

A DREAM OF RED HEROES: Myth in Chinese Socialist Realist Fiction

by

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B.A., University of Victoria, 1990

ACCEPTED  
A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of


MASTER OF ARTS


in the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming  
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PL2303

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PL 2303

2011

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ABSTRACT

In the following thesis I examine the question of the function and meaning of myth in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction. Using the theoretical approach suggested by Katerina Clark in her seminal work, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, I analyze the text from three Chinese Socialist Realist novels (*Hurricane*, *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, and *Red Crag*) to establish that Chinese Socialist Realist writers did, in fact, use a symbolic subtext to incorporate elements of official Chinese Communist Party mythology into the body of their works.

Following the establishment of this fact, I go on to demonstrate how Chinese writers encoded Marxist-Leninist ideology into a symbolic vocabulary that was recognizable to the Chinese people. By analyzing the text from the aforementioned novels I demonstrate how Chinese writers manipulated the informing values of traditional Chinese heroes to validate the elite status of the new Socialist Realist hero.

Once again, drawing on Clark's work, I use textual analysis to show that, as with its Soviet antecedents, Chinese Socialist Realist fiction conforms to a "master plot" that recapitulates the resolution of the "spontaneity/consciousness" dialectic. Using the myth of the hero's journey as a general framework Socialist Realist writers drew on their own experiences of the revolution to particularize the stages of historical development outlined by Marxist-Leninist ideology.

In the case of Chinese Socialist Realist fiction, it must be borne in mind that Socialist Realist literary doctrine was a Soviet invention, thus Chinese writers were called upon not only to transcode what was, essentially, an alien ideology, but to sinify it as well, i.e., to encode it into a symbolic vocabulary both recognizable and believable to the Chinese people. Beginning with a textual analysis of Zhou Libo's novel *Hurricane* I demonstrate how Chinese Socialist Realist writers accomplished this task by manipulating the informing scheme of traditional popular heroes (e.g., Liu Bei, Zhang Fei, and Song Jiang) so that they came to embody the values of the new Maoist-Leninist social order.

Through a textual analysis of the three above named novels it becomes apparent that the symbolic or mythic subtext, while subordinate to the principal mimetic text, was critical to articulating the values that validated the Chinese Communist Party's world view, as well as legitimizing its exercise of authority. For this reason in the following thesis I have argued that Chinese Socialist Realist fiction played an extremely important role in the formation of modern Chinese culture.

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## INTRODUCTION:

In every culture myths provide a framework for codifying the values of a particular age; they explain the order of things, and the most powerful myths legitimize the ruling elite's exercise of authority. When revolutions occur they overturn not only social and political institutions, but also the myths from which those institutions derive legitimacy. Nevertheless, no matter how radical the revolution the new myths that emerge incorporate key elements from their antecedents; in this way cultures maintain a sense of continuity in the midst of change.

So it was in Republican China (1912-1949); the values of Marxism-Leninism challenged the very myths that defined Chinese culture and shaped the collective identity of the people. Because the new value system was alien to all but a minority of educated revolutionaries it had to be encoded into a language that used selected elements from the symbolic vocabulary of traditional Chinese culture. Writers manipulated the informing values of traditional heroes so that they came to embody the ideals of the new socialist man; the Zhang Feis, Song Jiangs, and Wu Song of traditional popular fiction were transformed into the Zhao Yulins, Shao Jianbos, and Xu Yunfengs of the Maoist-Leninist revolutionary age.

A formula for encoding Marxism-Leninism into a Chinese framework was not easily arrived at; the debate over form and content in literature began during the May Fourth era (1919-1927) and continued well into the 1960s. While the influence of Marxist ideology is evident in much of the writing of the New Culture movement, it was not until after the 1927 KMT purge of the Communists that leftist writers began "determined efforts...to seize leadership in the world of letters."<sup>1</sup> Both 1928 and 1929 were marked by strident polemical debates within the leftist camp that weakened rather than strengthened the position of the Communists. In 1930, in an effort to overcome the factionalism endemic to the Shanghai literary scene (the centre of the New Culture movement), members of the now defunct Creation and Sun Societies came together to form the League of Chinese Left-wing Writers. As Hsia points out, this "proved to be a wise choice: upon the formation of the League, Communist dominance of Chinese letters became a reality."<sup>2</sup>

While leftist writers in Shanghai consolidated their control over the ideological content of literature during the 1920s and 1930s, there was only a tenuous connection

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<sup>1</sup>C.T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971) p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 125.

between the urban-based cultural movement and the military struggle taking place in the countryside. As Mao pointed out in his introductory remarks at the *Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art* (1942):

The revolutionary movement in literature and art, which developed considerably during the Civil War period, had the same general direction as the Red Army struggles of that time, but there was no coordination between them in their actual work and each fought as an independent army.<sup>3</sup>

However, following the Japanese invasion of Shanghai in 1937, many leftist writers fled to Yan'an where, for the first time, they came directly under the control of the Communist Party. Influenced by Lenin's views Mao advocated a highly utilitarian role for literature that completely rejected the idea of "art for art's sake" held by many of the May Fourth writers. In his *Talks*, he asserted that:

Art for art's sake, art that stands above class and party, and fellow-travelling or politically independent art do not exist in reality. In a society composed of classes and parties, art obeys both class and party and it must naturally obey the political demands of its class and party, and the revolutionary task of a given revolutionary age; any deviation is a deviation from the masses' basic need. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; as Lenin said, they are "a screw in the whole machine," and therefore, the party's work in literature and

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<sup>3</sup>Bonnie S. McDougall, *Mao Zedong's "Talks At The Yan'an Conference On Literature and Art": A Translation of the 1943 Text With Commentary* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1980), p. 58.

art occupies a definite, assigned position within the party's revolutionary work as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the newly arrived writers bridled under the limitations placed on their artistic freedom; a situation that gave rise to serious dissention, and brought the debate over form and content in literature into sharper focus.<sup>5</sup> Mao stressed that it was the task of writers to create a new proletarian literature (*wuchanjieji wenxue*) accessible to the masses, but he failed to offer any clear definition of what was meant by this term.<sup>6</sup>

It should be borne in mind that Mao's *Talks* were delivered during the first Rectification Campaign (*zhengfeng yundong*)<sup>7</sup> and, following a period of "socialist re-education," most of the Yan'an writers were sent to the countryside to acquaint themselves with the workers, peasants, and soldiers who were their target audience. In accordance with Mao's highly utilitarian view of literature and in light of widespread illiteracy, the novel held

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<sup>4</sup>Ibidem, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Gregor Benton, "The Yanan Literary Opposition," *New Left Review* (July-August 1975), pp. 93-106; Cyril Birch, "Fiction of the Yanan Period," *The China Quarterly*, 1960, 4, pp. 1-12; Merle Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), pp. 18-50; David Holm, "The Literary Rectification in Yan'an", in Kubin & Wagner eds., *Essays in Modern Chinese Literature* (Bochum, FRG: Brockmeyer, 1982), pp. 272-308.

<sup>6</sup>McDougall, op. cit., (see above, note 4) p. 76.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Mark Selden, *The Yanan Way in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

little prominence during the early and mid-1940s; wall newspapers, simple forms of reportage, and *yangge* were the most common expressions of the new proletarian culture. It was not until the 1948 publication of *The Sun Shines Over the Sanggan River* (*Taiyang zhao zai sangganhe shang*), by Ding Ling, and *Hurricane* (*Baofeng zhouyu*), by Zhou Libo, that the novel began to come into its own in "liberated" China. As the Communists consolidated their victory over the Guomindang, the focus of Party propaganda shifted from socialist revolution to socialist construction, and the novel was adopted as an appropriate vehicle for dramatizing the radical transformation that was taking place throughout the country.

During the period between Mao Zedong's *Talks* in 1942 and the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the Communists' struggle for survival left no time to refine literary doctrine, and this omission led to the dogmatization of Mao's utilitarian view of literature.<sup>8</sup> In summarizing developments in literature and art at the First National Congress of Writers and Artists (1949), Zhou Yang, echoing Mao's views,<sup>9</sup> focused on the works of writers who

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<sup>8</sup>D.W. Fokkema, *Literary Doctrine In China And Soviet Influence: 1956-1960* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), p. 20.

<sup>9</sup>McDougall, *op. cit.*, (see above, note 4) pp. 68-74.

had succeeded in popularizing (*dazhonghua*) literature, i.e., writing in a language that appealed to the broadest possible audience.

It was not until the Second National Congress of Writers and Artists (1953) that Zhou Yang, citing a number of Soviet novels as examples, specifically used the term Socialist Realism to describe the Party's literary doctrine. The adoption of this particular doctrine served much the same function in China that it did in the Soviet Union after 1934; it consolidated the Party's control over literary output. Far from being an artistic consideration, the Chinese Communist Party adopted Socialist Realism as a matter of function; it was perceived as the most effective form for promoting the Party's message of revolution and socialist construction.

In the Soviet Union, Socialist Realist literary doctrine was based on a canon of works that manifested, to varying degrees, three characteristics. First, the works extolled the values of Marxism-Leninism, their embodiment in the Communist Party, and the Party's infallible power to lead the people to a socialist utopian State. Second, the works had to be accessible to the masses, that is, written in a language using the vocabulary and speech patterns of ordinary people. Third, and most important, the works had

to be "party-minded" (*partiinosť*'), i.e., they had to be written in accordance with Party policy, and articulate the Party's orthodox Marxist-Leninist world view.

Paradoxically, Socialist Realist literary doctrine was both highly rigid and vaguely open-ended; the rigidity derived from Party orthodoxy, while the open-endedness derived from the lack of defining principles beyond the three characteristics cited above. Theoretically, the Socialist Realist novel could take any form as long as it incorporated the requisite characteristics. In reality, however, the demand that works articulate both optimism and "party-mindedness" necessitated the creation of a particular type of hero, one who recapitulates, through his own narrative development, the historical stages of Marxist-Leninist social transformation. He articulates not only the reality of "what is" but also "what ought to be."<sup>10</sup> This adds a dimension to the narrative that exceeds the normally defined parameters of realism. As formulated by A.A. Zhdanov, Stalin's Commissar of Literature, Socialist Realism is characterized by a fundamental contradiction between two mutually exclusive narrative modalities, i.e., Socialist Realism is

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<sup>10</sup>Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) p. 37.

a combination of the most matter-of-fact everyday reality with the most heroic prospects.<sup>11</sup>

At issue here is the contradiction between depicting matter-of-fact reality (i.e., the mimetic mode) and, at the same time, depicting an idealization of that reality (i.e., the utopian or mythic mode). The fundamental difference between these two modes is one of temporality; the mimetic narrative depicts an incomplete or imperfect world that develops in an open-ended temporal framework, whereas the mythic narrative depicts a perfected world that exists only in the closed temporal framework of legend.<sup>12</sup>

The contradictory nature of orthodox Socialist Realist literary doctrine clearly indicates that works of fiction written in this style are meant to serve two distinctly different functions. The mimetic narrative is an instructional text that depicts social transformation as seen through the optic of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and informs readers of the correct method, as defined by current Party policy, for affecting social change. This shapes the language of the narrative, rendering it highly didactic; even the most artistically crafted examples of Socialist

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<sup>11</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, (see above, note 10), p. 34.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibidem*, pp. 37-39.

Realist fiction lapse, at times, into the sterile vocabulary of Party rhetoric.

The mythic narrative, on the other hand, is used to codify the symbols of revolutionary lore, and to generate the official mythology of the new socialist state. The hero in the mythic mode re-enacts the rite of passage from pre-socialist to new socialist man. Clark defines this rite of passage in terms of the "spontaneity/consciousness" dialectic.<sup>13</sup> The mythic hero in Socialist Realist fiction is heroic specifically because he resolves this dialectic. Within a Chinese context the mythic hero, through his rite of passage from "spontaneity" to "consciousness," rejects the traditional hierarchy of meaning, overcomes the extreme individualism characteristic of the May Fourth era, and subordinates his individual identity to the collective identity of the Communist Party and the State.

Heroic acts in the mythic mode particularize the abstract values of Maoist-Leninist revolution<sup>14</sup> by articulating the process of individual rather than collective

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<sup>13</sup>Clark, op. cit., (see above, note 10),p. 15. "In this dialectical model, 'consciousness' is taken to mean actions or political activities that are controlled, disciplined, and guided by politically aware bodies. 'Spontaneity,' on the other hand, means actions that are not guided by complete political awareness and are either sporadic, uncoordinated, even anarchic (such as wildcat strikes, mass uprisings, etc.), or can be attributed to the workings of vast impersonal historical forces rather than to deliberate actions."

<sup>14</sup>Hereafter I will use the term Maoist-Leninist. Like Lenin, Mao adhered to the belief in a "vanguard" that would lead the way in building a socialist state. The idea of the "vanguard" conceived by Lenin and adapted by Mao is a central feature of Socialist Realist mythology, and for this reason I make a distinction here between Marxist-Leninist and Maoist-Leninist world views.

transformation. While the actions of the mythic hero manifest themselves in the external or realist world, the process of transformation itself is primarily symbolic and, as such, is articulated in symbolic language. However, it must be borne in mind that the symbolic text is always subordinate to the principal mimetic text and, when a novel's *denouement* occurs, it does so in the mimetic mode. The fact that the hero achieves full heroic status only in the mimetic mode reflects the ultimate goal of the hero's rite of passage, the resolution of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. In Chinese Socialist Realist fiction, then, truly heroic characters are able to translate the power of symbolic transformation into acts that have significance in the concrete world of Maoist-Leninist social revolution.<sup>15</sup>

When, in 1953, Zhou Yang pronounced Socialist Realism to be China's orthodox literary doctrine he also revived the debate on national forms (*minzu xingshi*).<sup>16</sup> Thus, creating

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<sup>15</sup>Mao Tse-tung, "Myth And Reality," in *Mao Tse-Tung On Art And Literature* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1960), p. 5. "Although stories of endless metamorphoses in mythology or nursery tales can delight people because they imaginatively embody man's conquest of the forces of nature and, moreover, the best mythology possesses, as Marx put it 'eternal charm', yet mythology is not based on the specific conditions of actual contradictions and therefore does not scientifically reflect reality. That is to say, in mythology or nursery tales the aspects that constitute contradiction have only a fancied identity, not a real one."

<sup>16</sup>Wylie, op. cit., (see above, note 2) pp. 181-182. "Indeed, theorists like Chou Yang and Ch'en Po-ta had been debating the CCP's cultural policies since the mid-1930s, and both had become prominent cultural spokesmen after the move to Yenan. In particular, Ch'en had a great deal to say about the relationship between content and form in art and literature, although he consistently argued that, provided the political content was correct, a good deal of variety in form could be tolerated.... The educated population could be reached through essays and novels; the illiterate peasant masses

a truly Chinese variant of Socialist Realist fiction was more complex than the mere replication of models taken from the Soviet canon; it involved re-informing the values of the traditional Chinese hero. Turning to such Ming dynasty classics as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo yanyi)* and *Outlaws of the Marsh (Shuihu zhuan)*, writers borrowed selected icons and tropes to create a new Socialist Realist hero who gave every appearance of being a traditional *hao han* (gallant), but with one very important difference; the values articulated were those of Maoism-Leninism rather than of traditional Confucianism.

How Chinese writers created the new Socialist Realist hero by encoding Maoist-Leninist values into a Chinese symbolic framework is the focus of the following analysis. It must be borne in mind that the element of myth in Socialist Realist fiction is subordinate to that of mimesis; the mythic narrative, as will be shown, is clearly a function of the subtext, and exists only within the context of the principal mimetic text. However, the subordinate

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could be reached by storytellers and popular drama. The correct political content would inevitably lead to the use of proper cultural forms designed to appeal to the particular audience that was under consideration.

Above all, the political line taken in the cultural field must be the correct one. Ch'en, Chou, and others agreed on this, but their view was in sharp contrast to that of people like Hu Feng and Feng Hsueh-feng. These latter believed that form had to determine content—that is, that modern political ideas could not be transmitted in traditional cultural forms because the forms would inevitably corrupt the contents. Therefore it was necessary, they argued, to raise the cultural level of the masses by encouraging them to appreciate the new cultural forms of the West and by discouraging the continued use of China's traditional cultural forms....Gradually, the position taken by Hu and Feng gave way to the ideas of Ch'en and Chou, which eventually came to represent Mao's own views on the subject."

function of the mythic subtext does not diminish the importance of myth in the age of socialist construction. On the contrary, the new Socialist Realist hero was recognizable precisely because the mythic hero's rite of passage created a symbolic bridge between the traditional social order and the Maoist-Leninist system of values.

Through an analysis of Socialist Realist texts it becomes apparent that the functional dualism of the orthodox literary doctrine necessitated a corresponding duality in the narrative structure of the novel itself. This fundamental duality shapes every aspect of the Socialist Realist novel, including the construction of the hero himself. In theory, all positive characters in the Socialist Realist novel are one, i.e., their individual identities are subsumed within the context of the Communist Party's mythic collective identity. In practice, however, the temporal contradiction between the "novel" and "epic" modes<sup>17</sup> dictates that the hero cannot logically function in both the realist and mythic modes simultaneously. Socialist Realist writers overcome this problem in one of three ways: i) they split composite characters into realist and mythic aspects (e.g. Xiao Xiang and Xiao Wang in *Hurricane*); ii) they pair

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<sup>17</sup>Clark, op. cit., (see above, note 10), pp. 39-39.

characters that functioned in tandem (e.g., Shao Jianbo and Gao Bo in *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* (*Linhai xueyuan*); iii) positive characters assume heroic status through rhetorical association with key Party icons (e.g. Xu Yunfeng, and Cheng Gang in *Red Crag* (*Hong Yan*). Whichever method is employed the effect is always the same; the positive hero is a stylized creation that is represented through the use of a highly formulaic set of epithets.<sup>18</sup> This process of stylization is carried to such an extreme that the hero in both the realist and mythic modes is totally lacking in interior development. Consequently, events and actions that occur do so exclusively in the foreground in a manner reminiscent of the Homeric narrative.<sup>19</sup>

This process of stylization results directly from the fundamental duality that marks all Socialist Realist fiction. Both the mimetic and mythic aspects of the hero are representations of a particular set of characteristics (i.e., the key signifiers of "consciousness" and "spontaneity") that have been reduced to their most simplified or abstract formulation. Consequently, both the mimetic and mythic aspects of the hero are recognizable

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<sup>18</sup>Ibidem, pp. 65-66.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar", in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953) pp. 3-23.

and convey meaning only within the context of official Party myths; thus, it is the myth of the red hero that is the key to deciphering the value system that legitimizes the Maoist-Leninist vision of society.

Like the hero in Socialist Realist fiction, the myths themselves are highly stylized; the symbolic vocabulary employed to convey meaning is reduced to an absolute minimum. The image of the rising sun, for example, signifies not only the positive value of the Communist Party—it is a representation of the Party itself. The Party is the "light", it is the embodiment of hope, of the present becoming the future; most importantly it is the ultimate manifestation of "consciousness". Likewise, the absence of light (i.e., darkness) is a manifestation of "spontaneity". The transformation from spontaneity to consciousness is the central theme of the Socialist Realist novel. The resolution of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic is represented through a formula that Clark identifies as the master plot.<sup>20</sup> The ephemera of "matter-of-fact everyday reality" varies from novel to novel but the master plot remains unchanged.

