’s 衛
慧 *Shanghai baobei* 上海寶貝 (Shanghai Baby) and Mian Mian’s 棉
棉 *Tang* 糖 (Candy). The criticism of these works, which clearly
refuse to acquiesce to the status of popular literature but instead
present themselves as the serious literature of a new generation, has
constantly had the activities, personalities and moral standards of the
authors in question as one of its targets. It has also been suggested
that the better of the two works must be *Candy*, because its author
really experienced the events described in the novel.

Another way in which interest in the biographical elements of
literary writing is clearly being revived in China nowadays, again
partly as a result of market forces, is the overwhelming resurgence of
interest in the essay genre. This time-honoured genre of writing,
rather marginalized in most Western literatures these days, is
currently once again being practised by virtually all major Chinese
authors. Essay collections are flooding the book market and Chinese
readers are displaying a prominent preference for this genre which, more than any other genre, purports to be non-fictional and encourages identification of the first-person narrator with the person of the author.

This study has shown how the traditional practice of working in literary societies adapted to the new print media that emerged in China from the late nineteenth century onwards. Since the late twentieth century, new online interactive media have been introduced in China and literary practices have already shown some surprising innovations. In the context of this study, it is especially significant to note the rapidly increasing number of literary websites that have taken over and developed the journal format. Vaguely reminiscent of the early Republican journals, these ‘webzines’ often divide their content into large numbers of sections, representing all kinds of different genres of writing. Not restricted by limitations of space, they can easily provide downloadable collections of classical literature, martial arts fiction and canonical New Literature, while simultaneously encouraging original contributions by their readers. Using interactive technology, these websites can provide a sense of community and participation unrivalled by print culture. Chinese readers and aspiring authors have responded in very large numbers, contributing to bulletin-board style communities in which literary works in all genres are produced, published, reviewed and studied. Web literature has already produced its own literary celebrities and literary prizes for web literature are awarded annually. Moreover, some established print culture authors have crossed over and established websites on which readers are kept informed about their personal lives and can occasionally join them in web chats. Although it is too early to ascertain if this will be an ongoing trend, it has so far confirmed the continuity of some of the literary values I have described in the preceding pages.

It has never been the aim of this study to arrive at conclusions that would make Chinese literature and its producers appear essentially different from, or ‘Other’ to, Western literatures and practices. I believe my emphasis on literary societies and journals has raised sufficient questions that could be raised equally fruitfully in the study of other cultures. It has been my aim, however, to argue that, regardless of the larger forces of cultural imperialism and globalization, cultural distinctions have existed and continue to exist. In the
final analysis, the global literary world is just as much in need of relational analysis as any other literary world. The study of modern Chinese literature has some unique insights to offer to that analysis. It is able to raise questions about texts, authors and values, and the way they are interrelated, that are sometimes too easily seen as no longer in need of answers. My questions have been questions of style. Many other questions remain.
APPENDIX A

MEMBERS OF THE LITERARY ASSOCIATION: BASED ON THE 1924 MEMBERSHIP LIST (SEE CHAPTER TWO)

The names of the members of the Association are given in the order in which they appear on the 1924 membership list, which is kept in the Modern Literature Archives (Xiandai wenxue guan 現代文學館) in Beijing. A reprint of the list can be found in Shu Yi 1992. The original list gives each member’s name, style (hao 號) and place of family origin (jiguan 籍貫), as well as the foreign languages each member has studied and each member’s correspondence address. In this list, I repeat names and styles (in brackets), adding important pseudonyms (in square brackets), years of birth and death as far as I have been able to trace them, and summary biographical information where appropriate and available. No biographical information is given for those members whom I thought to be sufficiently well known for their literary achievements.

1. ZHU XIZU 朱希祖 (Tixian 遁先) (1879–1944)
Historian. Graduated from Waseda. Taught at Beijing University around the time of the establishment of the Association.

2. JIANG FANGZHEN 蔣方震 (Baili 百里) (1882–1938)
Military theorist. Studied in Japan. Around 1920 he was involved in the Common Study Society (Gongxue she 共學社) and in Liang Qichao’s Progress Party (jinbu dang 進步黨). Military advisor to the Beiyang and Guomindang governments.