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<sup>20</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, (see above, note 10) p. 6. "The master plot is the one constant that links most novels of the Stalin period [the variant of Socialist Realism adopted by the Chinese Communist Party was essentially a Stalinist formulation] and, to a lesser extent, those of the post-Stalin era as well. I would go so far as to say that it *is* Socialist Realism: in order for a Soviet [Chinese] novel to be Socialist Realist, it must replicate the master plot."

To examine how the master plot was encoded into a Chinese symbolic vocabulary, as well as how symbolic values were manipulated after the process of encoding was completed, I will examine three novels: *Hurricane* (1948), *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* (1957), and *Red Crag* (1961). I have chosen these particular novels for a number of specific reasons. First, each of the novels is a key book in the canon of Chinese Socialist Realist fiction. Second, each is set during the period between the collapse of the Japanese occupation and the founding of the People's Republic in late 1949. This places them squarely within the "golden age" of the Chinese revolution; a time that lends itself to mythologizing acts of revolutionary heroism and, to mythologizing history itself. Third, each illustrates one of the three methods (referred to above) used to bridge the temporal duality inherent in Socialist Realist literary doctrine. Fourth, considered together, they illustrate the process or movement from encoding the new system of values to formularizing the symbolic vocabulary of Maoist-Leninist ideology.

The following analysis is meant, i) to demonstrate how Chinese Socialist Realist writers encoded the mythology of the new socialist State (Zhou Libo's novel *Hurricane*); ii) to demonstrate how writers manipulated symbols to meet the

changing political needs of the Party (Qu Bo's novel *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* and Luo Guangbin's & Yang Yiyang's novel *Red Crag*); iii) to decode the myths of China's Socialist Realist era. It is, therefore, important to understand what is meant by the term myth. In the interest of clarity I have used the following as my working definition:

A purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions, or events, and embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena.<sup>21</sup>

Given that Maoist-Leninist mythology represents a secularization of myth, the element of the supernatural is replaced by that of the extraordinary, where extraordinary is defined in terms of the master plot, that is, in terms of the resolution of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. In fact, the depiction of the Communist Party in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction represents a type of secular doxology. However, the symbolic value of the Party and of its official system of myths is grounded in the concrete reality of social transformation. Hence, the "red" hero in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction does not articulate a supernatural hierarchy of meaning, but the extraordinary reality of Maoist-Leninist revolution.

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<sup>21</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 1889.

## Chapter I: *Hurricane (Baofeng Zhouyu)* I to IV

To appreciate the value of Chinese Socialist Realist fiction it is necessary to understand the mythopoeic function of literature in China during the Maoist-Leninist revolutionary epoch. To date, Western critical analysis of Chinese Socialist Realist fiction has focused on the principal, mimetic text to the exclusion of the symbolic subtext.<sup>22</sup> While the mimetic text depicts "matter-of-fact everyday reality" seen through the optic of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the symbolic subtext depicts the epic reality of myth: of heroic deeds, ritual transformation, and the paradoxical existence of a yet to be realized socialist utopian State.

In no other work of Chinese Socialist Realist fiction is the element of myth more fully developed than in Zhou Libo's novel *Hurricane*. Of particular interest is the method Zhou uses to accommodate the modal contradiction that arises from incorporating both mimetic and mythic narratives within a single, overarching framework. He "resolves" this contradiction by establishing parallel narratives that develop synchronously yet remain separate throughout the

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<sup>22</sup>Cf. Cyril Birch, ed., *Chinese Communist Fiction* (New York: Praeger, 1963); C.T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (see above, note 1); Joe C. Huang, *Heroes and Villains in Communist China* (New York: Pica Press, 1973); Bonnie McDougall, ed., *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts in the People's Republic of China 1949-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

novel. To sustain this duality Zhou creates complementary heroes, one that functions exclusively in the mimetic mode (Team Leader Xiao) and one that functions exclusively in the mythic mode (Zhao Yulin). When reading *Hurricane* it quickly becomes apparent that the heroes in Zhou's novel are not complete characters in the Western sense; instead, they are aspects of a larger composite character, that is, one in which internal and external reality are integrated within a single literary persona. By splitting a single character into its mimetic and mythic components Zhou creates two highly stylized heroes who move toward a shared *denouement* within the frameworks of two mutually exclusive temporal modalities.

From the outset of this analysis it must be borne in mind that there is a clearly defined functional hierarchy in Chinese Socialist Realist literary doctrine; in all cases the mimetic narrative, the function of which is to educate and to entertain serves as the principal text. Likewise, the hero in the mimetic mode always serves as the novel's principal protagonist. The mythic narrative, on the other hand, is a function of the symbolic subtext and is always subordinate to the mimetic text. At the same time it must be understood that the values articulated by Team Leader Xiao are comprehensible specifically because Zhao Yulin

serves as a vehicle for encoding them into a symbolic vocabulary recognizable to the reading public. Because the process of encoding occurs in the mythic narrative, an analysis of the subtext is critical to understanding the information begin encoded.

### Textual Analysis

*Hurricane* is set in Heilongjiang Province. The War of Resistance has ended and the Chinese Communist Party has established nominal control in the region. Despite the presence of the Eighth Route Army, rural villages are still largely controlled by the traditional landlord class. The peasants of Yuanmao still live in fear of the tyrant, Han Number Six, and of the Nationalist-affiliated bandits who operate out of the nearby mountains.

It is the summer of 1946. A Communist Party Work Team arrives in Yuanmao to initiate the land reform movement. The mimetic narrative focuses on the process of collective transformation: the empowerment of the peasant class, the overthrow of the rural landlord elite, and the establishment of a new social order based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. The mythic subtext focuses on these same issues but does so from the perspective of the individual rather than from that of the collective.

One early morning in July, the sunrise was daubing the green fields of maize and gaoliang with a transparent film of gold. The dew on the bean leaves and vegetables glistened like a myriad of silver beads. Greyish wisps of smoke were curling up from the yellowish house-tops in the villages beside the highway. Here and there, droves of cattle were winding their way to the pastures laying farther beyond (p. 1).

The opening lines of *Hurricane* depict a rich, pastoral scene. The light issuing forth from the rising sun paints the landscape in red, green, silver, and gold. Fields ripe with maize, gaoliang, and vegetables suggest a landscape of abundance. Wisps of smoke curling from house-tops attest to the fact that the peasants have food to eat. The image of cattle moving out to pasture further reinforces the idea of plenty.

Using images taken from China's traditional symbolic vocabulary, Zhou establishes the first in a series of symbolic tableaux, (i.e., static representations in which individual images are combined to form discrete symbolic units), the values of which have been skilfully manipulated to reinforce the political rhetoric of Maoist-Leninist revolution. Considered as a whole, the series forms a coherent system for encoding the values of the new social order. The image of the sun rising on a bountiful landscape is the most powerful icon in the Party's symbolic lexicon,

and by having the Work Team emerge from this symbol Zhou reinforces one of the central myths of the Chinese Communist Party. Like the sun whose radiating light animates the landscape and sustains all life, the Party radiates the revolutionary consciousness that alone will empower the peasant class to transform feudal China into a modern socialist utopia.

Having established the value of the Party/Sun icon, Zhou switches from the symbolic to the mimetic mode. The cart in which the Work Team is riding becomes stuck in the mud. The driver climbs down onto the road to investigate.

At this moment a rubber-tyred carriage drawn by four horses came up from behind. Seeing a cart stuck before him, the driver veered to one side and whisked over a puddle, bespattering the carter on the face hands and clothes. The former turned around and gave the latter a look and a grin, and drove away triumphantly. Old Sun wiped his face with his sleeve, muttering:

"Damn you unseeing eyes!"

"Whose carriage is that?" asked one of the men on the cart. He was medium-sized and in his thirties. Old Sun recognized him as Team Leader Xiao, the man who had come the previous night for his cart, and answered vaguely:

"Who else would have such a fine carriage? Did you see those roan horses of his, so strong and sleek? When they gallop their hooves scarcely seem to touch the ground!" (p. 2).

There are two elements in the above passage worth noting. The transaction between Old Sun and the unnamed carriage driver establishes the underlying class contradiction that animates the entire novel. Old Sun's inferior social status is clearly defined by the nature of the transaction itself; the material basis for his subordinate status is reinforced by Zhou's use of rubber tires and well bred horses as signifiers of class status.

The fact that the Work Team is travelling in Old Sun's "dilapidated cart" links the Party to China's rural underclass and, by inference, suggests that the Party acts solely in its interest. It is, in fact, the Chinese Communist Party that is the hero in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction; personified in *Hurricane* by the mimetic hero, Team Leader Xiao. Most significant about Zhou's depiction of Xiao Xiang is the fact that it is an example of characterization in its most attenuated form. All that the reader will ever really know about Team Leader Xiao is that he is middle aged, of medium stature, has close cropped hair, and adheres unwaveringly to Party principles. This minimal depiction results both from the structure and function of the mimetic hero. As a component of a larger composite character there is a limited range of attributes that can logically be ascribed to him. Team Leader Xiao is a function of the

Party's collective or extrapersonal identity; thus his depiction is grounded in concrete social action. Team Leader Xiao is totally lacking in interior space or, in Booth's words, he exhibits "no revealed depths."<sup>23</sup> The mimetic hero represents one of the Party's faceless rank and file cadres and his depiction is kept as general as possible; by limiting his identifying characteristics, membership in the Party is not associated with any one particular type, thus suggesting that the Party, if not [in fact] universally accessible, stands on the side of the peasant masses.

To maintain the integrity of both the mimetic and symbolic narratives, Team Leader Xiao requires a surrogate in the symbolic mode; this role is fulfilled by Little Wang, a member of the Work Team.

"Any children?" asked the team leader.  
The carter chuckled and answered with  
deliberation.

"How can a carter have children?"

"Why not?"

Shaking his whip in the air, he gave the  
reason:

"I beat good animals — I've a bad heart  
— how can I have children?"

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<sup>23</sup>Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 9.

"How old is your wife?" chimed in a young man among the group whom everybody called Little Wang.

"Forty-nine."

"Then there's no hurry," Wang pursued with a grin. "She will yet bless you with offspring. Eighty-eight, not too late."

A roar of mirth went up, Old Sun himself joining in the laughter. To show what a good driver he was, he set his horses galloping like the wind (p. 4).

The entire tone of this exchange between Little Wang and Old Sun is markedly different than that between Team Leader Xiao and the carter. In this simple, humorous banter Zhou links Little Wang to China's pre-revolutionary symbolic system by having him invoke a traditional fertility rhyme that incorporates the highly auspicious sign of double eights. It is through this type of symbolic linkage that Zhou manipulates the values of key cultural signifiers, thus encoding the social values of Maoist-Leninist ideology into a Chinese symbolic vocabulary.

On their way to village the Work Team passes by a building that served as a headquarters for the Japanese military. Old Sun recounts that once the Japanese had fled the peasants from Yuanmao came and divided up the spoils.

A couple of weeks later, Han Number Six went about trying to set up an armed unit and declaring that he had orders from the Guomindang government to take

charge of all the property left behind by the Japanese military. Those who refused to surrender their things were tied up in Han's big courtyard and beaten black and blue. Han himself carted away all of the booty—horses, guns, bolts of cloth, clothes, pots and pans, and all the rest (p. 5).

In this brief passage Zhou introduces Han Number Six, the novel's central antagonist, and firmly establishes his negative value. He is immediately identified as a Guomindang agent who maintains his hold on the peasants through the exercise of terror. When questioned more closely about Han, Old Sun is reluctant to speak out. Team Leader Xiao encourages the carter not to be afraid, pointing out that with the Work Team he is among friends.

"Afraid? I'm not afraid of anything. I say what I like. As for Han Number Six, well, he's so-so. Look at that corn over there." The carter was drawing a red herring across the track. "It's so short that a sow can reach and eat without lifting her forelegs. That's thanks to the bandits too. It's going to be a poor harvest."

Team Leader Xiao said no more about Han Number Six, but shifted the conversation to the bandits.

"Did you say the bandits raided Yuanmao?"

"I'll say they did. They came twice in May. They stood on guard during the day, and ran wild at night. Forced women to take off their trousers and stand there while they looked their fill. The beasts!" (p. 5).

Following his initial observation, Old Sun's remarks to Team Leader Xiao have nothing to do with Yuanmao's crops; instead, Zhou uses this exchange to introduce two additional elements, one mimetic and one symbolic, that are associated with negative characters throughout the novel. Within the context of the mimetic narrative, Old Sun keys on the bandits' licentious behaviour; of the many details Zhou could have chosen to portray the occupation of Yuanmao this particular detail focuses on the lawlessness and depravity of the old society. The soldiers of the Eighth Route Army, on the other hand, are well disciplined and transgressions against the "people" are severely punished. This model of behaviour laid the foundation for a myth about the benign character of the People's Liberation Army that endured until the Tian'anmen massacre in the Spring of 1989.

Within the context of the symbolic narrative, the bandits' defilement of Yuanmao's women occurs at night, thus they are identified with the powers of darkness. By associating the Han Number Six and the bandits with the "dark realm," Zhou employs a simple but powerful symbolic convention that plays on the *yin-yang* duality at the heart of traditional Confucian thought. Just as the Party is the ultimate manifestation of all that is vital, light, and life sustaining, Han Number Six, along with his agents, is

wholly and irredeemably a black character; this is true of all antagonists in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction.

It is important to understand that Han's behaviour sets him beyond the limits of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic; his crimes are beyond redemption, and "justice" is served only by his death.<sup>24</sup> In China's new socialist society death is the single acceptable fate for the masters of the old social order, and it is Zhou's responsibility to depict a character whose eventual execution evokes in the reader a feeling of satisfaction. Zhou accomplishes this both by invoking and manipulating the values of key cultural signifiers so that the sociopolitical act of executing members of China's rural landlord class is supported by a "moral" justification. Ultimately, the moral justification for all political acts derives from the underlying myths that propel them; in this context the information encoded by Zhou in the subtext is critical to establishing the underlying moral logic that legitimizes the characters, events, and outcome of the mimetic narrative.

As the cart continues on its way to Yuanmao, Team Leader Xiao looks around him at the fields bordering the road.

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<sup>24</sup>Cf. Mao Tsetung, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," in *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), Vol. 5, p. 384.

He looked at the fields on either side, which showed signs of neglect. The maize leaves were beginning to turn yellow before they had filled out. The wheat was submerged in a sea of grass and weeds were growing apace (p. 6).

This landscape stands in stark contrast to the highly imagistic one depicted in the novel's opening paragraph. Drawn in the flat, unembellished style of the mimetic narrative, the above passage is wholly lacking in the rich symbolic imagery that marks the earlier landscape. The images of withering maize leaves and weed-choked stalks of wheat depict mundane (as opposed to epic) reality, and it is within the context of this landscape that the mimetic hero resolves the "spontaneity/ consciousness" dialectic by raising the peasants' class consciousness, fostering class solidarity, and ultimately guiding the peasants to overthrow Han Number six.

Interestingly, antagonists in Socialist Realist fiction incorporate the mimetic and mythic modes within a single persona. In the mimetic mode the crimes committed by Han Number Six have an impact in the cause and effect world of "everyday matter-of-fact reality." At the same time, Han's crimes are not new, that is, they are not of his own invention, but replicate a pattern of inhumanity that is as much myth as reality. Han's crimes against the peasants of Yuanmao are, therefore, functions of myth in the sense that

they replicate a pattern of behaviour that arose from the power hierarchy that sustained the old social order. The character of Han Number Six, therefore, is depicted both through actions that signify in the mimetic mode, and through symbolic images that are substantially mythological. This duality is evident in the description of the Han mansion. As the Work Team arrives in the village a "long-necked man with a small head" questions Old Sun then runs off in the direction of a nearby compound.

He reached a high black doorway, flung open the wicket, and scampered through it. This strange behaviour was noticed by Team Leader Xiao. The doorway looked like a four-pillar pavilion with a dragon shaped ridge, the door flaps encased in iron and studded with nails. The mansion was set in the middle of paddy fields and vegetable plots. Its high walls were skirted by willows and a moat, and from their four corners towered turrets from which pitch black gun slots looked out, like ogres' eyes, over thatched huts and cart tracks in the village, and all the horses, carts, and passers-by. The wicket door was left open by the long-necked man, and through it could be seen the courtyard and buildings inside. The north wing was topped with a tiled roof and its brightly polished windows shone. A flock of white geese were waddling about the courtyard (p. 7).

All of the elements in the first section of this passage are symbolic, beginning with the image of the black door, which immediately links the mansion to the black-

white, light-dark, *yin-yang* dichotomy established earlier. The image of the "four-pillar pavilion with a dragon shaped ridge" evokes not only the power associated with traditional ruling class architecture, but the subterranean world of dragons as well. The image of the "door flaps encased in iron and studded with nails" conveys a sense of menace that takes on a mythic dimension when reinforced by the image of "pitch black gun slots" looking out over the village "like ogres' eyes."

The symbol rich imagery of the mythic narrative shifts subtly into the mimetic mode when Zhou begins to describe the more mundane reality of tiled roofs, polished windows, and a courtyard filled with geese. The images in both the mythic and mimetic narrative modes act as signifiers, yet they do so in very different ways; Han's tiled roof does not hold the same value as the black door, nor do polished windows hold the same value as gun slots like ogres' eyes.

What must be firmly established at the start is that myth is a system of communication, that it is a message. This allows one to perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *A Barthes Reader*, ed., Susan Sontag (New York: Noonday Press, 1990), pp. 93-149.

The tiled roof, polished windows, and geese signify Han's wealth and class status, but they convey no more complex value. The images of the black door, dragon-shaped ridge, and ogres' eyes, on the other hand, evoke deeper cultural and psychological values that refer to a higher order of meaning. In the above passage Zhou tells us about Han's economic status, at the same time revealing that the mansion itself is a symbol, that it has a specific value within the context of the mythic narrative.

In the first chapter of *Hurricane*, Zhou establishes the basic framework of the novel; he encodes the informing value of the Party's primary icon, articulates the class contradiction that animates the mimetic narrative, introduces the principal hero, and sets the stage for the confrontation between good and evil. The remainder of the novel elaborates on the themes established by Zhou in this chapter: the positive value of the Chinese Communist Party based on its identification with and support for the peasant class; the negative value of the traditional social order, and the existence of a mythic socialist utopia.

In addition to the above mentioned elements, it is in the first chapter of *Hurricane* that Zhou establishes the mechanism for encoding the values of Maoist-Leninist ideology into a Chinese symbolic vocabulary. For example,

the rural manor, traditionally a signifier of status, wealth, and power is transformed into a dark, foreboding place with a negative value. In the mimetic mode the Han mansion is the residence of Yuanmao's biggest landlord, in the mythic mode it takes on the much more complex identity of the Nether World. The mythic subtext, therefore, while subordinate to the mimetic text, is important specifically because it serves as a vehicle for manipulating the values of key cultural signifiers.

The second chapter focuses on Han Number Six and is written almost exclusively in the mimetic mode; nevertheless, there are elements in this chapter that bear on the development of the mythic narrative.

Han Fengji was known far and wide. He was the sixth of seven brothers, now in his late forties. An opium smoker, he was so lean and dried and bald above the temples he looked over fifty. Behind his back people called him Han Number Six or Han Big Stick. In the time of the puppet regime he had been village head of Yuanmao. Every autumn he went around collecting grain for himself and flax and black currant leaves for the Japanese military. He generally carried a big stick, ready to thwack anybody who offended his ear or eye. At night he frequented the brothel. While he was in the room, he would leave his big stick outside the door, leaning against the wall, to frighten other people away. That was how he came by the name Han Big Stick (p. 9).

The information given in the above passage reinforces the negative value of Han Number Six by ascribing to him the types of behaviour that are unacceptable in the new society: opium addiction, random violence against the underclass, sexual depravity, and collaboration with the enemies of the State. In addition there is one element introduced in this passage that serves as a signifier in both the mimetic and mythic modes; Han Fengji's "big stick." In the daylight world of mundane reality Han's stick is the weapon he uses to enforce his authority in the village. At night, on the other hand, while taking his pleasure at a brothel, it symbolizes his power; its mere presence is enough to warn away anyone who sees it. The symbolic value of Han's stick increases along with the development of the mythic subtext; it becomes a token of authority that defines the locus of power in the relationship between Han Number Six and Zhao Yulin.

At the end of this chapter Zhou obliquely introduces a young swineherd by the name of Wu Jiafu. Seemingly insignificant, Wu is not mentioned again until Chapter Sixteen, at which time he serves as the catalyst for Zhao Yulin's emergence as a fully realized socialist hero. Zhou carefully lays the foundation for Wu Jiafu's later

importance in the mythic narrative by introducing him in the dark of night, and within the confines of the Han mansion.

Night fell, and the women and children retired to the west wing. Han told his wife to order his bodyguard Li Jingshan not to allow anyone in the household to talk to members of the work team. The swineherd Wu Jiafu, in particular, must not be allowed to go to the schoolhouse where they are billeted.

"If he disobeys," said Han, "string him up in the stable" (p. 16).

As in the second chapter, Zhou's primary focus in Chapter Three is on the development of the mimetic narrative. Interestingly, however, he opens the chapter with a passage written in the symbolic mode. Little Wang, previously established as Team Leader Xiao's surrogate in the mythic narrative, serves as the focal point of the action.

Little Wang was perched on the window-sill leaning against the frame, looking out over the highway bisecting the village. On the willows thickly covered with luxuriant dark green foliage sparrows were hopping from twig to twig and chirping shrilly. Swallows floated down from the sky, alighted on the telephone wire and began pluming their wet downy breasts. A group of children were playing hide-and-peek in the meadow across the road. Seeing a stranger sitting in the window of the schoolhouse, they ran through the willow grove, and in less than no time had swarmed up to the window (p. 17).

The linkage between Little Wang and the mythic narrative is reinforced by his direct association with pastoral, or utopian imagery. The landscape that he sees out of the schoolhouse window is reminiscent of the one described in the opening tableau; it is depicted in the same imagistic style and conveys the same sense of timelessness that characterizes the mythic mode. Once again, Zhou uses pastoral imagery (leafy trees, sparrows, swallows, children playing in a meadow) to signify the innocence, serenity, and abundance universally associated with the ideal of a rural utopia.

A naked child, scampering back into the meadow, trips and falls on the road. Little Wang gets down from his perch, picks the child up, and wipes away his tears. This child is marked from the others in his group by the fact that he has no clothes. When the child stumbles he is singled out, and it is only this child the comes into direct contact with Little Wang. The transaction between Wang and the child is brief, and passes almost unnoticed; however, the child takes on added significance when he serves as a bridge between Little Wang and the hero in the mythic mode.

Little Wang visited several families in the north end [of the village], then went to the south end where he came upon a naked child playing outside a wicket-gate. On closer look, he recognized him

as the child who had fallen down the day before. Little Wang took the boy up in his arms and asked:

"What's your name?"

"My name is Suozhu!" The child began playing with the pink tassel of Little Wang's Mauser.

"What's your age?"

"Mummy says I'm five. Daddy says I'll be old enough to be a swineherd in another year or two. Daddy isn't as good as Mummy — he often shouts at me. One day he said: 'I can't feed you — you'd better get out.' I said: 'I won't. I want to be with Mummy. Why don't you get out?' Daddy slapped me on the face."

"Where's your father? Is he in?"

"See, isn't he there?"

Through the character of Suozhu, Little Wang is brought into contact with Zhao Yulin. Using the child as a bridge between the two men is a simple yet effective device that reflects Zhou's skill as a writer, particularly his attention to seeming unimportant details. Suozhu fingers the red tassel on Little Wang's pistol, drawing attention to the weapon. In the mimetic mode a gun is a weapon and nothing more; in the mythic mode, on the other hand, Little Wang's Mauser carries the value of a power taken similar to that of Han's "big-stick." What is important at this point is that Zhou establishes that Little Wang's pistol is an

element whose true value is understood only in the context of the mythic narrative.

Suozhu's initial description of his father paints him in a rather unfavourable light. More than an incidental detail, Zhao Yulin's gruff temperament helps to mark the change he undergoes during his passage from "spontaneity" to "consciousness." Zhao's transformation can be divided into four distinct phases, each of which is based on a ritual event:<sup>26</sup> 1) the ritual death and rebirth of passage; 2) the ritual of the hero's quest; 3) the ritual of initiation into the mythic family; 4) the ritual of heroic sacrifice followed by deification as an elite martyr. Each of the ritual acts performed by the hero in the mythic mode furthers the resolution of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic; a process whereby the fundamental character of the mythic hero is transformed.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, (see above, note 10) p. 9. "Ritual is a term for those social acts that are felt by the participants to concentrate the greatest amount of cultural meaning in them. Rituals are that part of the language of culture in which signs achieve the lowest degree of arbitrariness. This is somewhat paradoxical because they are, at the same time, the most conventionalized. All rituals have form, and they are successful in focusing otherwise diffuse cultural energies precisely in the degree to which they are formulaic. They provide a kind of shaping force to the categories that are most powerfully abroad in the society; they are a focusing lens for cultural meaning."

<sup>27</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 16. "The task of literature as the generator of official myths is to provide object lessons in the working-out of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. As is generally true of ritual forms, the master plot personalizes the general processes outlined by Marxist-Leninist historiography by encoding them in biographical terms: the positive hero passes in stages from a state of relative 'spontaneity' to a higher degree of 'consciousness,' which he attains by some individual revolution."

A man, stripped to the waist, had just pushed open the dilapidated lattice door of a thatched hut, and come out. He was standing in the courtyard with a short-stemmed pipe in his hand. He was about thirty-two years old, medium-sized, neither plump nor thin; the most conspicuous thing about him was a thick, inky beard. This was Zhao Yulin, also known as Bare Bottom Zhao. He had a wife and a son, but he had no means to feed and clothe them. It was a choice between the belly and the back: If Zhao was to fill the one, he could not cover the other. Thus he, his wife, and son had no clothes to wear. In the winter the three of them stayed glued to the *kang*, only getting up to fetch fuel and water and to cook. In summer, when the crops were shoulder high, Zhao's wife slipped out to the fields to work before it was light, and only came back after dark. None of the villagers knew her secret. One day, however, as she was weeding, she heard shouting, and when she stood up to see what was the matter her naked shoulders were seen. Soon Mrs. Zhao's nakedness became the talk of the village, and Zhao was given the name Bare Bottom (p. 22).

The description of Zhao Yulin as thirty-something with a medium build is identical to the description of Team Leader Xiao. But, where Team Leader Xiao's characterization never transcends the surface depiction of mundane reality, two additional characteristics ascribed to Zhao Yulin serve establish a linkage between him and the heroic tradition exemplified in the Ming Dynasty popular novels, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo yanyi)* and *Water Margin (Shuihu zhuan)*. Zhao is described as having an inky beard; here the

beard conveys the traditional symbolic value of virility and, at the same time, establishes a visual correspondence between Zhao Yulin and earlier heroes, such as Zhang Fei (*Three Kingdoms*) and Li Kui (*Water Margin*) both of whom are known for their physical prowess.

Through this "visual" linkage Zhou establishes the basic mechanism for systematically reinforcing the values of selected cultural symbols. The illusion of continuity between Socialist Realist and Classical heroes is further reinforced by Zhao's sobriquet (*chuohao*), Bare Bottom, a device that links him very closely to the *hao han* (gallants) of Liangshan Marsh, e.g., Song Jiang the Timely Rain, Dai Zong the Marvellous Traveller, and Li Kui the Black Whirlwind. However, unlike the above nicknames that allude to fantastic qualities, Zhao's sobriquet distinguishes him as being at the very bottom of Yuanmao's social hierarchy. Zhou uses Zhao Yulin's nakedness to symbolize not only the political impotence of the peasant class under the Confucian social order, he also uses it to dramatizes the "epic" power of Maoism-Leninism to transform even the most lowly individual. Zhao Yulin, through his indoctrination in Party lore, emerges transformed, the change is all the more dramatic because he begins his journey stripped of all power and worldly possessions.

Zhao Yulin invites Little Wang into his hut where the they share a pipe and talk about farming. Zhao soon realizes that, like himself, Little Wang is a peasant; a fact that breaks the ice between the two men. Eventually the conversation leads to the subject of the day's work, and when Zhao mentions that he is planning to grind millet Little Wang offers to help. Sharing the peasants' labour as a means of "striking roots" in a village was a normative behaviour for land reform workers; however, between Zhao and Wang, this shared experience is an act of ritual bonding.

As the two men work together at the grinding stone Little Wang gradually reveals his personal history, recounting how his father, a member of the Communist Party, was brutally murdered by the Japanese, forcing him and his mother to become beggars. The passage detailing Little Wang's life is rather long and need not be cited in its entirety; however, one particular paragraph is of interest because of its symbolic content.

Little Wang could never forget an August day the year when he, a little boy of seven, and his mother were trudging west along the highway under a blazing sun, with no human habitation in sight. Suddenly inky clouds gathered in the southwestern sky and dissolved into a downpour, blackening heaven and earth. Far away, a huge gloomy pall woven of shafts of rain seemed suspended from heaven to the earth like the legendary dragon's beard. In a flash a tearing

wind laden with moisture had carried over rain clouds flickering with lightning and rumbling with thunder. Little Wang's mother staggered along on her small bound feet. There was no shelter anywhere, and soon they were sopping wet. At long last they came upon a roadside shrine and crawled into it, soaked to the skin. The boy's teeth were chattering, and as his mother hugged him tightly in her arms, her tears dropped on his upturned face (p. 24).

Zhou's use of imagery in the above passage immediately identifies it as belonging to the mythic narrative; it is, in fact, another in the series of symbolic tableaux. Mother and child huddle in an isolated shelter as the elemental forces of nature rage unchecked around them. Each of the images used to create this landscape carries a negative value: the isolation; the sudden darkness; the violent rain, the dragon's beard; the thunder and lightning. Clearly, Zhou invokes these images for the traditional values that they convey. However, having previously manipulated the context within which these values are perceived, such negative imagery automatically refers to the symbolic linkage between the primal forces of nature and the rapacious landlord class. The elemental forces of the traditional feudal order isolate, diminish, and terrorize the mother and child; their anguish and suffering (and by inference the anguish and suffering of China's entire peasant class) is captured in the above tableau, evoking in

the reader feelings of anger against the old order, and sympathy for its victims.

But sympathy alone is not enough to balance the scales of justice. With her tears dropping onto Little Wang's upturned face, his mother calls out for revenge, exhorting him to avenge the death of his father. Once again Zhou uses the mythic narrative as the moral justification for the violent overthrow of the landlord class. By reducing this group of individuals to mere manifestations of elemental natural forces, Zhou depersonalizes them to such a degree that their elimination is perceived as a positive, even an heroic act.

Finished with the grinding the men break for lunch, then begin repairing trellises in Zhao's vegetable plot. At first Zhao talks about others in the village, but after a while shifts the focus of the conversation to talk about his own life. He recounts how he came to live in Yuanmao, detailing the hardships and suffering visited upon him by Han Number Six and the Japanese occupation forces. There are clear parallels between Zhao's history and Little Wang's; viewed in conjunction these two stories combine to form a kind of mytho-historical biography, a kind of

attenuated *bildungsroman*.<sup>28</sup> It should be kept in mind that the process of ritualizing historical events diminishes the importance of the individual; Zhao Yulin and Little Wang, therefore, are not so much heroic characters as they are symbolic representations of heroic struggle.

Zhao Yulin's autobiographical account reinforces the bond between himself and Little Wang, thus giving the land reform worker the entrée he needs to ask about Han Number Six. This shift back into the mimetic mode maintains the forward motion of the principal text. As the two men continue working Zhao reveals what he knows about Han's exploitation of the peasants in Yuanmao and collaboration with the Japanese.

"There's no end to the stories about him," Zhao whispered. "He'd only to send word to Morita Taro to have someone killed. Plenty of people were killed in the village that way. In those days the black doorway of his mansion was the gate to hell. Nobody dared to enter that gate" (p. 29).

Any ambiguity regarding the symbolic value of the Han mansion is dispelled when Zhou draws a direct connection between the mansion and the Under World. In keeping with

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<sup>28</sup>Clark, op. cit., (see above, note 10), p. 17. "The great historical drama of struggle between the forces of spontaneity and the forces of consciousness is unfolded in a tale of the way one individual mastered his wilful self, became disciplined, and attained to an extrapersonal identity. Thus...the Socialist Realist novel might in effect be seen as a politicized variant of the *Bildungsroman*, in which the hero achieves greater harmony both within himself and in relation to his society. Such a cannot be taken very far, however, because the Socialist Realist novel is so highly ritualized that the hero's progress is neither individual nor self-valuable."

the symbolic values of light and darkness (*yin* and *yang*) established previously, Zhou invokes the image of the black door—the "gate to hell"—as day gives way to night.

After supper, the guest rose to go, his face flushed with youth and health.

"Let me walk a little way with you," said his host.

As they walked Little Wang explained to Zhao why and how the poor people should fight the landlords and local despots and emancipate themselves.

"Which of the landlords of this village should we deal with first?" Little Wang asked.

"Who do you say?" the peasant parried with a grin.

"If we tackle him, dare you join in?"

"Dare I join in? The devil himself couldn't stop me!"

Little Wang gripped his hand tightly, and exclaimed: "Good, very good! 'A brave fellow is as good as his word, a swift horse needs no spurring'" (p. 30).

It is at this point in the narrative that Zhao Yulin accepts the challenge of the "hero's quest" (the object of the quest being the physical elimination of Han Number Six). The handshake between Zhao and Wang is a further step in the process of ritual bonding that, by degrees, initiates Zhao Yulin into the mystical body of the Party. The "epic" nature of this transaction is reinforced by Little Wang's

use of the term *hao han* (*hao han yi yan, kuai ma yi bian*). By referring to Zhao as a *hao han*, Zhou further reinforces the linkage between Zhao Yulin and past heroes, such as the gallants of Liangshan Marsh. There is a thematic connection in this allusion as well; like the fraternity of outlaws in the Liangshan Marsh, the Communist Party claims a similar status, portraying itself as a fraternity of modern day *hao han* formed to fight the injustice and oppression of the traditional social order.

When Zhao got home his wife was washing the dishes, while Suozhu was playing on the *kang*. Seeing his father, he jumped down and ran up to him with open arms. Papa was in a better humour. That guest must have cheered him up. Papa hadn't beaten him today. He stroked his father's inky beard and told him triumphantly that he had caught a grasshopper that evening and meant to catch another the next day....

Little Suozhu could not keep his eyes open. Before he could give an answer, he fell asleep on his father's chest. Zhao laid the boy gently down on the *kang* and covered his naked body with a tattered jacket (p. 30).

That Zhao Yulin has begun to undergo a fundamental transformation is evident in the way that Suozhu relates to him when he returns. This image of Zhao as a gentle and loving father stands in sharp contrast to Suozhu's earlier depiction of him; Zhou uses the child to dramatize the transformation that is taking place. Little Wang reawakens

in Zhao his own forgotten sense of humanity; the change is immediately apparent to the boy who climbs up on his father's lap and falls asleep nestled against his chest. As he is dozing off, Suozhu reaches up and strokes his father's "inky beard," a simple gesture that reinforces the linkage between Zhao Yulin and the *hao han* of an earlier age.

Before Zhao can take up his quest he must undergo a rite of passage to prove himself worthy of the challenge that lies ahead; thus he descends into the Realm of Darkness where he participates in the ritual sacrifice of his individual identity, confronts the image of Han as the archetype of evil, and re-emerges transformed.<sup>29</sup>

Zhao stepped into the yard, smoking his pipe. His wife lay down alongside her boy and soon began dozing off. Zhao stepped back into the room, sat down on the edge of the *kang*, leaned against the wall, refilled his pipe, and puffed and puffed at it. He was recalling bitter memories of the wrongs Han Number Six had done him during the past years.

Three years before, to avoid being drafted for labour again, he had gone hiding in a pine grove, but Han came to know this and told Morita Taro, the Japanese gendarme officer, who tracked him down and threw him into prison. Three months later he was sent to a labour camp in Yanshou. Then last year he was three days behindhand in rent

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<sup>29</sup>Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1970), p. 30. "The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation—initiation—return*: which might be named the unclear unit of the monomyth."

and, to punish him, Han made him kneel on crocks, which cut into his flesh until the blood oozed out, reddened the bowls and spilled over the ground. The pain was like a knife turning in his heart (p. 31).

Zhao Yulin separates himself from the world of mundane reality by stepping outside his hut to smoke. He returns to sit on the *kang* beside his wife and child but is still separated from them by the barrier of sleep. Recalling the wrongs inflicted on him by Han Number Six, he begins his descent into the Dark Realm. The salient feature of this journey is his participation in the ritual sacrifice, symbolized by the blood-letting on the crocks. Using graphic images, Zhou creates yet another in the series of symbolic tableaux; significantly, it takes place within the confines of the Han mansion. Zhao's punishment is specific to him, and the singular nature of the event leaves its mark upon him; when revealed to the villagers this mark proves to them that Zhao has undergone the necessary rites of passage that legitimize his status as hero, and confers on him the right to act as a leader in the transformation of China's traditional social order.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Campbell, op. cit., p. 29. "The passage of the mythological hero may be overground, incidentally; fundamentally it is inward—into depths where obscure resistances are overcome, and long lost, forgotten powers are revived, to be made available for the transfiguration of the world."

Now the work team had come to deal with this enemy of his, this son of a bitch! He felt elated. He lay down on the *kang*, and puffed at his pipe in the best of spirits. "But is it possible, really? Is it as easy as Comrade Wang seems to believe to knock Han out?" This question suddenly flashed into his mind. He turned over to this side and that and thought and thought. Sleep would not come. He got up, groped for his pipe, stepped into the kitchen, raked out a cinder, lighted his pipe, squatted down beside the stove, and began smoking. To the accompaniment of the sizzling pipe, his mind was buzzing. Han had great power and influence....

"Just suppose they can't pull it off," he thought.

But then he seemed to hear Little Wang's voice asking: "Brother Zhao, are you afraid?" And in his mind's eye he could see the young comrade's grinning round face.

"Why should I be afraid?" the peasant parried, feeling thoroughly ashamed of himself and at the same time recovering his courage at the thought of Little Wang.

"If a young fellow like Comrade Wang isn't afraid, why should I be?... Tomorrow I'll rally some fellows, and we'll see whether Han is able to get the better of us!" He seemed to see the landlord standing before him, narrowing his beady eyes menacingly. Zhao flared up. "Nothing will satisfy us but your death!" (p. 32).