3. ZHOU ZUOREN 周作人 (Qiming 啓明) (1885–1967)

4. XU ZANKUN 許贊堃 (Dishan 地山) [Luohuasheng 落花生] (1893–1941)

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1 The reprint contains three printing errors, which are corrected here. The original list contains one error, which is explained in the item for member no. 115.
5. GUO XIFEN 郭希汾 (Shaoyu 紹虞) (1893–1984)

6. YE SHAOJUN 葉紹鈞 (Shengtao 聖陶) (1894–1988)

7. SUN FUYUAN 孫福源 (Fuyuan 伏園) (1894–1966)
Well-known editor and publisher. Edited (among others) the Beijing Chen bao 晨報 (Morning News) and its literary supplement. Co-editor of the Beijing Literature Trimonthly. Brother of Sun Fuxi 孫福熙 (see Chapter Three).

8. WANG TONGZHAO 王統照 (Jiansan 劍三) (1897–1957)


10. ZHENG ZHENDUO 鄭振鐸 (Xidi 西諫) (1898–1958)

11. GENG KUANG 耿匡 (Jizhi 濟之) (1899–1947)
Famous for his early accounts of life in the Soviet Union, and for his many translations of Russian literature.

12. QU SHIYING 瞿世英 (Junong 菊農) (1900–1970)
Translator. Relative of member no. 40, Qu Qiubai.

13. HUANG YING 黃英 (Luyin 嘯陰) (1899–1934)

14. ZHANG JIN 張晉 (Zhaode 昭德) (?–?)
Contributed one translation to the first issue of the Shanghai Literature Trimonthly. No contributions to Association journals after that. No biographical data found. The membership list gives his last known address as “Harbin (?)”.

15. LIU JIAN 劉健 (Xingxuan 星軒) (?–?)
No biographical or bibliographical data found.
16. WANG QINGNI 王晴霓 (?-?)
Member of the Morning Light Society, which was active in Beijing before the Literary Association was founded. Published poetry in the Morning Light Society’s journal. No further data found.

17. SONG JIE 宋介 (Weimin 唯民) (1895-?)
Member of the Morning Light Society. Studied at Harvard. Taught political science at Beijing University. Active collaborator with the Japanese since 1938. Date of death unknown.

18. GUO BIFAN 郭弼藩 (Mengliang 梦良) (1897?-1925)
First husband of member no. 13, Lu Yin.

19. XU GUANGDI 許光迪 (Xiaohang 晓航) (?-?)
Contributed a translation to the April 1921 *Short Story Magazine*. No further data.

20. YI JIAYUE 易家钺 (Junzuo 君左) (1899–1972)
Was forced to give up his membership of the Young China Association after publishing a controversial article in the *Jingbao* (Capital News) in 1922. Worked as editor for various magazines and newspapers. Published extensively on all kinds of subjects. Moved to Hong Kong in 1949 and to Taiwan in 1967.

21. CHEN TINGYI 陳聽彝 (Dabei 大悲) (1887–1944)
Active as dramatist and playwright throughout the Republican period. Briefly worked for the Wang Jingwei regime during the War.

22. WANG XINGHAN 王星漢 (Zhongchen 仲宸) [Wang Zhongren 王仲仁] (?–1923)
Graduate of Beijing University English Department. Member of the Renaissance Society (*xin chao she 新潮社*).

23. BAI YONG 白鏌 (Xuzhi 序之) (?–?)
Published in the Beijing *Literature Trimonthly* as Bai Xuzhi. Published a collection of poetry in 1934 as Bai Yong.
24. XIE LIUYI 謝六逸 (1898–1945)
Graduated from Waseda. Active publicist and contributor to Association organs. Editor at the Commercial Press. Later taught at various Shanghai universities.

25. GENG CHENG 耿承 (Shizhi 式之) (?–?)
Sibling of members no. 11 (Geng Jizhi) and no. 38 (Geng Mianzhi). Contributed a translation of Russian literature to the Association series. Also translated Oscar Wilde for *The Short Story Magazine*. No biographical data available.