When he considers the step he is about to take Zhao Yulin is assailed by doubts and nearly overcome by fear. He feels restless and there is no escape in sleep; he moves

off of the *kang*, further isolating himself from the world of mundane reality. When Zhao's fear threatens to immobilize him the image of Little Wang appears before him. As in all ritual passages, the initiate is given a guide who leads him down into the Nether World, and keeps the hero from losing his way.<sup>31</sup> Little Wang offers Zhao Yulin the courage and strength that derives from the collective identity of the revolutionary vanguard (i.e., the Chinese Communist Party). Zhao Yulin establishes a link between himself and Little Wang (if he is not afraid, why should I be), thus subordinating his personal identity to that of the collective. In taking this crucial step Zhao furthers the resolution of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic by merging with the extra-personal identity of the Party.

Lest there be any residual ambiguity as to the object of Zhao's quest, he proclaims that only the death of Han Number Six "will satisfy us!" Building on the "moral" foundation established earlier, Zhou once again elevates to the status of heroic deed the political act of eliminating (executing) the members of China's traditional rural elite;

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<sup>31</sup>Ibidem, p. 72. "Not infrequently, the supernatural helper is masculine in form. In fairy lore it may be some little fellow of the wood, some wizard, hermit, shepherd, or smith, who appears, to supply the amulets and advice that the hero will require. The higher mythologies develop the role in the great figure of the guide, the teacher, the ferryman, the conductor of souls to the afterworld."

only when Han Number Six is put to death will Zhao achieve the goal of his quest.

When the cock was crowing its third round, up he woke and off he went to see the land reform workers, stripped to the waist as usual, his tattered straw hat on his head. At the schoolhouse he found Little Wang lying on a desk, his head, and rubbing his eyes. Seeing the peasant, Little Wang slipped off the desk and went out with him for a walk outside. Zhao described to him all the tangle of thoughts that had passed during the night. In conclusion he declared:

"I see my way clear now, and I'll fight him to the finish even if I have to die fighting."

"Carry the revolution to a successful finish," Little Wang emended cheerfully.

"Yes! 'A brave fellow is as good as his word, a swift horse needs no spurring.'" Zhao remembered the proverb Little Wang had quoted. Then the two friends set off together to look for other poor villagers (p. 32).

Although Zhao Yulin has undergone a fundamental transformation, his newly acquired "consciousness" is far from complete; he still perceives the coming struggle in terms of his own personal sacrifice. Little Wang "cheerfully" corrects him, shifting the dramatic focus of the narrative so that it reinforces the pre-eminence of the collective goal over the sacrifice of the individual. Nevertheless, Zhao's successful rite of passage has proven his worthiness

to take on the role of elite Party hero; a point that is reinforced when he himself invokes the term *hao han*. With his guide (Little Wang) beside him, Zhao sets off on his quest to overthrow Han Number Six by spreading the gospel of revolution among the poor peasants of Yuanmao.

Essentially, Zhou uses *Hurricane's* subtext to establish a symbolic system that simplifies Maoist-Leninist historiography by encoding its key values into carefully constructed images that explain and validate the Party's radical transformation of the traditional social order. The mechanism Zhou uses to generate these images is Zhao Yulin's ritual passage from "spontaneity" to "consciousness," and his quest for the "holy grail" of the revolution; social justice (i.e. class revenge).

Ironically, in 1937 Mao stressed that myths could not articulate the concrete reality of social transformation;<sup>32</sup> yet it is specifically through the manipulation of traditional mythology that Socialist Realist writers generated the images and symbols used by the "masses" to comprehend and internalize the reconfiguration of their world.

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<sup>32</sup>Mao Tse-Tung, *On Art And Literature* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1960), p. 5. "Although stories of endless metamorphoses in mythology or nursery tales can delight people because they imaginatively embody man's conquest of the forces of nature and, moreover, the best mythology possesses, as Marx put it, 'eternal charm', yet mythology is not based on the specific conditions of actual contradictions and therefore does not scientifically reflect reality. That is to say, in mythology or nursery tales the aspects that constitute contradiction have only a fancied identity, not a real one."

## Chapter II: *Hurricane* V to XXI

Chapter Five opens with Team Leader Xiao working "feverishly night and day" to evaluate the information gathered by the other members of the Work Team.

Having used up the limited supply of candles he had brought with him from the district, he was working away by the flickering light from a bean-oil lamp, studying information relating to the villagers. He knew that in order to complete the work for their emancipation and other tasks of the Party, it was essential to have an objective knowledge about people and things (p. 37).

Although objectivity is needed to "correctly" evaluate class structure in Yuanmao, it is not a quality that moves the peasants to risk possible reprisals for exposing Han Number Six at a public gathering. While it is Team Leader Xiao who determines when political conditions are right for a meeting, it is Zhao Yulin who moves the peasants to open their hearts to the gospel of class warfare and revolution.

Zhao Yulin leaped off the desk, stuck his pipe in his waistband, took a step or two forward, unbuttoned the great-coat given him by the Soviet Army, and bared his muscular sun-tanned chest. That was a habit of his—whenever he spoke he got so excited he would sweat, so he always bared his chest first.

"Good neighbours, I'm one of the poorest men in this village. I know you call me Bare Bottom behind my back, but I don't mind. I wouldn't mind if you called me that to my face" (p. 44).

In a gesture that is pure heroic bravura Zhao Yulin strides to the center of the room, bares his "muscular sun-tanned chest," and takes control of the action. There is about this scene a sense of ritual story telling. As Zhao intones his litany of suffering his words cast a spell on many of those present; even the "cool" and objective Team Leader Xiao is deeply moved. However, the tragic events detailed by Zhao up to his point in the narrative are important, not in and of themselves, but because they lay the foundation for his final revelation.

"Another time, Han ordered me to kneel on crocks, which cut into the flesh. It hurt as badly as if I'd fallen on a mound of swords, and the blood spilled over the crocks and the ground." He lifted his leg up onto the edge of the desk, rolled up the trouser to above the knee and, pointing to the scars, said: "Look at these scars, here—here—here!" (p. 46).

By exposing his scars Zhao Yulin reveals to this fellow villagers that he is the hero in their midst. His scars validate his claim to elite status by proving that he has undergone the necessary rites of purification and passage.

"Neighbours, the work team is with us! I want to avenge myself on Han. I want to get my own back. During the puppet Manchuguo regime he was head of this village. How many of you were beaten by him?"...

"Have we the courage to settle accounts with him?" Zhao boomed....

"You all say you dare! Follow me then! In a revolution we have to do more than talk. Let's go and catch that bastard. When the people see Han bound up, they'll be brave enough to accuse him." Zhao elbowed his way through the throng, making for the door. He wiped the sweat off his forehead with the sleeve of his old army coat which was unbuttoned, hanging loose and trailing.

"Let's be off! Those who have the courage come with me!" Zhao did not seem to have heard what the others had said. "Those who fear trouble had better go home to cuddle their wives and kids under the quilt," he shouted (pp. 46-47).

In this emotionally charged atmosphere it is Zhao Yulin, not Team Leader Xiao, who emerges as the heroic figure. Clearly, the events that take place in this scene are functions of the mythic narrative, but Zhao Yulin's elite status is now based on more than purely symbolic acts; by declaring that "in a revolution we have to do more than talk," Zhao demonstrates that he has begun to internalize the doctrine of revolution taught to him by his "guide," Little Wang. This process whereby the hero in the mythic mode internalizes the values of Party doctrine is extremely important because it lays the foundation for his most heroic act; the transformation of ideology into action.

Little Wang squeezed his way to the door, undid the strap of his automatic, and told Zhao Yulin to arm himself with it.

"Take this with you, in case you need it. That bastard may have guns."

...Zhao nodded his head, took the gun, slung the strap across his shoulder, and was about to go, when Little Wang called him: "Just a minute. Take a rope with you." He hurriedly unstrung his baggage rope and gave it to him. "Tie him up tight. Dealing with a counter-revolutionary, leave nothing to chance" (p. 48).

Little Wang's passing of his gun to Zhao Yulin is a highly ritualist act, one that acknowledges the Party's recognition of Zhao's elite status. As well, Little Wang cautions Zhao to take a piece of rope, offering the one from his own bedroll. The value of the rope, like that of the gun, is not as a mundane object in the mimetic mode, but as a symbol of officially sanctioned authority. Both the gun and the rope are tokens given to the hero by his "guide" as he sets out on his quest.<sup>33</sup> Of the two objects, the piece of rope is by far the more interesting; it is not until Han Number Six is successfully bound hand and foot that Zhao Yulin completes the final stage in his ritual transformation.

The group were on the way to the Han mansion, with Zhao walking with big strides at the head. The autumn night was cool. The Milky Way above was

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<sup>33</sup>Campbell, op. cit., (see above, note 29), p. 69. "For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass."

twinkling with a myriad of stars. Far and near, crickets and grasshoppers were chirping incessantly. At the disturbing footfalls below, the sparrows on the trees started with fright and hopped from twig to twig, shaking the dew-laden leaves so that the dew dropped on the men's shoulders and their guns (p. 49).

Nowhere in the mimetic narrative are descriptions drawn with such a rich play of imagery. The group moves along the road beneath a star-studded sky, while crickets and grasshoppers chirp, and sparrows flutter in the trees. The entire scene reverberates with the sound of the men's footfalls, and dew, like holy water, drops from the leaves onto their shoulders and guns. It is not coincidental that the men's weapons are included in the sanctifying ablution that rains down upon them; when all is said and done the ritual acts depicted in the mythic narrative have meaning and value only if they are translated into concrete action; in this case the execution of Han Number Six.

In Chapter Seven, when Zhao confronts Han for the first time his manner is tentative, reflecting the fact that he is still in the process of emerging; he is "conscious" but has yet to achieve full realization. While he has earned the right to take on the elite role of hero, there remain obstacles to be overcome before he is able to act with the full power and authority of his newly won heroic persona.

As Zhao and his men headed for Han's house they met two men coming towards them, their figures silhouetted against the starlight. In another minute they recognized Han and his bodyguard Li Qingshan. The suddenness of it all startled Zhao—he was speechless and instinctively held the rope he was carrying behind his back. The bald head looming up before him was the terrible landlord, Han, whom the country folk had never dared look in the face. "How can I seize him?" wondered Zhao. Seeing his hesitation, Han adopted his usual high and mighty tone: "Old Zhao, I'm told you want to put me under arrest. Well here I am!"

"Why don't you speak up?" demanded Han, taking a step forward. "What's that rope for—there behind your back? Do you want to arrest me?" Who gives you the authority? What have I done to be arrested?...What harm have I done you that you should bring a rope to seize me?" (p. 50).

The most telling element in the above transaction is the fact that Zhao is, as yet, unable to use the rope given to him by Little Wang. Not only is he unable to use the rope, in point of fact, his fear of the landlord causes him to hide it behind his back. Han skilfully takes the upper hand in his exchange with Zhao and Section Leader Zhang, an experienced cadre who is accompanying the peasants, must intervene on Zhao's behalf to shift the initiative back in his favour. Finally, Han provokes Zhao's anger, and in response his heroic nature begins to manifest itself more overtly.

"Don't you remember making me kneel on crocks?" Zhao plucked up courage again. The fact that Zhao dared speak out took Han aback a little. However, he immediately denied the charge and tried to soft-soap him, saying: "Brother Zhao, you've got it all wrong. Why! I never did such a thing!"

Enraged, Zhao answered furiously: "Can your lie alter the fact? I won't argue with you here. Let's go and see Team Leader Xiao." The rope appeared again as suddenly as it had disappeared.

"Very well, let's go." The landlord trembled inwardly at Zhao's unexpected firmness, but he tried to put a bold face on it. "Even Team Leader Xiao'll have to talk reason. Black and white can't be confused. I've a clear record, and nobody can libel me. Brother Zhao, who can wrong an upright man?"

"Who's your brother? Don't brother me"  
(p. 51).

Because Zhao is a function of the mythic narrative, the indictment he levels against Han is based on his ritual punishment, rather than on such "mundane" events as his suffering during conscription, his family's abject poverty, or the death of his young daughter. However, Zhao is in the process of transformation, and each obstacle that he overcomes moves him upward through ascending levels of "consciousness," from "spontaneity" to the myths of heroic sacrifice and eternal return. The reappearance of the rope in Zhao Yulin's hand indicates that he is becoming stronger, and reinforces the fact that he has overcome the first

major obstacle on his quest; having the courage to stand up to a member of the landlord class.

When the group of peasants arrives at the schoolhouse with Han Number Six under arrest, Team Leader Xiao shakes Zhao's hand in congratulation. This handshake marks a shift in the narrative from the mythic back into the mimetic mode; questioning Han and organizing political meetings are functions of the mimetic hero.

In Chapter Eight, Han is brought before the villagers to answer for his crimes.

Liu Sheng mounted the platform with a leap, and the gathering drew closer below. All turned and looked at the doorway through which Zhao was bringing out Han, who was not bound (p. 61).

The critical piece of information in the above passage is that Han Number Six is not bound. Based on the informing scheme previously established by Zhou, the fact that Han is unbound clearly indicates that he has yet to be fully subdued, which in turn sets up the expectation that, for the present, Han will somehow escape the peasants' wrath. Liu Shen a member of the Work Team, brings the meeting to order and calls on the peasants to air their grievances against Han.

However, everybody kept silent. Little Wang looked at Zhao as much as to say: "Why don't you fire the first shot?" (p. 62).

Just as in the earlier scene in the schoolhouse, Zhao Yulin is once again called upon to ignite the peasants' anger. While characters from the mimetic narrative can appeal for Han's condemnation on rational, ideological grounds, it is the hero in the mythic mode who appeals to them on a deeper, emotional level.

Zhao pushed his way to the front. The sight of Han sitting there completely at his ease made him angry. He unbuttoned his green jacket, because the idea of speaking in public made him break into a sweat. He pointed a finger at Han and boomed:

"You traitor! You oppressed us more cruelly than the Japanese devils. In 1937, backed by that Japanese bastard Morita Taro, you conscripted me for forced labour before my turn. When I got back, my land had gone to seed, my daughter had died, and my wife and little boy had gone begging. The crop had failed, yet you insisted upon my paying you the rent. When I said I had nothing to give, you made me kneel on crocks till my blood spilled over the ground. Do you remember that? Folks!" He turned to the meeting: "Shall I get even with him, this old traitor?"

"Go ahead," responded several dozen men, among whom were a dozen youngsters. Standing near the platform they could see the scars on Zhao's knees; they felt sorry for him and indignant (pp. 62-63).

The narrative shifts back from the mimetic to the mythic mode when Zhao Yulin strides to the center of the action and strikes an heroic pose. Once again Zhao invokes

the ritual blood-letting on the crocks as proof both of Han's unmitigated evil and his own legitimacy as a member of the revolutionary vanguard. The sight of Zhao's scarred knees evokes feelings of sympathy and indignation in the men gathered at the foot of the stage. Among the peasants is a young man who is distinguished from the others by the clothes he is wearing.

After a few men had accused the landlord, a young fellow stepped forward from the right corner. He was wearing a tattered straw-hat and a vest which had been patched and repatched with rags of every colour and shape—red, grey, blue and checkered, till you could hardly tell what cloth the original vest was made of. This young man in the colourful vest stepped forward and said: "Han, you relied on Japanese backing to have us poor fold savagely beaten. You were crueller than the Japanese devils! In 1938 you hired me as a farmhand. At the end of the year I asked for my wages, but you refused to pay me. When I asked why, you said, 'because that's what I choose!' And the next day you told the Japanese clerk Miya to conscript me for forced labour. Now what have you got to say?" (p. 63).

Just as Team Leader Xiao needs a surrogate to operate for him in the mythic mode, so too does Zhao Yulin require a surrogate to function in the mimetic mode. The character introduced above, Guo Quanhai, is the one who fulfils this function; but for one important distinction (i.e., the ritual punishment on the crocks) his experience with Han is

strikingly similar to that of Zhao Yulin. There are, in fact, a number of different characters that function variously as surrogates in the mimetic mode, but Guo Quanhai is the one most closely linked to Zhao.

Predictably, the first "struggle meeting" against Han Number Six comes to a disappointing end with the landlord offering to turn over some livestock and property to compensate for his past crimes. Following his release, life in the village goes on, but the presence of the Work Team and Zhao Yulin dictates that things will never be the same.

The villagers of Yuanmao organized a Peasants' Association in Zhao's hut. It started with a nucleus of thirty-odd poor peasants, hired labourers, and artisans. Zhao was elected chairman and concurrently chief of the organization committee; Guo, vice-chairman and concurrently chief of the land distribution committee (p. 80).

Having participated in the requisite rites of passage, and having demonstrated his courage by standing up to Han Number Six, Zhao Yulin's status in the village has undergone a dramatic change. Through ritual acts, such as his rites of passage, Zhao is transformed from Bare Bottom to Chairman, from destitute and powerless peasant to a figure of authority and knowledge. Zhao's transformation depicts, in biographical terms, the social revolution that is taking place around him; his actions particularize but do not

personalize the larger process of transforming society from a "spontaneous" into "conscious" organizational entity. It should always be borne in mind that the Party's utilitarian literary doctrine shapes the very function of myth during the revolutionary epoch; myth is valid and meaningful only if it translates into concrete political action. This point is reinforced when Guo Quanhai quotes Chairman Zhao to support his position in a discussion about the practice of social action.

"Yang, if we poor men want to stand up, it's up to us to make the effort. Our Chairman Zhao says: 'Earth sticks to earth and makes a wall, poor men stick to poor men and together overthrow a kingdom.' If we poor men unite, we need be afraid of nothing (p. 81).

Interestingly, Zhao's words have the ring of a traditional aphorism, but in the construction of this saying (*tu bang tu cheng qiang, qiong bang qiong cheng wang*) Zhou skilfully combines an element of ersatz "traditional" wisdom with an element of Maoist-Leninist revolutionary thought. Constructing this type of hybrid is one method Zhou uses to encode key pieces of information by using China's traditional symbolic vocabulary. As well, the aphorism's stylization as a folk idiom reinforces the sense of continuity between the old and new cultures.

Given that the mimetic narrative is the primary focus of Socialist Realist fiction, it is not surprising that Guo Quanhai, Zhao's surrogate in the mimetic mode, plays an increasingly prominent role in the novel. Zhao's function is critical to the development of the novel, and he is periodically brought into the narrative to keep the text and subtext in synchronization; nevertheless, it is Guo Quanhai who is the more active of the two.

Vice-Chairman of the Peasants' Association, Guo was the busiest of men; he hadn't a minute to himself. He was forever talking to all kinds of people, explaining this that and the other... He told the villagers that the world was divided into two big families, one rich and the other poor, and that if the poor wanted to stop being poor and stand up, they must first do away with the landlords (p. 82).

As a manifestation of Zhao in the mimetic mode, Guo articulates the mythic hero's ritual transformation (i.e., his symbolic resolution of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic) by translating the experience into collective action. By having Guo Quanhai invoke the image of the "Great Family"<sup>34</sup>, Zhou reinforces both the importance of a collective identity in forging a cohesive political

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<sup>34</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, (see above, note 10), p. 114. "Like Germany and several other countries in this period [mid 1930s] the Soviets focused on the primordial attachments of kinship and projected them as the dominant symbol for social allegiance, Soviet society's leaders became 'fathers'(with Stalin as the patriarch); the national heroes, model 'sons'; the state, a 'family' or 'tribe.' The new root metaphor for society provided the state with a single set of symbols for enhancing its increasingly hierarchical structure by endowing it with a spurious organicity."

movement, and the "us against them" mentality that serves to ameliorate the moral implications of eliminating an entire social class.

Under the supervision of the Work Team, the Peasants' Association has significantly increased the size of its membership, and with more information about the history of events in Yuanmao, Team Leader Xiao convenes a second meeting to accuse Han Number Six. Significantly, in this meeting it is Guo Quanhai, not Zhao Yulin, who serves as the focus of the action; a clear signal that events are taking place in the mimetic mode. Zhao is present at the meeting but his role is peripheral; having previously validated his claim to elite status there is no longer any need for him to recount his tale of ritual punishment or to display the scars on his knees.

Han stood beside the table, hanging his head. He was paler than last time. A number of children had swarmed round him to look curiously at the rope around his waist. One of the bolder children asked him to his face, "Mr. Han, why haven't you brought your big stick today?" (p. 99).

From the information given in the above passage it is clear that Han's status in Yuanmao has changed dramatically. At the first "struggle meeting" Han appeared unbound; at this second meeting the group of children pointedly draw attention to the fact that the rope now binds Han around the

waist. The children taunt Han, an act that would have been unthinkable prior to the arrival of the Work Team, which further points to his diminished authority. Finally, the children mock him about the absence of his "big stick", yet another indication that his position in the village has been considerably weakened.

Guo Quanhai leads the struggle against Han, and this time the accusations hurled by the peasants are far more bitter and filled with rage. Old Tian, a character singled out by Little Wang during the first meeting, tells the most bitter tale of all. In effect, Old Tian plays the same role that was earlier played by Zhao Yulin; he appeals to the other peasants on a purely emotional level, and when he reaches the end of his account the response is immediate and violent.

Old Tian could not go on—he cried aloud. The crowd surged nearer. People shouted: "Beat him! Beat him!" A brick came flying up from somewhere and landed quite close to Han. His face turned pale, and he stood there trembling, knee knocking against knee.

"Strip him first!" shouted somebody.

"Kill him!" added somebody else (p. 103).

In terms of the mimetic narrative, there appears to be enough information against Han to justify his immediate execution; however, if the crowd were to kill Han at this

point in the novel it would leave a number of critical elements in the mythic narrative unresolved. While Zhao has already undergone a dramatic transformation from powerless peasant to political leader, he has yet to be formally initiated into the "Great Family" (i.e., the Chinese Communist Party), and has yet to overcome the final obstacle in his quest; a confrontation with Han in which the villain is bound hand and foot.

By the end of August the last mowing was over and the peasants hung up their hoes. The rainy season had set in. Most people stayed indoors doing odd jobs.... They could have given part of their spare time to organize the struggle against Han, but they slackened their efforts and even ceased to meet and chat regularly. The uncertain political situation and the rumour-mongering of the reactionary elements seemed to have affected their attitude (p. 112).

Han Number Six has proven to be an extremely crafty adversary, having twice deflected the attack against him. Following the second "struggle meeting" Han pays a fine and the forward motion in both the mimetic and mythic narratives reaches a kind of stasis. Han's crimes, as vicious and sadistic as they are, have not been enough to bring him down. What is needed, therefore, is some dramatic event that revitalizes the peasants' commitment to the revolution.

Up to this point in the novel Zhao Yulin has laboured heroically to overcome various obstacles, yet there is some-

thing missing that keeps him from achieving the final goal of his ritual quest. Through his association with Little Wang, Zhao has been introduced to the political doctrine of socialist revolution, but he has yet to be initiated into the arcana of Party lore. It is this event alone that will complete Zhao's transformation into a fully realized hero; such an important ritual must be conducted by the Party's "high priest" in Yuanmao, Team Leader Xiao.

"Have you anything else to do today?"  
Team Leader Xiao asked.

"No, nothing more."

"Then let's go for a walk," he  
suggested.

They strolled along the roadside in the shade of the elms, through whose thick foliage the sun's rays were falling like golden discs to the ground. The south wind was wafting the scent of ripening wheat and grass....Zhao, his rifle slung across his shoulder, was walking alongside his leader. Presently he left the road to plunge into some bushes and soon emerged with a cluster of small red fruit in his hand. Putting one in his mouth, he said:

"Crab apples are at their best at  
harvest time...."

A flock of grey and white geese in the ditch craned their necks at the men's approach, and waddled, cackling, up and down, but without scattering in fright. One gander was trying vainly to shake off a green willow leaf sticking to its red bill....

They walked on. Sparrows were rocking slightly on the tender twigs of the willows, and behind the poplars were curling grey smoke wisps from the kitchens where the villagers were preparing their midday meal. Cocks were crowing here and there. Creaking down the road towards them was a three-horse cart piled high with sheaves of hand and weeds, on top of which were several bulging sacks.

"Have some corn." The young peasant in a straw-hat drew in rein, and hailed them, then pulled out a dozen ears of corn from one of his sacks and tossed them to Zhao. A colt, who had been following behind the cart, took advantage of this halt to hurry forward to suck from its dam.

They walked on. On either side of the road were bright yellow sunflowers towering above the green pea plants on the trellises. They walked into a vegetable garden and sat down on a stack of firewood. Zhao rolled a cigarette. Here for the first time, Team Leader Xiao proposed to him that he should join the Party. They had a long talk on the subject.

That night Zhao did not sleep a wink. He felt so happy, now that he was to become a member of the Communist Party. He turned over and over on the *kang*, until his wife woke and said:

"Why aren't you sleeping? What are you thinking about?"

He did not answer her. Before day break, while the sky was twinkling with stars and the earth was wet with dew, he was off to see Team Leader Xiao, his rifle slung across his shoulder. He was given an application to fill in. Zhao Yulin, a poverty-stricken peasant, now became a

probationary member of the Communist Party of China. He would be a full member after a three month period of probation. As the one to introduce him, Xiao put down his view of Zhao on the form:

"A poor peasant, honest and able, willing to sacrifice everything for the cause of the workers' and peasants' liberation" (pp. 117-119).

I have cited this rather long passage in its entirety because of its importance in the novel. If there was any ambiguity about the source of the utopian scene depicted in the novel's opening tableau, this description leaves nothing to the imagination of the reader. Using the same set of images he employed in the initial scene, Zhou elaborates on them, filling in the landscape with additional details that reinforce the utopian vision that represents the "final elimination of the terror of history, 'salvation.'"<sup>35</sup>

This entire scene is constructed with symbolic imagery. Team Leader Xiao and Zhao Yulin are not walking through a mimetic landscape; instead, they are walking along a road that winds through the mythic socialist utopia. The bounty of the countryside spills everywhere around them, suggesting mastery over the "spontaneous" forces of nature. The colours are bright and vibrant, imbuing the landscape with a

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<sup>35</sup>Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 149.

sense of energy and vitality. Zhao himself plunges in to the bushes to pick a cluster of red fruit, which he ingests. Animals do not fear the two men as they walk along; a common convention used to signify purity of spirit. The sunlight falls "like golden discs on the ground," and bright yellow sunflowers stand towering, both images that refer to the Party's principal icon. Out of all the symbolic tableaux created by Zhou in the novel *Hurricane*, none is so rich in imagery, detail, and meaning. Through his skilful use of imagery and symbols Zhou conveys the ritual nature of Zhao's initiation into the Party. Unable to sleep he tosses and turns throughout the night; this time, however, his thoughts are not on the terror of the Dark Realm but on the Party's vision of a utopian future.

The price to be paid by the hero for admittance into the mythic utopian garden is high indeed. Team Leader Xiao spells out the price quite clearly on Zhao's application for Party membership: "willing to sacrifice everything for the cause of the workers' and peasants' liberation." As Ruhlman points out, the characteristic of self-sacrifice is common to the heroes of traditional Chinese popular fiction.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Robert Ruhlman, "Traditional Heroes in Chinese Popular Fiction," in *The Confucian Persuasion*, ed., Arthur F. Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 151. "Passionate and sensitive, the heroes possess outstanding gifts of personality and talent, and the resolution to behave on a level higher than that of the sages and the wise. They are kind, generous, and refuse rewards; for duty and ideal, they sacrifice their dearest and closest attachments."

But, while both traditional and the new socialist heroes are willing to sacrifice everything, including their lives, for the cause that they follow, the underlying motivation for the sacrifice is radically different; first and foremost traditional heroes sacrificed themselves out of a sense of personal loyalty, the new socialist heroes sacrifice themselves to overthrow the traditional social order.

Once Zhao Yulin had been initiated into the Party events move at a rapid pace; specifically, the Peasants' Association becomes increasingly active, which causes Han a great deal of consternation. It is at this point that Wu Jiafu, the young swineherd mentioned at the beginning of the novel, is brought into the action. Initially, he is approached by Guo Quanhai and invited to participate in the discussion group sponsored by the Peasants' Association. Thinking he is safe within the protective "family" of the Association, Wu pours out his bitter story.

In all his four years in Han's house, the little swineherd had not known a happy moment. Thirteen years old, he looked only ten; because of his hard life he was nothing but skin and bones. All by himself he had to look after over twenty pigs and a number of sucklings... In the winter he had no bedding and woke up several times in the night shivering. The Han family never spoke to him except to curse him, and the bodyguard often beat him. Now as he told his story, he sobbed, and many women and children were moved to tears (p. 132).

The list of crimes against Han is long and terrible yet the members of the Peasants' Association, including Chairman Zhao, are at a loss as to how to finally bring him down. With Wu Jiafu, Zhou creates an extremely sympathetic character whose tragic tale is similar to the stories told by Zhao Yulin, Little Wang, Guo Quanhai. Zhou's use of an imagistic narrative style keys the reader that events involving this character occur in the mythic mode. It is, in fact, Han's final assault against the young swineherd after he returns from a Peasants' Association meeting that serves as the catalyst for the novel's *denouement*.

"Where have you been?"

"None of your business," shouted the boy, surprised at his own courage.

"Hum! So you're putting on airs too!" said Li, outraged to find that the little swineherd who usually cowered before his stick now dared to wag his tongue and defy even the master. Li lifted the stick and boomed: "If it's not the master's business it's the business of this stick!" The stick came down with a thump on the back of the recoiling boy.

"Stop!" Han ordered, trying to suppress his anger. "Let him say what happened at the discussion group. If he does, we'll spare him."

"I won't tell you anything, not even if you kill me." The little swineherd tossed his head defiantly.

Han's face reddened and his neck swelled. "So you want to stand up do you? I'll teach you to stand up! Yank off his clothes, Li, while I fetch the whip."

Pinned to the ground, the boy screamed: "Help! Han Number Six is killing me!"

Li hastily gagged him by ramming a rag into his mouth. It was nearly dawn, and everything was still. Wu's cry for help had reached the two militiamen patrolling the road by the Han mansion. Now one of them was running towards the Han mansion, while the other sprinted down the road, blowing his whistle and crying: "Han's killing someone!"

The little swineherd was lying on the ground, his clothes ripped off. Han planted a foot on his back, thinking: "I may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb." Lifting the whip he declared

"I'm going to beat you to death!"

Whack! Whack! Whack! The horsewhip rose and fell, and bloody lines appeared one after another on the boy's bare back and buttocks. The bodyguard added his stick to his master's whip, beating the lad on the head and body. The blood splattered Han's white silk trousers. Soon Wu ceased to move. He had fainted. Grinding his teeth, the landlord shouted:

"Go quick and dig a hole in the stable. He wanted to stand up—he'll never stand up again!" (pp. 133-134).

Han's assault on Wu Jiafu is important both for its symbolic value, and as a device for moving the plot forward as well. Similar to Zhao Yulin's ritual punishment, Wu's

beating occurs in the dead of night and takes place within the walls of Han's dark mansion (the symbolic Nether World). As with Zhao, Wu Jiafu is made an unwilling participant in a ritual blood letting. Not only does this event move the plot forward, it accentuates Han's madness as well. Alerted by Wu Jiafu's cries for help the peasants rise up in mass and like a *hurricane* storm through the village to the Han mansion.

The whole village was agog. The sun was reddening the clouds above the horizon, and the cocks were crowing...Men and women, old women and children were converging on the Han mansion. They formed a human torrent; the sun behind them lighting the their shining, shaved heads and tattered grey felt hats, as they surged forward like a tidal wave (p. 134).

In keeping with his previously established system of values, Zhou invokes the Party's principal icon (i.e., the rising sun) as the primary informing symbol for the peasants' insurrection. That this event occurs as dawn is breaking reaffirms that the power to overthrow Han, and by implication the entire landlord class, derives solely from the Chinese Communist Party.

Not unexpectedly, it is Zhao Yulin who scales the walls of the mansion to lead the assault against Han. As a function of the mythic narrative, Zhao's breaking into the Han mansion represents the final obstacle on his quest; the

hero returns to the Dark Realm but this time he is the avenging warrior not the sacrificial victim.

At this point in the novel Zhao Yulin's character undergoes a subtle but significant change; as he passes the various tests on his hero's-journey his function shifts gradually toward the mimetic mode. It is evident that such a shift has occurred when Zhao and Guo, his counterpart in the mimetic mode, act simultaneously; something that would be wholly incongruous if Zhao was still operating in the mythic mode. Understanding this shift in Zhao's modal orientation is the key to understanding the function of myth in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction. The mythic hero's quest must resolve itself by resolving the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic; in terms of Mao's utilitarian views, the only acceptable end to Zhao Yulin's symbolic transformation is concrete political action.

Zhao and Guo discover Wu Jiafu's battered body lying on the floor. Zhao Yulin reaches down and touches the young boy in what is yet another of the ritual acts that mark the hero's transformation. In effect, the swineherd now assumes Zhao Yulin's former role as the hero discards the last vestiges of his mythic aspect. With the blood of Wu Jiafu on his hands Zhao makes the final shift from symbolic to mimetic hero.

In the confusion of the moment Han Number Six somehow manages to escape. Zhao instructs Guo Quanhai to stay with the young swineherd, and together with Team Leader Xiao he sets off to hunt down the evil landlord. Although Zhao Yulin has been shifted significantly towards the mimetic mode he is still primarily a function of the mythic subtext and is, therefore, subordinate to the novel's mimetic hero, Team Leader Xiao. Consequently, it is critical that both Team Leader Xiao and Zhao Yulin affect the capture of Han Number Six together; the novel's *denouement* must occur in the mimetic and mythic modes simultaneously.

"Old Zhu, did you see Han passing by here a while ago?"

"No, I didn't," he answered, beckoning Zhao to come nearer. "Come and have a look at the big dogfish I've caught today!"

...Old Zhu whispered to him: "Look in the fish shed over there, under the straw."

Zhao jumped off the spring-board, levelled his gun, and sprinted towards the small shed not far from the bank. He burst in and parted the straw on the ground with the muzzle of the gun. A big head with a receding hair line showed through the damp, yellow straw. This head tried to wriggle back into hiding again. Here at last was the enemy of the people of Yuanmao who had so nearly escaped. Burning with anger, Zhao rammed the rifle-butt down on Han's arm, cursing:

"Bastard! Where do you think you can fly to? To the sky?"

Team Leader Xiao and Wan entered the shed, ducking their heads at the entrance.

They found a rope in one corner, bound the landlord hand and foot, loaded him onto Wan's black horse, tied him to it astride, and then headed back slowly for the village (pp. 138-139).

Significantly, Zhao Yulin uses a rifle to subdue Han Number Six and it is Team Leader Xiao who uses a rope to bind him "hand and foot." Zhao's role in the above transaction marks his first overt act in the mimetic mode. It is unimportant which of the two men binds Han Number Six; the rope, previously a signifier in the mythic mode no longer carries the same symbolic value. At this point in the novel Zhao Yulin and Team Leader Xiao are, for all practical purposes, interchangeable. When the mythic hero triumphs over his enemy he "transcends" his purely symbolic function by taking on the collective identity of the "Great Family" (i.e., the Party). Paradoxically, the "Great Family" is a wholly mythic invention, yet it is from this myth that Zhao finds the courage and strength for direct political action.

Seeing Han bound hand and foot on the back of a horse the peasants of Yuanmao are overcome with hatred and rage. They would kill him immediately if not for the intervention of Zhao Yulin, who counsels them that Han must be tried by

all the victims of his crimes. The tone of his speech in addressing the villagers mirrors the calm, rational style of Team Leader Xiao, further reinforcing the fact that the resolution of the spontaneity/consciousness manifests itself as directed, disciplined, politically correct behaviour.

When Han reached the platform in the middle of the courtyard, shouts went up on all sides. Zhao blew his whistle and cried:

"Order, please! No small meetings now! Take your places properly" (p. 145).

Zhao Yulin's personal transformation is a microcosm of the revolutionary events reshaping Chinese society. The symbolic nature of this transformation is important because it encodes the new socialist system of values into an easily recognizable and easily understood vocabulary of images and symbols. Reworking elements of traditional fiction and popular folk lore Zhou constructs a mythological tale in which the hero's journey from destitute and politically impotent peasant to a powerful member of the revolutionary vanguard appears both logical and, more importantly, possible.

One by one the peasants "stand up" to denounce Han. Their litany of rage and grief rises to a crescendo that culminates in their demand for Han's immediate death. Team Leader Xiao momentarily halts the action while he calls

headquarters for the "legal" sanction to execute the villainous landlord. Not surprisingly, the Party concurs with the verdict of the masses (having manipulated events to this specific end), and Han is marched off to the execution ground.

Zhao and Bai, carrying their rifles, pushed Han out towards the East gate of the village. Guo and Big Li followed behind with over a thousand people at their heels. They were shouting slogans, singing songs, blowing trumpets, beating gongs and drums. Old Mrs. Tian, who had lost the sight of both eyes, hobbled along with Mrs. Bai supporting her.

"I've been hoping and crying these three long years for a day like this," sobbed the old woman. "Thanks to Chairman Mao Zedong and the Communist Party, my daughter has been avenged!" (p. 148).

As with all the major events that occur in *Hurricane*, with the exception of Han's capture, his march to the execution ground is a highly ritualist event. The cacophony of sounds, slogans, songs, trumpets, gongs and drums is reminiscent of the traditional *yang ge* performed annually by the peasants. To punctuate the ritual nature of this event, an old blind woman, a classical representation of the mythic seer, weeps in thanksgiving for Mao Zedong and the Communist Party who have delivered the peasants of Yuanmao into salvation.

This penultimate tableau is a ritual celebration not of Han's death but of the peasants' liberation, the "dawning" of a new age. Through the power of collective ritual the peasants participate in the mythic, collective identity of the "Great Family," thereby experiencing a type of transformation. However, it is induced by the group ritual and is temporary and of a lower order than that experienced by the mythic hero.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, the depiction of Han's actual execution is wholly unnecessary; what is important is that the "people's" consciousness has been reshaped so that the execution of landlords is perceived as a politically correct act.

To reinforce the importance of individual transformation and individual sacrifice, Zhao Yulin acts out one final ritual in which he gives his own life defending the village against bandits led by Han's younger brother.

"Disperse, quick!" Xiao cried. "Lie down!" But he remained standing himself, and a bullet grazed his right hand....

"Is it serious?" demanded Zhao and Guo, hurrying up.