26. LIU JIARONG 劉嘉鎔 (Tiezhu 鐵著) (?–?)
No biographical or bibliographical data found.

27. TANG XINGTIAN 唐性天 (?–?)
Graduated from Beijing University. Elected General Secretary of the Association in 1922. Translated Theodor Storm’s *Immensee* for the Association series, a translation which was heavily criticized by Creation Society members. Continued to be active in the publishing world in the 1930s. No biographical data found.

28. JIN ZHAOZI 金兆梓 (Zidun 子敦) (1899–1975)
Editor and publisher, mainly at Zhonghua publishing house. Contributed, together with member no. 29 (Fu Donghua), a translation of Bliss Perry’s *A Study of Poetry* (1920) to the Association Series.

29. FU DONGHUA 傅東華 (Donghua 凍蕩) (1893–1971)
Well-known literary translator.

Editor of the influential cultural newspaper supplement *Study Lamp* in the early 1920s. Later studied philosophy in Berlin. Was also active in the field of drama. Taught at various universities.

31. FAN YONGYU 范用佘 (Zusan 足三) (?–?)
Published works on politics in the 1920s. Published in Association organs.
32. SU YUQUN 蘇駭群 (Zongwu 宗武) (?–?)
Contributed to WAZB and XSYB. No further data.

33. SONG XIZHU 宋錫珠 (Liqing 麗卿) (?–?)
No biographical or bibliographical data found.

34. WANG GENG 王庚 (Shouqing 獻慶) (1895–1942)
Graduate from Qinghua and West Point. Member of the Chinese
delegation at the Versailles conference. Performed various military
functions in the Beiyang and Guomindang governments. Best known
as the first husband of Lu Xiaoman, who left him in 1925 for
Association member no. 93, Xu Zhimo.

35. WANG SHIYING 王世英 (Zhuangsun 庄孫) (1897–1945)
Early woman writer. Contributed to various magazines and
supplements, including the Shanghai Literature Trinonthly.

36. LIU TINGFANG 劉廷芳 (Dansheng 堂生) [Timothy Lew]
(1891–1939 (1947?))
Graduate of Columbia and Yale. Professor of theology and
psychology at Yanjing. Important member of the Chinese Christian
community. Priest. Contributed to XZYB. Published a collection of
poetry in 1930.

37. LIU TINGFAN 劉廷藩 (?–?)
Contributed poems to various magazines and supplements in the
1920s. Most likely related to no. 36.

38. GENG Xu 聰矗 (Mianzhi 勉之) (?–?)
Translated Chechov for the Association Series, together with his
brother, no. 11, Geng Jizhi.

39. SHEN YING 沈穎 (Shiqi 士奇) (1901–1976)
Studied Russian in Beijing, together with Geng Jizhi and Qu Qiubai.
Translated much Russian literature. Later worked in the railway
sector in Manchuria. Worked for several publishing houses after
1949.
40. QU QIUBAI 瞿秋白 (1899–1935)

41. LI ZHICHANG 李之常 (Shenwu 慎五) (?–?)
Frequent contributor to Association organs in 1921 and 1922. Went to the USA for study in 1923. No further data.

42. LI JIN 李晽 (Junyi 君毅) (?–?)
No biographical or bibliographical data found.

43. XU QIXIANG 徐其湘 (Liuji 梭幾) (?–?)
Translated (part of) a Russian work on materialism, published by the Commercial Press in 1922. No further data.

44. CHEN JIA 陳嘏 (Xianian 遐年) (?–?)
Published the earliest Chinese translation of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* with the Commercial Press in 1918.

45. SHEN DEJI 沈德濟 (Zemin 澤民) (1900–1933)
Younger brother of no. 9 (Mao Dun). Active member of the Young China Association. Early Communist Party member. Famous revolutionary martyr.

46. JIANG XIN 江新 (Xiaoqian 小鶴) (1894–1939)
High-school classmate of no. 6 (Ye Shaojun). Studied in USA. Later ran a successful arts and crafts factory in Shanghai.

47. CHEN QITIAN 陳其田 (1903–?)
Published translations from the Japanese. Address in 1924: “Shanghai, National Christian Association”

48. HU XUEYU 胡學愚 (Yuzhi 愈之) (1896–1986)

49. LIU YANLING 劉延陵 (1896–1988)
50. TENG GU 聂固 (Ruoqu 若渠) (1901–1941)
Was familiar with Creation Society founders Guo Moruo and Zhang Ziping. Published in one of the early issues of Creation Quarterly. Later active in Guomindang government.