"Nothing much—only a scratch," Xiao answered. "You lie down quick." Before

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<sup>37</sup>C.G. Jung, *Four Archetypes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 59. "To experience transformation in a group and to experience it in oneself are two totally different things. If any considerable group of persons are united and identified with one another by a particular frame of mind, the resultant transformation experience bears only a very remote resemblance to the experience of the individual. A group experience takes place on a lower level of consciousness than that of an individual."

he had finished, a bullet hit the butt of Zhao's rifle. Enraged, he straightened up instead of lying down, cursed, opened fire, and ran forward in the direction where the bullet had come from with his levelled gun. The men behind saw him run up a slope planted with maize, then throw his arms out and fall back! He lay with his hand hanging limply over the a ridge of the field. His hat had fallen off, he had crushed to corn the barrel of the gun tight in his right hand. The blue cloth jacket, which had been his share in the distribution of clothes, was wet with blood....

Guo came up to Zhao and kneeled on one knee before him.

"Chairman Zhao!" The sight of the wounded man's ashy face brought a lump to Guo's throat, and he could say no more. Zhao opened his eyes and gasped:

"Go and fight them. Use my gun. Leave me along." His eyes closed weakly....

Guo took the cartridge belt off Zhao and slung it across his own shoulder. The faded green cloth belt was sticky with blood (p. 170).

As the personification of the omnipotent Party, Team Leader Xiao orders his men to take cover while he himself stands cool and collected amid a hail of gunfire. Here stands *Hurricane's* principal hero, a selfless cadre fighting fearlessly on the frontline of the revolution. When he is shot in the hand he dismisses the wound as merely a scratch; bullets kill people but against the Party itself they are useless.

The death of Zhao Yulin, on the other hand, is an event that signifies an entirely different order of meaning. Having achieved the status of mimetic hero, his character shifts back into the symbolic mode as he rushes towards his own death. The depiction of Zhao, frozen momentarily in time, with his arms flung out against the sky is an extremely powerful image; for an instant his pose resembles a crucifixion, the most powerful Western symbol of ritual sacrifice. Further, the hillock that Zhao scales is covered with maize, and when he falls to the ground he crushes a couple of ears beneath his body. In numerous cultures, including Asian, maize, maize gods, and maize spirits have had symbolic value in vegetation ceremonies, fertility rites, and rites of passage.<sup>38</sup> In depicting the hero's death Zhou invokes a number of symbols to reinforce the ritual nature of his passing; along with the crucifixion-like pose and the symbolic value of maize plants, Zhao's wound is described as being as big as a wine cup, alluding to the ritual image of crocks filled with blood.

In this final ritual act Zhao Yulin attains the highest status possible for a hero in Socialist Realist fiction: he becomes a martyr for the cause of revolution.

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<sup>38</sup>Sir James Frazer, *The New Golden Bough*, ed., Theodor H. Gaster (New York: Mentor Books, 1964). For further reference to the pan-cultural appearance of corn or maize gods see Part IV, "Dying and Reviving Gods," pp. 339-438. Also see, Part V, "Spirits of the Corn and Wild," pp. 471-566.

Martyrdom has always been a primary mode of vindication. Death as the supreme sacrifice acts as the ultimate sanction. Martyrs leave to the living an obligation to emulate their high moral example.<sup>39</sup>

In death Zhao Yulin merges with the mythic identity of the Party, taking his place among other fallen heroes who have preceded him into the mythic utopia alluded to time and again in the novel. The villagers mourn his passing, yet at the same time they celebrate his revolutionary heroism; ultimately Zhao's individual death is unimportant because the Party and the cause survive.

Team Leader Xiao eulogizes the fallen hero, and announces that Zhao has posthumously been made a full member of the Chinese Communist Party.

The audience broke into thunderous applause. the trumpets sounded, and Zhang conducted the band. Someone had hoisted a red flag, which was waving proudly and cheerfully in the breeze under the blue sky, amid the green poplar and elm trees. Women and children were singing the song *Without The Communist Party There Would Be No New China* (pp. 187-188).

Clearly, Zhao's funeral is not so much a mourning of his death as it is a celebration of Party. The red flag waves "proudly and cheerfully" against the blue sky, framed

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<sup>39</sup>Clark, op. cit., (see above, note 10), p. 179.

by the rich green of the elms and poplars. The symbolic values of the colours invoke the rich imagery used to construct both the opening tableau and the scene of Zhao's "mythic" walk with the team leader. The value of the colors, the poplars standing erect and tall like sentinels, the tone of the participants, and the singing of a Party anthem leave little doubt that Zhao Yulin has taken his place among the countless fallen heroes of the revolution. Team Leader Xiao declares that Zhao's life (his death) must serve as an example for all of the villagers, that the battle has yet to be won, that everyone must become a soldier in the cause of Maoist-Leninist revolution.

In the ruddy light of the setting sun,  
over the red beards of the gaoliang, by  
the water quietly flowing, the trumpets  
sounded a dirge called *Lament The Dead  
On The Great Wall* and the drums rolled  
(p. 188).

Thus Zhao Yulin is laid to rest and the novel comes to a close. The hero has completed an entire transformational cycle from naked peasant to a powerful symbol of hope and salvation. All around his grave the setting sun bathes the landscape in soft red light. Quietly like the river flowing beside his grave, Zhao Yulin passes forever into the mythic utopia of the new socialist age.

### Chapter III: *Tracks In The Snowy Forest (Linhai xueyuan)*

Like *Hurricane*, Qu Bo's novel *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* is set in northeastern China following the collapse of the Japanese occupation. Rather than focusing on the issue of land reform, however, the action in *Tracks* depicts the exploits of a small detachment of People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers as they battle counter-revolutionary bandits and Guomindang agents in mountains of Heilongjiang Province.

Both novels faithfully replicate the Socialist Realist "master plot" (i.e., the rite of passage from "spontaneity" to "consciousness"), but the structure of the two novels and the formulation of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic are significantly different. There are a number of factors that account for these differences, not the least of which is the ideological debates that took place in China between 1948 and 1957.<sup>40</sup> Of the three novels examined in this paper, *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* comes closest to exemplifying the type of literature first envisioned by Qu Qiubai and later advocated by Chen Boda; a literature of the masses that combines "old forms" with new content (i.e.,

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<sup>40</sup>Without going into the complex polemical debates that took place between 1948 and 1957, the political imperatives of "socialist construction" were very different than those of "socialist revolution." By the mid-1950s the CCP was further consolidating its control over literary output and focusing its rhetoric on the move toward collectivization.

the ideology of social revolution).<sup>41</sup> In telling the story of Shao Jianbo and his band of PLA fighters Qu borrows extensively from the Ming dynasty *literati* novel *Water Margin*. By manipulating the values of traditional symbols Qu transforms the story from one that reinforces the traditional values of the Confucian social order, into one that champions the virtues of the new socialist society. Qu's reworking of the earlier novel is complete to the point that he replicates not only *Water Margin's* episodic narrative structure, but reworks the symbolic values of specific characters and events as well.

Further, *Water Margin's* extensive use of interlocking characters<sup>42</sup> is a narrative device that readily lends itself to the duality inherent in orthodox Socialist Realist literary doctrine. The convention of pairing characters offers Qu a traditional structure for combining the mimetic and mythic modes in a manner quite different from Zhou's use

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<sup>41</sup>Cf. David Holm, *Art and Ideology in Revolutionary China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 53-66.

<sup>42</sup>Andrew H. Plaks. *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 316. "Chin Sheng-t'an's interest in interlocking textual figures also applies at the level of specific characters in the text. Only one of his *wen-fa* terms relates explicitly to the juxtaposition of individual characters in the narrative. This is his 'technique of applying powder on the reverse side' (*pei-mien p'u-fen fa*), describing the use of one character as a foil for another, such as we see in the treatment of Sung Chiang and Li K'uei, or Yang Hsiung and Shih Hsiu.... Beyond the examples of this type that Chin provides, we may also note here that the principle of paired characters clearly applies to Lu Ta and Wu Sung, Lu Chun-i and Yen Ch'ing, and the various pairs of brothers (Hsie, Ts'ao, Sun, K'ung) that fill the text. In some of these cases it may be said that there is no real differentiation between the two figures yoked together; but in other pairs...the author very quickly moves beyond a simplistic joining of similar types (or complimentary opposites) to a deeper exploration of the serious differences brought out in the respective comparisons. This is most obvious in the case of Sung Chiang and Li K'uei, whose complex relationship of similarity and difference sets up a central axis of meaning for the novel."

of character splitting, a fact that impacts directly on the style of characterization.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike Team Leader Xiao and Zhao Yulin, who function as components of a larger composite character, the heroes in *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* appear much more as individuals, albeit in highly attenuated form.<sup>44</sup> Without question characters such as Shao Jianbo and Yang Zirong are drawn in greater detail than Team Leader Xiao and Zhao Yulin, and thus they have a much stronger visual presence in the narrative. Qu's use of specific visual traits to depict his heroes links them directly to the symbolic system used to depict heroes in traditional Chinese popular fiction.<sup>45</sup> By drawing so directly on traditional symbolic conventions Qu

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<sup>43</sup>As indicated previously, the two principal heroes in Zhou Libo's novel *Hurricane* are not fully integrated characters in any normal sense of the term; instead they are aspects or components of a larger composite character. The composite is divided (i.e., split) in such a way that specific attributes are assigned exclusively to the mimetic and mythic heroes respectively. A key feature of this particular literary convention is that the actions of both heroes are restricted by their assigned attributes; this is particularly true of Team Leader Xiao who never manifests any of the emotional/intuitive attributes that define the subtextual hero, Zhao Yulin. With the exception of Zhao Yulin's brief crossover into the mimetic mode, the principal and subtextual heroes function in mutually exclusive narrative and temporal modalities.

In contrast, the characters in Qu Bo's novel *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, such as Shao Jianbo and Yang Zirong, contain both mimetic and symbolic attributes; in this sense they are not components of a larger composite, but are "integrated" characters. In this structure characters (e.g., Shao Jianbo and Yang Zirong) can be made to function as a pair, one of which operates in the mimetic mode and one of which operates in the mythic. What is particular about this structure is that all the principal characters can function (not simultaneously) in both the mimetic and the mythic modes.

<sup>44</sup>I use the term "individuals" with reservation. The heroes in *Tracks* function as individuals in the sense that they serve both as agents of the mimetic narrative and, at the same time, manifest, to varying degrees, interior or emotional aspects. It must be borne in mind, however, that their depictions are highly stylized and they never achieve the organic unity of fully integrated characters with interior depth and complex psychologies.

<sup>45</sup>Cf. Robert E. Hegel, "Making the Past Serve the Present in Fiction and Drama: From the Yan'an Forum to the Cultural Revolution," in Bonnie S. McDougall, ed., *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts In the People's Republic of China 1949-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 197-220.

taps into an established symbolic vocabulary familiar to everyone in Chinese society, literate and illiterate alike.

Admittedly Qu's reworking of *Water Margin* lacks the texture and complexity of the original Ming dynasty novel, but it serves its purpose as a vehicle for manipulating the values of key cultural symbols so that they reinforce the Party's increasingly sinified variant of Marxist-Leninist ideology. As the Communist Party moved to consolidate its control over Chinese society during the 1950s, the propagation of Mao Zedong Thought became one of the primary functions of Chinese Socialist Realist fiction. However, despite the literature's highly utilitarian, didactic function, the symbolic subtext is important because it explains, in a recognizable language of images and symbols, the values and hierarchy of relationships that shape the new social order.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, the "master plot" in *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* reflects a subtle but distinct change in the formulation, or signification of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. Unlike *Hurricane*, in which the process of

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<sup>46</sup>Cf. Abner Cohen. *Two Dimensional Man* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1974), p. 30. "We can observe individuals objectively in concrete reality, but the relationships between them are abstractions that can be observed only through symbols. Social relationships develop through and are maintained by symbols. We 'see' groups through their symbols. Values, norms, rules and abstract concepts like honour, prestige, rank, justice, good and evil are made tangible through symbols, and men in society are thus helped to be aware of their existence, to comprehend them and to relate them to their daily life."

individual transformation occupies a significant portion of the narrative, in *Tracks* this process is framed exclusively in terms of the collective; thus the resolution of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic is not the result of individual epiphany, but of collective action.

There is yet another important difference between the way the two authors (Qu and Zhou) formulate "spontaneity" and "consciousness." Zhou articulates the dialectic in terms of socially disenfranchised peasants and politically empowered revolutionaries; in contrast, Qu articulates it in terms of empowered revolutionaries and "enlightened" Party cadres. In *Hurricane*, the hero's journey is a re-enactment of the transformation of "spontaneous" emotion into action. In *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, the hero's journey is a re-enactment of the transformation of "spontaneous" action into disciplined, focused behaviour. In the context of the new social order, "consciousness" is not only a matter of political awareness, it is a refinement of that awareness through the cultivation of "objectively" derived values. The revolution is no longer a matter of heart alone, but of the heart and mind together.

Not surprisingly, Communist Party doctrine is the highest expression of "consciousness." As the embodiments of "consciousness", Party leaders such as Mao Zedong, Liu

Shaoqi, Lin Biao, and Zhu De generated a charismatic power that was, ultimately, the driving force for social cohesion. At the level of the masses, however, the charismatic power of the Party elite is highly diffuse. Ordinary people do not experience it directly; rather they experience it indirectly through contemporary myths, popular legends, and through participation in carefully structured ritual events. In this sense, the Party's exercise of authority is effective only insofar as the people accept as valid its symbolic representation of a just social order. It is, then, finally, by manipulating the values of key cultural symbols that Chinese Socialist Realist writers encode the new ideology into an understandable framework, and in so doing create the new myths that legitimize the Party's exercise of authority.<sup>47</sup>

### Textual Analysis

It was dawn in late autumn. White frost covered the ground. The air was icy, bone-chilling.

A bugle call broke the morning stillness. Whistles shrilled; commands, footfalls, shouts rang on the drill fields—noisy but not disorderly, bold, bright, impressive.

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<sup>47</sup>Cf. Edward Shils. "Charisma, Order, and Status", in *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 267. "Effective power, however great, does not automatically and completely legitimate itself simply by its effective existence. The social order it appears to create, maintain, or control must not only give the impression of being coherent and continuous; it must also appear to be integrated with a transcendent moral order. It must incorporate a standard of justice referring to an order beyond that already realized in existing institutions."

Shao Jianbo, his uniform neat and spruce, as smart little automatic in the holster hanging from the brown belt around his waist, strode briskly towards the drill field of First Battalion. He was the regimental chief-of-staff, a brilliant, handsome young officer of twenty-two.

Jianbo walked over and watched the bayonet practice of the Heroes Platoon commanded by Liu Xunzang, otherwise known as "Tank". With the eyes of a superior officer on them, the men outdid themselves. They attacked lustily, their blades flashing, their shouts echoing through the air.

Half an hour later, a red sun began to show itself over the rim of the south-east mountains. The officer on duty at regimental headquarters, Chen Jing—a staff officer for communications and liaison, came running up to Jianbo. Panting, he saluted.

"Deputy Commander-in-Chief Tian telephoned us at five thirty-seven. He ordered a troop of cavalry for immediate action....

Anxious to know the reason for this sudden development, Jianbo walked towards the bridge at the east end of the village that led to the military zone headquarters. We put tens of thousands of Guomindang soldiers out of action in the Peony River region more than six months ago, he mused. All that is left of them are five brigades, and these are brigades in name only. They have no soldiers—just a few officers who've gone into hiding. Land reform work in the countryside is proceeding steadily. Everywhere in the villages, in the fields, people are busy—dividing the landlords' land, issuing new title-deeds, opening granaries and distri-

buting the grain, accusing landlords at mass meetings and settling scores for the oppression, exploitation, injury and humiliation the land-owning tyrants inflicted upon them for years, for generations. The peasants have grain in the granaries, and own land of their own to till. Everyone is happy. They're singing, *The ten-thousand-year iron tree has blossomed at last, branches withered for centuries are beginning to bud*. Life is peaceful for the people. Our troops are busy drilling, preparing for the day when we go into action against Chiang Kai-shek's main forces (pp. 1-3).

*Tracks in the Snowy Forest* is intended as a work of popular fiction, as an entertaining story that articulates, without ambiguity, the correct ideological line, and depicts the Party, personified by heroic PLA soldiers, as the saviour of the oppressed masses. With this in mind Qu quickly sets up the general framework of the novel, invokes the icon of the rising sun to confer legitimacy on the scene, and draws a direct connection between the Party and the benefits of the newly emerging socialist order.

From the information given in the first three pages of the novel it is clear that the soldiers' orderly routine is about to be disrupted, and that the regimental Chief-of-Staff, Shao Jianbo, will be at the center of the action. Jianbo serves much the same function in *Tracks* that Team Leader Xiao serves in *Hurricane*; he is the central hero and the novel's principal personification of the Party. Jianbo

is young, handsome, brilliant, and predictably his actions will be rational, disciplined, and ideologically correct. Interestingly, the stereotyping in *Tracks* is as much a result of the traditional method of heroic characterization in Chinese popular fiction as it is a result of the narrowly defined parameters of orthodox Socialist Realist literary doctrine.<sup>48</sup>

Not surprisingly, the opening scene of *Tracks* is animated by the life-giving rays of the rising sun. What is striking about Qu's use of this symbol is that it is given in a kind of shorthand, that is, its depiction is marked by an economy of detail. In contrast, recall the rich texturing of light and colour Zhou employs to ascribe meaning and value to the image of the rising sun. A decade later, when *Tracks* is published, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this symbol; Qu need only refer to it in brief terms to invoke an entire range of previously established meanings (the Party, Mao Zedong, the socialist age, etc.).

Clearly there is a difference between Zhou's and Qu's relation to this most central of symbols. Through his use

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<sup>48</sup>Cf. Robert Ruhlman. "Traditional Heroes in Chinese Popular Fiction", in Arthur F. Wright ed., *The Confucian Persuasion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960) p. 148. "Popular fiction does not speak of nondescript fathers and sons, but of 'good' and 'bad' fathers and 'filial' and 'ungrateful' sons. Good characters say and do exactly what is expected of them, invariably with identical phrases and attitudes; evil ways inspire a somewhat freer invention and more colourful details, but their depiction remains very stereotyped."

of imagery Zhou is encoding specific values into the image of the rising sun; Qu, on the other hand, is invoking an image whose values have already been established. This is an important distinction that marks a fundamental difference in the way the two authors relate to the structure of symbolism and the representation of myth in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction; Zhou uses images to build the meaning of symbols, whereas Qu uses symbols as images to convey established meaning. Zhou is reworking the informing values of China's traditional symbolic vocabulary; Qu is using that same vocabulary as an already well defined lexicon of tropes and symbols. Unlike Zhou, Qu does not have to "explain" the value of specific symbols, he need only incorporate them into the text to evoke the desired response.

In addition, *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* is a military romance<sup>49</sup> as opposed to a pastoral novel,<sup>50</sup> and symbols are

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<sup>49</sup>Cf. C.T. Hsia. "The Military Romance", in Cyril Birch ed., *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) pp. 339-390.

<sup>50</sup>Clark, op. cit., (see above, note 10), pp. 106-107. "William Empson has said that 'good proletarian art is usually covert pastoral,' and after reading a few Stalinist novels of this ilk [S. Babaevsky's *Cavalier of the Gold Star*], one might begin to suspect that the assertion is true. However, though the Stalinist novel makes heavy use of nature, it is not 'pastoral' in the old sense. But there is a modern 'version of pastoral' that Empson himself uses, and in this there is no necessary connection with a setting in nature, let alone with shepherdesses and Arcadian fields. Rather, literature is called 'pastoral' if, as P. Marinelli put it, 'it deals with the complexities of human life against a background of simplicity. All that is necessary is the memory and imagination should conspire to render a not too distant past of comparative innocence as more pleasurable than a harsh present.'"