51. GU SONGKUN 顧誥坤 (Jiegang 頤剛) (1893–1980)

52. PAN JIAXUN 潘家洵 (Jiequan 介泉) (1896–1989)
Graduate of Beijing University. Translator of English literature. Taught at various universities before the War of Resistance. Worked as a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences after 1949.

53. YU PINGBO 俞平伯 (1900–1990)

54. LI SHICEN 李石岑 (1892–1934)
Spent eight years in Japan. Was for a while editor of Study Lamp. Worked at the Commercial Press. Spent 1928–1930 in France and Germany. Taught at various universities afterwards.

55. XIA MIANZHAN 夏勉旃 (Mianzun 丐尊)

56. XU YUNUO 徐玉諾 (1893–1958)
Popular early modern poet and short-story writer. One of the most prolific writers on the literary scene of the early 1920s. Disappeared from the literary scene after 1925.

57. YAN SU 嚴素 (Jicheng 既澄) (1899–?)
Studied English and philosophy at Beijing University. Worked at the Commercial Press. Co-editor of WXZB.

58. HU TIANYUE 胡天月 (1891–1922)
Contributed to Study Lamp and to the 1921 XSYB.

59. ZHU ZIQING 朱自清 (Peixian 佩弦) (1898–1948)
60. LIU FU 劉復 (Bannong 半農) (1891–1934)
See Chapter Five.

61. ZHANG YUGUI 張毓桂 (Xinnan 辛南) (?–?)
Translated Strindberg for the Literary Association series as Zhang Yugui. Later published on Tibet as Zhang Xinnan.

62. CHEN XIAOHANG 陳小航 [Luo Jinan 羅稼南] (1898–1971)
Well-known writer during the War of Resistance, when he started using the name Luo Jinan.

63. FEI JUETIAN 費覺天 (?–?)
Published a book on the principle of class struggle in 1927. No further data.

64. ZHOU QU 周蓮 (Yutong 予同) (1898–1981)
Historian. Editor at Commercial Press. Co-editor of WXZB. In later life professor at Fudan University.

65. ZHOU JIANREN 周建人 (Qiaofeng 喬峰) (1888–1984)
Biologist. Youngest brother of member no. 3, Zhou Zuoren, and of Lu Xun.

66. HU ZHEMOU 胡哲謀 (Ziyi 子贻) (?–?)
Worked at Commercial Press. Co-editor of WXZB.

67. YU JIFAN 俞寄凡 (?–?)
Published extensively on aesthetics and music, also translations from Japanese. No further data.

68. LI JINHUI 李錦暉 (Junquan 均荃) (1891 (1892?)–1967)
Musician. Popular song-writer. In the 1930s also active in the film industry.

69. MA GUOYING 馬國英 (?–?)
Linguist. Published extensively on phonetics and interpunction. No further data.
70. YUE SIBING 樂嗣炳 (1901–1984)
Linguist. Later professor at Fudan.

71. XIONG FOXI 熊佛西 (Huanong 化農) (1900–1965)
Well-known dramatist. Studied in the USA.

72. DENG YI 鄧綱 (Yancun 演存) (?–?)
Active as writer and translator during the 1910s. Translated Dickens in 1914. Later translated Galsworthy for the Literary Association Series.

73. ZHAO BOYAN 趙伯顏 (Shengzuo 生佐) (?–?)
Published a novelette in 1928. Also published translations of German literature, among which Gerhard Hauptmann. No further data.

74. XIE WANYING 謝婉瑩 (Bingxin 冰心) (1900–1999)

75. ZHAO GUANGRONG 趙光榮 (Yingruo 英若) [Wang Fuquan 汪馥泉?? Wang Fuyan 汪馥炎??] (1899–1959 or 1890–1939/40)
Conflicting data. See Chapter Two.