"A way out of the 'harsh present' is also an important underlying motive of the Stalinist novel, but it situates it in the future instead of looking nostalgically to the past."

used quite differently. For Zhou symbolism is primarily a function of a distinct mythic narrative (subtext), whereas Qu uses symbolism as a function of the mimetic text; symbols are used to enhance the depiction of "concrete" reality. Unlike *Hurricane*, in *Tracks* there is no discrete symbolic narrative, and the principal characters and events are written in the mimetic mode. In fact, the opening chapter of this novel is marked by a distinct lack of symbolic representation; there is little in the narrative that leads beyond or transcends the mundane depiction of reality. This fact stands in sharp contrast to Zhou's extensive use of symbolic imagery in opening his novel.

This paucity of symbolic text is clearly evident in Qu's sterile litany summarizing the civilian population's general situation. His list of facts is devoid of imagery with the one exception of the song lyric, *the ten-thousand-year iron tree has blossomed at last, branches withered for centuries are beginning to bud*. Although it is the peasants who are singing this song, the iron tree evokes none of the pastoral imagery normally associated with a rural utopian landscape. On the contrary, it conjures up the images of steel resolve and mythic endurance. In this context the image of the iron tree is not a symbol of landscape but an iconic representation of the enduring spirit of the peasant

masses revived by the Party. As the central image in the opening chapter, then, the iron tree serves as the principal informing symbol of the novel; dormant for centuries, the spirit of the masses bursts forth, re-energized by the life-giving power of the Party. With the image of a long dormant iron tree Qu appears to be referring back to a time that pre-dates the Confucian order, to the time of a mythic egalitarian society.<sup>51</sup> As the source of new life the Party is the legitimate inheritor of this pre-Confucian tradition, and is the "vanguard" of its re-emergence.

Shao Jianbo, anxious to learn what has happened, rushes off to headquarters and reads the following dispatch:

Last night (the 12th) at 24:00 hours, over two hundred bandits hiding in the mountains suddenly raided Pine Tree Station, burning and killing. County Head Zhu and the land reform team led by her are surrounded.

Your regiment shall rush a battalion and a troop of cavalry, lightly equipped, to their rescue. The cavalry troop shall first cut the bandits' retreat route to the mountains so that we may destroy them to the last man. This is an order (p. 4).

The information given in this dispatch sets the plot of *Tracks* in motion by establishing the basic framework for a series of battles between the PLA and Guomindang bandits

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<sup>51</sup>Known in the post-Engels socio-historical tradition as "primitive communism."

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hiding in the trackless wastes of the Aristocrat Mountain Range. More immediate is the fact that Jianbo learns that his sister, County Head Zhu, and the land reform team at Pine Tree station are under attack. Clearly Jianbo is shaken by this news but struggles heroically to control his emotions, asking for permission to lead his troops to the rescue.

The regimental commander nodded. Jianbo strode through the door.

Commissar Liu hastened after him.  
"Comrade Jianbo. I know that County Head Zhu is your elder sister and she's very dear to you. If anything unfortunate has happened, you mustn't give way."

"Don't worry, Commissar." Jianbo grasped his hand. "You can rely on me...."  
(p. 4-5).

While this opening sequence of events set the plot in motion, it is also important because Zhou uses it to establish the basic framework for his particular formulation of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic, the contradiction between emotion and reason. Clearly Jianbo's emotions are stirred by the news that his sister is under attack, and Commissar Liu cautions him that he "mustn't give way." The message given here is that heroes in the new socialist age must apply objective criteria and reason when planning a course of action; Jianbo's response to the

situation at Pine Tree Station must be governed by rational thought not emotionalism.

Along with Shao Jianbo, the opening chapter introduces Liu Xunzang, the commander of the Heroes Platoon, and Gao Bo, Shao Jianbo's "clever young guard." While both will play major roles in the events to come their importance at this point in the novel is that they are assigned nicknames (*chuohao*). The fact that Qu uses nicknames informs the reader that the formula for depiction heroes in *Tracks* is linked to the traditional formula for depicting *hao han*; characters are given secondary names that describe certain outstanding characteristics. Because of his physical strength Liu Xunzang is called "Tank", and because of his youth and experience Gao Bo is called "Little Old Warrior."

Predictably, the scene that Jianbo encounters at Pine Tree Station is one of unspeakable horror; the village is in flames and mutilated bodies litter the ground. Qu does not spare the reader in giving a graphic account of the carnage left by the bandits; it is a description equal to any of the scenes of graphic violence portrayed in *Water Margin*.

From a big willow tree next to a horse  
trough hung nine grisly heads, suspended  
by wire strung through their ears. All  
had clenched teeth and glaring eyes;  
even death had been unable to quell  
their furious hatred.

A crude board attached to the tree bore the inscription, "This is what happens to pauper trash who take land from their betters."

Rigid with rage, Jianbo strode back to the chaff-cutter.

Beside the heap of cruelly murdered victims was a large pile of embers. The body of an old woman lay partly in the remains of the fire; it had been consumed to ashes from the waist down. The old lady's chest and white hair were flecked with blood (p. 7).

The bandits' message is important because it focuses attention on the class nature of the massacre. This event, is not one of individual but of collective, class tragedy. Once the bodies of the victims have been gathered together for burial the soldiers stand around them in a circle and swear an oath of vengeance. Again, this is not an oath of individual vengeance, but of collective, class vengeance.<sup>52</sup>

Standing at attention in a circle around the massacred villagers, the soldiers paid their last silent respects. Even their horses lowered their heads as if in mourning. Then two hundred iron fists shot furiously into the air, and two hundred voices cried:

"Forgive us, beloved countrymen, we came too late. But rest in peace. We swear to

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<sup>52</sup>Plaks, *op. cit.*, (see above, note 43), p. 336. "The most serious flaw of Sung Chiang's performance as a leader is one he shares with many other figures of narrative literature in China and elsewhere: his tendency to allow his own personal desire for revenge to govern his actions as a military commander." The emphasis in *Tracks* on collective anger and class vengeance marks a significant difference between the traditional Chinese popular novel and Socialist Realist fiction.

collect this bloody debt! We swear to  
avenge this heinous crime" (p. 8).

The group's collective rage and grief is particularized when Shao Jianbo learns that his sister has also been murdered by the bandits. Interestingly, it is Jianbo's young guard, Gao Bo, who brings him the news, and, in what is a clear example of character pairing, it is Gao Bo, not Jianbo, who expresses his emotions. Qu uses these two characters to demonstrate the "spontaneous" and "conscious" response to the events at Pine Tree Station.

Nine bodies were hanging from a big old cypress on the slope of the western mountain. Six men and three women. The bandits had disembowelled them and cut off an ear from each....

For a moment, Jianbo could see nothing, feel nothing. His head whirled. He began to fall. The weeping Gao Bo grabbed him and cried in alarm, "203. 203."

With an effort, Jianbo opened his eyes and took a grip on himself. Before he turned to look at his sister again, he heard a gentle voice saying, "Comrade Jianbo...if anything unfortunate has happened, you mustn't give way." He could clearly see in his mind the kindly Commissar Liu. Jianbo gritted his teeth. His eyes were dry. The grief in his heart became a towering rage (p. 9).

Despite the fact that Jianbo is standing before the disembowelled corpse of his beloved sister he wills himself to suppress his emotions. He begins to waver but hears the "gentle voice" of Commissar Liu urging him to not to abandon

his revolutionary "consciousness." This scene is clearly reminiscent of the one in which Little Wang appears to Zhao Yulin during his "rite of passage." Interestingly, Jianbo is not required to personally undergo the act of ritual sacrifice, as was Zhao; his sister, County Head Zhu, acts in his behalf. However, like Zhao Yulin, Shao Jianbo's resolve is strengthened through the intervention of a "spiritual" mentor (an experienced Party member) who guides the hero away from the emotional chaos of "spontaneity" toward the disciplined structure of revolutionary "consciousness."

Dry-eyed, Jianbo fulfils his organizational duties by writing a factual, "objective" account of events. The men under his command want to rush off into the mountains, but Jianbo awaits further orders, refusing to give way to his men's subjective, emotional response to events. As he waits, Jianbo reflects on his early life, on the history of his family, and on his own transformation from an orphaned peasant to a member of the Chinese Communist Party. This particular type of autobiographical narration is foreign to the traditional Chinese romance (*yanyi*) formula, but it is a key element in the formula for Socialist Realist fiction.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, (see above, note 10), p. 44. "The point of convergence that makes these disparate works [exemplars from the orthodox canon of Soviet Socialist Realist fiction] form a single tradition is the informing scheme of human biography that underlies each work and has its roots in Marxist-Leninist historiography and revolutionary lore. This curious aspect of Socialist Realist composition is demonstrated most strikingly in two official classics that are autobiographical: D. Furmanov's *Chapaev* (1923) and N. Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1932-34). In these novel's

Galloping hoofbeats interrupted his thoughts. Regimental Commander Wang and Commissar Liu dismounted.

Fighting to control his emotion, Jianbo stood before them at attention and gave his report, mechanically, as if by rote. By the time he reached the part about his sister's terrible death, he was unable to go on.

Wang, Liu, the PLA fighters, the villagers, stood in mournful sorrow.

"We have not fulfilled our duty," said Commander Wang. "We are very ashamed...."

"The death of County Head Zhu and the other comrades is a great grief to us..." said Commissar Liu. Then he raised his head, extended his chest and thrust his fist into the sky. "We swear: we shall wipe out the Guomindang bandits to the last man, and avenge their victims...."

"Vengeance, Vengeance...." Every soldier and peasant joined in Commissar Liu's cry, and their voices roared like thunder. "We'll collect this bloody debt. We swear to avenge this monstrous crime" (pp. 20-21).

The massacre at Pine Tree Station is an event that galvanizes the resolve of the PLA soldiers, and this final oath of vengeance strengthens the heroes' sense of common identity and common purpose. This is particularly important in the case of Shao Jianbo, Gao Bo, and Liu Xunzang (Tank),

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the author's own life was deindividualized as he patterned it to recapitulate the great legends of the revolutionary hero. Autobiography became autohagiography."

all three of whom had been identified by name in the text. As Ruhlman points out, oath-taking is a common feature in both *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*. Not only does the swearing of an oath strengthen the bond between the novel's principal heroes, it also reinforces the linkage between the new heroes of the revolution and their antecedents in the traditional popular novel.<sup>54</sup>

The events that follow from this opening chapter are an elaboration of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic which, in *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, is framed in terms of the contradiction between reason and emotion, and between thought and action. The importance of applying reason and "objective" criteria is stressed time and again throughout the remainder of the novel; it is never brute strength or martial skills alone that win the day. This thought/action dialectic is expressed through external events and is, therefore, primarily a function of the mimetic mode. This is not to say that *Tracks* is devoid of symbolic content; it is not, but the symbolic imagery of the mythic subtext is superimposed on what is essentially a mimetic text.

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<sup>54</sup>Ruhlman, op. cit., (see above, note 50), p. 170. "Their [the traditional *hao han*] common purpose is symbolized by the oath of brotherhood they all take. The day after they first meet, the three heroes of the *Three Kingdoms* take a similar oath: 'We were not born the same year, the same month, the same day, but we swear to die in the same year, the same month, the same day.' Instead of the normal loyalties between prince and subject, lord and vassal, father and son, which can be called *vertical*, the oath of brotherhood, found in all secret societies, establishes between swordsmen a bond of *horizontal* loyalties." In the context of the Socialist Realist novel, particularly *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, this *horizontal* loyalty is based only on common purpose but, more importantly, on class identity.

In the second chapter of *Tracks*, Qu introduces the bandits responsible for the Pine Tree Station massacre, Horse Cudgel Xu and Butterfly Enticer. Qu uses the slaughter to reinforce the contradiction between the "true" and the "just" (County Head Zhu) and the unmitigated evil of the feudal landlord class (Horse Cudgel Xu and Butterfly Enticer). As in all Socialist Realist fiction there is a wealth of biographical details to identify the villains as the blackest of demons; both characters are vividly drawn, which accords with Ruhlman's observation that the *literati* writers exercised greater descriptive latitude when depicting negative stereotypes.

Horse Cudgel Xu stood by the fire, hands on his hips, his horsy eyes staring, stubble half an inch long covering his face. With the firelight flickering over his big stout body, he was the incarnation of an evil spirit. Grinding his teeth, he sneered at the captives:

"Communists. Pauper trash...."

"let the bastards climb the Mountain of Knives in hell. Hey pauper trash, we'll see who's tougher." From behind Horse Cudgel Xu a hideous witch shot out. Her face was like a dried-up ear of corn—long, thin, yellow, with a mouth full of gold teeth. Venomously, she twitched her hips. There was no mistaking her. The notorious Butterfly Enticer (pp. 22-23).

There is no need here to recount in detail the biographies of Horse Cudgel Xu and Butterfly Enticer; their

lives and actions mirror the same evil qualities found in Han Number Six: exploitation of the peasant class, sadistic brutality, sexual promiscuity (particularly in the case of Butterfly Enticer), opium addiction, collaboration with the Japanese, and support for Chiang Kai-shek. All of the villains in Socialist Realist fiction fit this same pattern of unmitigated evil, which places them clearly beyond the purview of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. This is very important because the members of the landlord class had to be dehumanized before the "masses" would accept the Party's ideological justification for their extermination.

Events in Chapter Three begin to refine the plot, limit the number a primary characters, and focus the action on Shao Jianbo, the novel's principal hero. It is in the third chapter, as well, that Qu establishes the first of the novel's symbolic trines: Commander-in-Chief Tian, Regimental Commander Wang, and Commissar He. The significance of the number three, while based on the complex numerological structure of the *Yijing*,<sup>55</sup> conveys a range of less philosophically refined meanings common to popular culture.

In works of traditional popular fiction, such as *Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*, the triadic grouping of the

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<sup>55</sup>Cf. Richard J. Smith. *China's Cultural Heritage* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 91-92.

novels' central heroes is a principal feature of the informing scheme; for example, Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei in *Three Kingdoms* and Chao Gai, Song Jiang, and Wu Yong in *Water Margin*. Qu purposely uses both triadic and diadic character alignments to reinforce the linkage between his Socialist Realist heroes and the legendary heroes of the Ming dynasty classics. If Qu can effectively establish this illusory linkage between the past and the present, then by inference, the actions of his heroes will validate the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party and the new social order.

"What we need is a small flexible but strong unit that can scout and fight at the same time. A unit that can manoeuvre and twist through the mountain forest with the enemy until it finishes them off to the last man!" Tian brought his fist down on the table lightly.

"We have come to a decision," he continued. His eyes swept the room, then fixed themselves on Jianbo. "Comrade Shao Jianbo is to organize such a unit and be responsible for this task."

Jianbo was already on his feet. His young face was flushed with pleasure; his dark handsome eyebrows arched high. Controlling his excitement, he looked at Commander Tian gratefully. Lively, emotional, Jianbo was one of the youngest officers of his grade....

Commissar He liked this bold youth and recognized his good qualities. Now he added a word of caution.

"You'll need two kinds of courage—collective courage and the courage of the individual. The battles your men will be fighting will call particularly for the individual type of courage. This courage is based on three things—a clear political understanding, military skill and resourcefulness, and a powerful physique. Only men with these attributes can be a match for the kind of enemy you're going up against" (pp. 35-36).

In being selected to lead the small band of guerrilla fighters Shao Jianbo is singled out as an exceptional individual; however, to this point in the narrative he has done nothing extraordinary nor exhibited any particularly outstanding qualities. To reinforce the image of Jianbo as a heroic character Qu calls attention to "his dark handsome eyebrows arched high;" a visual cue taken directly from China's traditional symbolic lexicon. In the phrase, *yingjun de hei meimao song gao le*, the term *yingjun* conveys not only that Jianbo is young, handsome, and spirited, but that he is eminently talented as well.

The use of visual cues, while central to establishing a sense of continuity between Jianbo and China's earlier heroic tradition, does not, in and of itself, validate his selection as the leader of an elite guerrilla unit. To establish, finally, the legitimacy of Jianbo's elevated status, the remainder of Chapter Three is given over to an extended autohagiographic passage in which he recounts an

earlier episode in which a rationally throughout course of action saved the lives of his comrades taken prisoner by the Guomindang army.

Qu's use of a pen and pocketwatch to trigger Jianbo's reminiscence is an example both of his incorporating new symbols into the traditional vocabulary of *literati* fiction, and of encoding two new values not present in the novel written by Zhou a decade earlier. Just as Jianbo's dark arching eyebrows evoke a specific set of meanings, so too do the pen and pocketwatch; they are contemporary talismans that convey important information about the hero. The pen shows that Jianbo is literate and progressive. The watch, a rare and highly prized object, symbolizes the mechanistic world of industrialization, a world whose existence is made possible only by way of the Party's guidance.<sup>56</sup>

In the opening section of Chapter Four Commander Wang and Deputy Commander-in-Chief Tian meet with Shao Jianbo to check on his preparations for battle.

Wang and Jianbo rose to greet Tian as he entered the room. Tian shook hands with Jianbo and asked jestingly, "How's it

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<sup>56</sup>Katerina Clark, "Little Heroes and Big Deeds" in Sheila Fitzpatrick ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 190. "...the key myths of the age were so colored by a fervor for industrialization that they were usually expressed in terms of the factory model. Society itself was conceived as a machine, whose separate parts were harmoniously interrelated and regulated. In Five-Year Plan novels, even those dealing with the kolkhoz, one can find countless uses of the machine metaphor for society." Admittedly, Shao Jianbo's watch is not a factory, but within the context of a sinified variant of Socialist Realism (i.e., the predominantly rural orientation) the allusion to a mechanistic world view is clearly established.

going, General of the Expeditionary Force?"

"Everything's ready. We're leaving in an hour."

"Everything, eh?" Tian sat down on a bench. "Good. Let me hear about your 'everything.'"

Jianbo recited rapidly, as if giving a memorized report on the drill field.

"The unit has been formed. It consists of Scout Hero Yang Zirong, Combat Hero Liu Xunzang, Expert Climber Luan Zhaojia, the Long-Legged Marcher Sun Dade..." (pp. 49-50).

In his report to Commander Wang and Deputy Commander-in-Chief Tian, Jianbo identifies the detachment's principal characters: Yang Zirong, Liu Xunzang, Luan Zhaojia, and Sun Dade. Qu's use of descriptive titles (i.e., Scout Hero, Expert Climber, and Long-Legged Marcher) are variant nicknames, the use of which reinforces the figural linkage between these heroes and their antecedents in *Water Margin*; this is particularly true for Liu Xunzang and Sun Dade, both of whom are identified quite specifically. There is an obvious correspondence between Liu Xunzang (The Tank) and Li Kui (The Black Whirlwind), as well as between Sun Dade (The Long-Legged Marcher) and Dai Zong (The Marvellous Traveller).

Of particular interest are Shao Jianbo and Yang Zirong who, together, represent the novel's principal "heroic

pair." In terms of figural linkages it can be argued that Jianbo corresponds more closely to Liu Bei (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) than to Song Jiang; he is the idealist commander who inspires his champions, then sends them one by one onto the field of battle. Yang Zirong, on the other hand, is a man of action and, as will be seen from the text, is an up-dated version of Wu Song. In terms of the novel's "master plot" Yang Zirong's physical bravery and cunning serve as a foil for Shao Jianbo's disciplined and reasoned behaviour. The contrast offered by these two characters is necessary because Jianbo's transformation is not as overtly dramatic as that of Zhao Yulin; rather, it represents a gradual refinement of "consciousness" (i.e., increasing mastery over subjective behaviour).