76. WANG ZHONGQI 王仲麒 (Boxiang 伯祥) (1890–1975)
Historian. Published extensively on the Confucian classics.

77. MI RUZHUO 米汝卓 (1903–?)
Graduated from Beijing University in 1925. Continued his studies at Waseda. Performed various official functions in the Guomindang government. Published extensively in the early WXZB. Later published on economics.

78. CHEN WANGDAO 陳望道 (Renzhong 任重) (1890–1977)
1920 editor of New Youth. Translated the Communist Manifesto. Later chancellor of Fudan University.

79. LIU JINGYI 劉靖齋 (Dabai 大白) (1880–1932)
Famous modern poet and scholar of poetry.
Active writer and critic. Later held high posts in the PRC literary bureaucracy.

81. **ZHAO JINGSHEN 趙景深 (1902–1985)**
Teacher at various schools, editor at Kaiming Bookstore and other publishing houses. Edited *WXZB* from 1927 to 1929. Published extensively on *kunqu* theatre. Author of a great number of biographical pieces and anecdotes about modern Chinese writers.

82. **LI WUYU 李戊于 (Qingya 青崖) (1886–1969)**
Famous translator of French literature. Studied in Belgium.

83. **ZHANG JINFEN 張近芬 (Chongnan 崇南) [C.F. nüshi 女士] (?–1940)**
Early woman poet. Also famous as translator of Oscar Wilde’s work.

84. **GE YOUHUA 葛有華 (Youhua 又華) (?–?)**
Published collections of prose and poetry around 1930. The poetry collection carries a preface by no. 6, Ye Shaojun. No further data.

85. **LIU PEIHU 劉佩琥 (Huru 虎如) (?–?)**
Contributed to Association periodicals. Later disappeared from the literary scene.

86. **HOU YAO 侯曜 (Yixing 翼星) (1900–1945)**
Actor, dramatist and film director. Wrote five of the nine works in the Literary Association Popular Drama Series. Moved to Hong Kong in 1933 and to Singapore in 1935.

87. **GU YUXIU 顧毓琇 (Yiqiao 一樵) [Y.H. Ku] (b. 1902)**
Well known as fiction writer during the 1920s. Published a novelette in the Literary Association Series in 1923. Published many other works, including classical poetry, and is still publishing. Complete works published by Taiwan Commercial Press in 1961. Vice-minister of education (1938–1944) and later president of Central University in Chongqing. Moved to the USA in 1950 and has been living there ever since. Scientist. Graduate of MIT and emeritus professor of the University of Pennsylvania.
88. TANG CHENGBO 湯澄波 (1902–?)
Translated Maeterlinck for the Association Series. Taught at Lingnan University, Guangzhou. Member of Guangzhou branch of the Association. Later performed several high functions in the Guomindang government. Date of decease unknown.

89. YE QIFANG 葉啓芳 (Fenfen 芬分) (1899–1975)
Member of Guangzhou branch. Graduate from Yanjing University. Editor of various magazines. Later professor and head librarian at Zhongshan University.

90. ZHU XIANG 朱湘 (Ziyuan 子沅) (1904–1933)
Well-known poet. Studied in the USA. Contributed to Association periodicals and Association Series (also translations). Committed suicide in 1933.

91. YU XIANGSEN 余祥森 (Rensheng 詮生) (1897–?)
Worked at Commercial Press. Co-editor of WAZB. Published a list of Chinese transliterations of foreign names and places in 1925. Published a history of German literature in 1930. Worked for pro-Japanese Central China Reform Government (established 1938 in Nanjing, later merged with Wang Jingwei puppet government). Date of decease unknown.

92. LIANG ZONGDAI 梁宗岱 (Pugen 菁根) (1903–1983)
Well-known poet and translator of French poetry. Member of Guangzhou branch.

93. XU ZHANGXU 徐章垿 (Zhimo 志摩) (1897–1931)

94. LI XUGANG 李絮剛 (Yingrou 營柔) (?–?)
Contributed to XSYB in 1923. No further data.

95. YANG JINGCI 楊敬慈 (?–?)
Active as writer and translator in the 1920s. Contributed to XSYB and Morning News Supplement. No further data.
96. FAN ZHONGYUN 樊仲云 (Deyi 得一) (1899–?)
Writer and translator (of Japanese works). Worked at the Commercial Press and was one of the most active contributors to Association periodicals. Worked for the pro-Japanese government during the War of Resistance. Later lived in Hong Kong. Date of decease unknown.

97. ZHAI HUAN 瞿恒 (Yifu 毅夫) (1899–1974)
Address in 1924: Wisconsin, USA. Friend of no. 87, Gu Yiqiao. Wrote preface for the latter’s Violets and Jasmins [sic]. In later life professor at Nankai University, vice-minister of education (1945–1948) and professor at Taipei Normal University and Tamkang University.

98. GU PENGNIAN 顧彭年 (Pengyan 朋彥) (?–?)
Address in 1924: Commercial Press. Contributed to XSYB. No further data.

99. FU SHANGLIN 傅尚霖 (Dilei 迪雷) (?–?)

100. WU LIMO 吳立模 (Qiubai 秋白) (?–?)
Contributor to WXZB. No further data.

101. YU DAOQUAN 于道泉 (Boyuan 伯源) (?–?)
Published a translation from Tibetan into Chinese and English in 1930, together with Zhao Yuanren (Y.R. Chao). No further data.

102. SUN GUANGCE 孫光策 (Lianggong 傑工) (1894–1962)
Linguist and publicist. Contributed to some Association publications.

103. SHEN ZHONGJIU 沈仲九 (1886–1968)
Published in Xingqi pinglun 星期評論 (Weekly Review) in 1919. Studied in Japan and Germany. Educator and publicist. Later actively involved in the post-1945 Chen Yi regime in Taiwan.

104. WANG SHOUCONG 王守聰 (Yaheng 亞蘅)
In 1923 member of the Green Wave Society (lübo she 綠波社), in which Zhao Jingshen (no. 81) was also active. No further data.
105. YAN DUNYI 嚴敦易 (Yizhi 易之) (1905–1962)
Expert on classical literature. Contributor to Association publications.

106. XU MINGJI 徐名驥 (Tiaofu 諧孚) [Pushao 蒲梢] (1901–1981)
Zheng Zhenduo’s assistant at the Commercial Press. Active editor and publicist.

107. CHU BAOLI 褚保厘 (Dongjiao 東郊) (?–?)
Contributed to WXZB. No further data.

108. SU ZHAOLONG 蘇兆龍 (Yuequ 蹀衢) (?–?)
Active contributor to English-language magazines published in China. No further data.

109. CHEN FU 陳 (Xueping 雪屏) (1901–1999)
Professor at Beijing University and Southwest Associated University. Acting minister of education in 1948. Served as Secretary-General of the Executive Yuen on Taiwan, and as adviser to the President of the Republic of China.

110. GUI YU 桂裕 (Chenghua 澄華) [John Y. Kwei] (1903–?)
Published various works in Taiwan after the War of Resistance, among which A New Interpretation of Confucius (1991). No further data.

111. WU LIN 伍麟 (Jianchan 劍禪) (?–?)
No biographical or bibliographical data found.

112. CAO JINGHUA 曹靖華 (1897–1987)
Famous translator of Russian literature. Studied in Moscow. Later dean of Beijing University Russian department.

113. ZHANG DATIAN 張大田 (Yaquan 亞權) (1900–?)
Translator of Russian works. Later Chinese consul in various places in the Soviet Union.
114. GAN NAIGUANG 甘乃光 (1879–1957)
Originally taught economics at Lingnan University. Member of Guangzhou branch. Later became a Guomindang bureaucrat. Went to Taiwan after 1949.

115. “CHEN RONGYI” 陳榮宜
The name Chen Rongyi is the result of a printing error on the original 1924 list and should read Chen Shouyi 陳受宜. In an interview in Jia Zhifang 1985 (855–7), Liu Simu (member no. 119) lists nine, instead of ten members of the Guangzhou branch. He neither mentions a Chen Rongyi, nor no. 120, Chen Shourong, but only Chen Shouyi, whom he remembers as having been an assistant professor at the Chinese Department of Lingnan University, who later went to the USA. This is indeed correct. Chen Shouyi (Ch'en Shou-yi) (1899–?) was Professor of Chinese Culture at Pamona College when he published, in 1961, his Chinese Literature: A Historical Introduction. However, Chen Shourong, though not mentioned in Liu Simu’s recollection, may well have been a member of the Guangzhou branch after all. In the preface to Chinese Literature (Ch’en 1961:viii), Ch’en Shou-yi thanks his brother, Professor Shao Wing Chan of Stanford University. Shao Wing Chan is the Cantonese pronunciation of Shou Rong Chen, i.e. Chen Shourong, member no. 120.

116. SITU KUAN 司徒寛 (?-?)
Member of Guangzhou branch. Student and later teacher at Lingnan University. Dates unknown.

117. PAN QIFANG 潘啓芳 (?-?)
Member of Guangzhou branch. Student at Lingnan. Later lived in Hong Kong. Dates unknown.

118. CHEN RONGJIE 陳榮捷 [Wing-tsit Chan] (1901–1994)
Member of Guangzhou branch. Editor of Guangzhou Literature Trimonthly. Went to the USA, where he became well known as a scholar of Chinese philosophy under the name Wing-tsit Chan.

119. LIU SUIYUAN 劉燧元 (Simu 思慕) (1904–1985)
Member of Guangzhou branch. Well-known writer, translator and editor. Worked for various magazines and newspapers both before
and after 1949. Later became head of the Institute for World Literature at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

120. CHEN SHOURONG 陳受榮 [Shao Wing Chan]
See under no. 115, “Chen Rongyi”.

121. CHEN YI 陳逸 (Zuiyun 醉雲) (?–?)

122. WANG LUYAN 王魯彦 [Lu Yan 魯彥] (1901–1944)
Well-known novelist.

123. ZHAO XIZHANG 趙熙章 (?–?)
Contributed to XSYB in 1923. No further data.

124. PAN CHUITONG 潘垂統 (?–?)
Zhou Zuoren’s student at Shaoxing no. 5 middle school before 1917. Studied at Beijing University. Early contributor to XSYB. Later also contributed to WXZB. Dates unknown.

125. FENG REN 豐仁 (Zikai 子愷) (1898–1975)

126. GU JUNZHENG 顧均正 (1902–1980)

127. ZHANG XICHEN 章錫琛 (Kecun 客村) (1889–1969)
Well-known publisher. Founded Kaiming Bookstore in 1926.

128. HU XUEZHI 胡學志 (Zhongchi 仲持) (1900–1968)
Translator of English and German literature. Younger brother of member no. 48, Hu Yuzhi.
129. XU JIE 許杰 (1901–1992)
Well-known fiction writer. Later dean of Chinese department at East China Normal University.

130. WANG YIREN 王以仁 (1902–1926)
Bosom friend of no. 129, Xu Jie. Published two collections of short stories. Committed suicide over a lost love in 1926.

131. GAO JUNZHEN 高君箴 (Yunhe 蘊和) (1901–1985)
Translator of children’s literature. Translated a collection of children’s stories from various countries, together with her husband Zheng Zhenduo (no. 10), for the Literary Association Series.
APPENDIX B

STATISTICS ON LITERARY SOCIETIES, JOURNALS AND BOOKS

Table 1 shows numbers of literary societies founded in each year for the period 1920–1936, according to Fan Quan (1993). There are separate columns for societies active in Shanghai, in Beijing, and elsewhere.

Table 2 shows numbers for literary journals founded in each year of the period 1916–1936, based on four different sources: a) Xiandai wenxue qikan lianhe diaocha xiaozu (1961); b) the journal catalogue of the Beijing Library (Shanghai and Beijing journals only); c) the journal catalogue of the Beijing University Library; d) Tang Yuan (1988).

Table 3 shows numbers for literary journals in circulation during each year of the same period, based on the same four sources.

Journal statistics (Tables 2 and 3) for the years 1935–1936 based on the second and third sources are not entirely representative because I failed to count journals founded before but folding after 1936. Where numbers are not representative, this is indicated by adding an asterisk (*).

Table 4 shows numbers of literary works published in book form in each year for the period 1882–1936, based on Jia Zhifang & Yu Yuanguai 1993. There are separate columns for poetry, fiction, essay, drama and translation.
Table 1. Literary societies 1920–1936

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