After listing the personnel, he described the equipment, stated the tactics he intended to use, described all his preparations. He was plainly a bit proud of his thoroughness.

"So that's your 'everything,' is it?" the commander asked with unexpected sternness.

Jianbo realized he had slipped up somewhere. He knew how strict Tian was about battle preparations. His face reddened.

"Well, what about it? Do you have anything else to report?"  
"That's all."

"I ask you—what will you do if men are wounded?"...

"I'm confident in my men's strong physiques and endurance..."

"Rot." Tian fixed Jianbo with an icy stare. "What if the severity of a man's wounds exceeds the power of his endurance? Eh? What will you do? Let him die?"

"No, of course not." Jianbo was becoming a little flustered. "We'll pool our knowledge to win a maximum victory with a minimum of casualties."

"That's only your subjective intention. You're going into a huge trackless forest; winter there is bitterly cold. It will take you several months, at least, to finish your campaign, quite unlike your adventure in Yantai several years ago. Understand?"

"Yes." Said Jianbo earnestly. "I was only trying to make the unit more mobile, keep our size down to a minimum..."

"That's a mark against you—subjective and careless at the start....(pp. 50-51).

This exchange between Commander Tian and Shao Jianbo leaves no doubt that the cultivation of rational, objective thought is a principal theme in *Tracks*, as well as a necessary attribute in the late 1950s variant of the Chinese Socialist Realist hero. Clearly, Jianbo's failure to include a medical orderly in the unit is not a lapse into "spontaneity", but it does demonstrate that his transformation is not yet complete; that his elevation to the status of fully realized hero depends on his use of

objective criteria, not subjective judgements, in making decisions.

Like Zhao Yulin's story, Shao Jianbo's re-enacts the mythic tale of the hero's quest. While there are difference between them in narrative structure, plot, and characterization, the underlying process of heroic transformation is the same. Following his ritual passage at Pine Tree Station, Jianbo undertakes a hero's journey during which he proves his worthiness of elite status. What is most interesting and telling about his quest is that the "grail" he struggles to attain is identical to that sought by Zhao Yulin: the extermination of class enemies. This is a basic theme in all works of Chinese Socialist Realist fiction.

Craggy peaks pierced the heavens like great stone teeth; mountain gales roared over the tree-tops like tremendous angry seas. Dense trees blotted out the sky overhead; thick grass concealed the ground underfoot.

The Aristocrat Range—who knew how high it soared into the sky? Or over how vast an area it sprawled? People said it had thirty-eight hundred peaks. After several days of marching, the little unit had crossed only a dozen mountains. The evening of the third day, they made camp in a cave in a hung overhanging cliff, halfway up Mount Peony. Compared with the entire mountain, the cliff was no bigger than a fingernail, and Jianbo and his thirty-five men took up only a small corner of the cave (pp. 54-55).

Qu uses the very forces of nature to construct a landscape of epic scale. The images of mountain peaks towering like "stone teeth," and endless trees blotting out the sky enhance the heroic nature of Jianbo's quest by creating the picture of a threatening landscape, one that diminishes human beings. In point of fact, for all their described ferocity the villains in *Tracks* are rather easily overcome; it is the unpredictable force of nature that is the real enemy. By overcoming the difficulties of operating in a trackless forest (the problems of snow and wind, cold and damp), by taming the very force of nature itself, Jianbo and his comrades are able to triumph over the enemy, exterminating them to the last man.

There is no real benefit to be gained in analyzing each of the "hero cycles" depicted in *Tracks*; instead, I will look only at Yang Zirong's capture of the Eagle's fortress on Tiger Mountain. This particular episode is interesting because it is the one most closely linked to *Water Margin*; on his approach to the bandits' lair Yang Zirong faithfully re-enacts Wu Song's killing of a tiger on Jingyang Ridge.<sup>57</sup> Clearly, the linkage established through this re-enactment is meant to sustain the illusion that the contemporary

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<sup>57</sup> Shi Nai'an and Luo Guanzhong, *Outlaws of the Marsh*, trans. Sidney Shapiro (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1988), Vol. 1, pp. 363-373. For a detailed description of the points of correspondence between Wu Song's behaviour and that of Yang Zirong, see Hegel, *op. cit.* (see above, note 47), pp. 197-223.

Socialist Realist hero is the legitimate inheritor of the classical heroic tradition. However, while Yang Zirong's mad antics and the killing of the tiger are entertaining and advance the overall plot, they are minor incidents in the larger scheme to vanquish the Eagle. Far more important is what occurs before and after this particular episode. Just prior to his meeting with Zirong, Jianbo sits quietly in his quarters considering every aspect of the Scout Hero's plan. The night is very still and he hears the ticking of his pocketwatch; once again Qu draws the readers attention to this symbol of a "rationally" ordered world.

They seated themselves on the *kang*, on opposite sides of a low table. Zirong smoked his short pipe.

"What do you say, Comrade Zirong? Think you can carry out your idea?" Jianbo asked affectionately.

"I'm absolutely confident that I can, Commander 203." Zirong replied assuredly. "I've gone over every detail in my mind."

Jianbo nodded. "The plan is a good one, but..." He frowned. "if it goes wrong, you'll suffer and our mission will receive a serious setback..."

"But I have several conditions in my favour. First, we've got the Vanguard Map the Eagle's been longing for. Second, I've learned to speak the bandits' jargon. Third, with a little more practice I can act the part of a bandit perfectly. Fourth..." Zirong paused, then said with flashing eyes,

"I'm completely dedicated to the Party and the people."

"You think that's enough to guarantee victory?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, you're wrong." It was the first time he and Zirong had ever argued in their years of friendship as companions in battle... (pp. 177-178).

This exchange between Jianbo and Zirong is highly reminiscent of the one in which Deputy Commander-in-Chief Tian chastises Jianbo for thinking subjectively. The fact that it is now Jianbo who cautions Zirong demonstrates that through his experience leading the small detachment (e.g., planning and carrying out the assault against Horse Cudgel Xu on Breast Mountain) the novel's principal hero has gained a greater mastery over his own subjective behaviour.

Once inside the Eagle's fortress Yang Zirong's behaviour is anything but "spontaneous;" rather his precise use of "bandit jargon", his preparations for the "Hundred Chicken Feast", and his execution of Captain Luan are carefully thought out actions that are based on objective criteria.

Zirong laughed inwardly. So far so good. But he had to press on to the death. To show this vicious enemy any pity would be a crime against the people and their revolution. Under no circumstances could the Eagle be allowed to soften or to consider retaining Luan to strengthen

his gang. Alive, Luan would be a canker in the revolution's heart. He had to be killed....

Zirong dragged the Tinker to the edge of a cliff. When he saw that they were alone, the scout twisted Luan's collar and said furiously:

"You incorrigible bandit. I want you to know what you're dying for. Tuft Cheek nearly killed your wife, and he stole your Vanguard Map. But we caught him and our nurse saved her. We should have executed you at Nine-Dragon Confluence, but we were lenient. Who knew that today you would repay our kindness by adding crime to crime. You've brought this on yourself. In the name of our country and our people I sentence you to death."

Two shots, and the bandit crumpled to the ground. The scout examined him carefully to make sure he was dead, then kicked him over the cliff (290-292).

The manner in which Yang Zirong executes Captain Luan signifies a shift away from the raw emotionalism associated with the execution of Han Number Six. The reason for this shift is extra-literary, as are so many of the forces that shape Chinese Socialist Realist fiction; it corresponds to a shift in Party policy just prior to collectivization. In Qu's novel, the "objective" criteria upon which this fundamental shift is predicated are articulated by heroes whose actions are based on the reasoned will of the collective. It is clear from Yang Zirong's matter-of-fact approach to Luan's execution, that "human" emotions exert

little or no impact on the characterization of Chinese Socialist Realist heroes in late 1950s.

Not surprisingly, Shan Jianbo and the members of the small detachment eliminate every bandit they encounter as they sweep methodically through the Aristocrat Range. Only Hou Tiangun, Xie Wendong, and Ma Xishan, the leaders of Guomindang resistance in Heilongjiang Province, remain to be captured and executed. After fleeing to the border with Kirin Province, the villains are finally cornered at Four Square Ledge, where Jianbo and his comrades deliver the *coup de grace*.

"I order you to surrender your arms. Be quick about it," Jianbo snapped.

Ma put his right hand in his pants' pocket. There was a spurt of flame from the pocket, and a bullet skimmed by Jianbo's body. Yongqi darted forward, seized the bandit chief's wrist and wrenched out the pistol Ma had concealed in his pocket.

Furiously, Ma flung himself at the young commander, but a punch from Tank, who was standing beside Jianbo, felled him to the earth.

"Struggle. A death-bed struggle. Ridiculous." Jianbo took the pistol which Yongqi had seized.

After rolling a few turns Ma crawled to his feet. In his hand was a dagger—the bandit's last weapon. On it was inscribed: "Succeed or die with honour. Presented by Chiang Kai-shek." Ma rushed at Jianbo with his blade.

"Pardon me," said the young commander.  
He shot Ma dead with Ma's own pistol.  
The bandit chief fell without a sound in  
the snow...(p. 555).

Jianbo's remark just prior to shooting Ma Xishan with his own gun is curious indeed; who is Jianbo speaking to when he says, "Pardon me?" The incredibly offhand way in which Jianbo shoots the old bandit is highly reminiscent of the way Yang Zirong executes Captain Luan; this time, however, the killing is done without resorting to an elaborate ideological justification. With this last, coldly calculated act, Shao Jianbo resolves the personal/class revenge dialectic, signalling that his transformation is complete and that his heroic quest is at an end. Now that Jianbo's revolutionary "consciousness" is fully realized, he is able to kill Ma Xishan without compassion; the class enemy has been totally dehumanized, and his execution is worthy of only the most minimal remark.

Not surprisingly, Qu is unable to effectively incorporate current Party doctrine into the body of his text, and herein lies one of the principal difficulties in trying to infuse "old forms" with new meaning; the form itself limits content. However, like so much else in this pastiche of a novel Qu appends a final chapter onto the end of the text to reinforce the novel's ideological message. For all intent and purpose, *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* ends

with Shao Jianbo and White Dove looking out over a now benign landscape. In point of fact, the rush of images thrown at the reader in this last chapter bear little relation to the actual outcome of the novel.

Winter departed and spring came, Every living thing on the great land again awakened, all filled with a fresh vitality.

The towering Long White Mountains had turned emerald green. An entrancing sight, they shone like then thousand treasure houses.

The entire city of Peony River was a whirl of excitement and joy.

Thick smoke poured into the clear blue sky from every factory chimney, Every-where big motors hummed.

Mountain songs floated over the fields in the outskirts. Peasants, men and women were busy with the spring planting.

Whistles shrieking, trains rushed back and forth along the eastern Heilongjiang lines.

Training planes rose, dived, and circled the sky.

The raging Peony River, with tumbling waves, raced down it long course like ten-thousand stampeding horses...  
(p. 558).

Gone is the pastoral garden of a decade earlier; now factories, planes, and trains define the landscape. There is no radiating sunlight falling like "golden discs" onto

fields because the blue sky is now painted with the thick smoke of industrialization. This depiction of utopia as an industrialized landscape stands in sharp contrast to the image offered in *Hurricane*. There are superficial elements of correspondence between the two landscapes, but the linkage between a pastoral utopia and an industrial state is nearly as illusory as the linkage between the heroes in *Tracks* and their antecedents in *Water Margin*.

Despite a very tenuous connection, it is, finally, to this highly ordered world of machines that the heroes in *Tracks* belong. However, the epic transformation of a pastoral garden into an industrial utopia will prove far more difficult than tracking down bandits in the mountains; many heroes will be called upon to sacrifice themselves for the ideal represented in this mythic landscape. Interestingly, the novel comes to a close with Shao Jianbo, shoulder to shoulder with an army of comrades, marching south for the decisive battle of the war. If the reader accepts the linkage between *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* and *Water Margin* the future bodes ill for Jianbo; Song Jiang's southern campaign against Fang La was costly indeed.

#### Chapter Four: *Red Crag (Hong yan)*

*Red Crag*, co-written by Luo Guangbin and Yang Yiyan, recounts the struggle of the Communist Party Underground in Chongqing between 1948 and the "liberation" of southwestern China in late 1949. While the action takes place in Sichuan rather than in Heilongjiang Province, and has an urban rather than a rural orientation, there is a general correspondence between *Hurricane*, *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, and *Red Crag* based on the fact that they all share the same historical framework: the Chinese civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists following the collapse of the Japanese occupation. But there is more than a historical correspondence that links these works; all three are revenge novels in which sacrifice and death are the central themes; a point I will return to later.

The narrative structure of *Red Crag* is linear, and in this it corresponds more closely to *Hurricane* than to *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*. However, this correspondence applies only in the most general sense; in *Red Crag* there is no formal structural distinction between the mimetic text and symbolic subtext as there is in *Hurricane*. In this, the narrative structure of *Red Crag* is similar to that of *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, and both are written primarily in the mimetic mode.

This is not to say that *Red Crag* is a critical realist novel (it is not), or that it is devoid of mythic content. On the contrary, in *Red Crag*, Luo and Yang achieve a level and intensity of myth-making that far exceeds that found in *Hurricane*. Luo and Yang create a symbolic subtext in much the same way that Qu does in *Tracks*; they interrupt the mimetic text at specific points in the narrative to insert ritual events that articulate the heroes' value system and validate their actions in the mimetic mode. Interestingly, this type of narrative structure is used more effectively in *Red Crag* than in *Tracks*. The symbols used in *Red Crag* are contemporary rather than traditional, and rhetorical rather than imagistic; because of this the narrative achieves a sense of immediacy not achieved in either *Hurricane* or *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*.

In fact, the type of symbolic imagery so prevalent in *Hurricane* is reduced to an absolute minimum in *Red Crag*; to the image of a five-starred red flag,<sup>58</sup> and even this image is used sparingly. Because the novel's informing scheme is based on the use of rhetorical symbolism, the heroes in *Red Crag* are heroic because the narrator tells the reader that their actions conform to the behavioral norms prescribed by

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<sup>58</sup>Initially, the red flag carries the hammer and sickle, symbol of the international communist movement. Toward the end of the novel, however, this symbol is replaced by five yellow stars which symbolize China, the Party, the workers, the peasants, and the soldiers.

Party doctrine: they are loyal to the Party and the ideals of Mao Zedong Thought; they are committed to building a new social order; and, most important, they will sacrifice their lives for the survival of the Party and the Nation.<sup>59</sup> The minimization of symbolic imagery is possible because by 1961, the year of *Red Crag's* publication, the process of encoding the symbolic vocabulary of Maoist-Leninist socialist utopian mythology has been carried to the point of rigid formularization. Luo and Yang need not establish an elaborate symbolic system to explain the informing values that motivate the novel's heroes; the occasional brief reference to the icon of the red sun or that of the red flag, is sufficient to invoke a specific set of previously defined values.

Additionally, by 1961, the new Socialist Realist heroes have become heroic in their own right; they no longer have to rely on extensive inter-textual linkages with traditional popular fiction to validate their legitimacy. At the same time, the depictions of the heroes in *Red Crag* are so stereotypic they tend to blur as distinct individuals;

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<sup>59</sup>That the image of a red flag is the principal icon in *Red Crag*, particularly the five-starred red flag, broadens the identity of the Party. The sun icon, used previously to distinguish the Party as a force outside the traditional socio-political order, is now replaced by an icon of nationhood; the Party is no longer outside the body politic but is, in fact, its very heart.

a characteristic they share with their traditional antecedents.<sup>60</sup> Because no single character dominates the focus of the narrative the locus of heroism is diffused throughout a group of heroes, reinforcing the ideas of collective identity and collective behaviour. Within the context of this general framework there are subtle gradations of "electedness" based on an individual's degree of loyalty to the Party (i.e., the worse the torture the greater the hero's degree of loyalty). The authors reinforce this hierarchy of heroism by giving certain characters names that cue the reader to their elite status. For example, Comrade Xu, a leader of the Communist underground in Chongqing, has the given name, Yunfeng; the two characters that make up this name convey the meaning of loftiness. In the end, however, the identities of the individual heroes are subsumed (through death) within the larger collective identity of the mythic "Great Family."

*Red Crag* is a prison novel, a story of courage and sacrifice; correspondingly, the focus of dramatic action centers on the heroes' will to withstand cruel tortures and endure extreme deprivation while remaining loyal to and inspired by the ideals propagandized by the Party. The list

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<sup>60</sup>Ruhlman, op. cit., (see above, note 38), pp. 149-150. "...individualism is generally sacrificed to the emphasis on heroic traits. The hero emerges as a rather ingenuous, obvious, and single-minded fellow who makes his decisions without qualms or hesitations and demonstrates little psychological growth."

of cadres who sacrifice their lives in *Red Crag* is extensive; in fact the last two-thirds of the novel, set in the Zhazidong and Bai House concentration camps, recount in detail the prisoners' elaborate preparations for ritual death. While ritual sacrifice is an important element in all Socialist Realist fiction,<sup>61</sup> it has always been just that, one element in a larger ritual. In *Red Crag*, on the other hand, the entire narrative is used to set the stage for a final cathartic ritual of collective sacrifice which occurs during an abortive jailbreak at the end of the novel.

This focus on ritual death as the *leitmotif* in *Red Crag* marks a dramatic shift from both *Hurricane* and *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*; it is no longer the re-emergence of the hero transformed but the moment of epiphany, of death itself, that serves as the novel's *denouement*. The hardship and suffering endured by the prisoners serve as an elaborate purification ritual whereby the heroes "earn the right to make the passage to a new order of existence."<sup>62</sup> Unlike for Zhao Yulin and Shao Jianbo whose ritual passages were one step in a larger process, for Xu Yunfeng, Cheng Gang,

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<sup>61</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, (see above, note 10), pp. 177-182.

<sup>62</sup>Katerina Clark, "'Boy Gets Tractor' and All That: The Parable Structure of the Soviet Novel" in, *Russian and Slavic Literature*, eds., Richard Freeborn, R.R. Milner Gulland, and Charles A. Ward (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1977), p. 371.

Jiang Xuejin and the other novel's other victims, death is the supreme act of attainment.

### Textual Analysis

A heavy grey fog lay like a pall over the mountain city at the junction of the Yangzi and Jialing rivers, and the Monument to the Victory of the War of Resistance was hidden in the dense mist. the gloomy morning heralded the beginning of another year in an era of turmoil (p 1).

In contrast to the positive and energetic opening passages in both *Hurricane* and *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, where the icon of the rising sun animates the landscape, the opening passage in *Red Crag* is marked by an absence of this important informing symbol. Isolated from the main body of communist revolutionaries, the members of the Chongqing underground operate in a world that is still controlled by the "powers of darkness."

Beginning on this dour note, the first eight chapters of *Red Crag* describe the general political situation in Chongqing and introduce the key characters (heroes and villains) in the novel. The method used to introduce these characters resembles the "billiard ball" pattern used in the

introductory chapters of *Water Margin*;<sup>63</sup> one character leads to another, and so forth, as the narrative threads its way through the maze of underground Party workers until all the key characters have been identified. Yu Xinjiang is the character who set this pattern in motion.

Yu Xinjiang was not dressed like a worker today. His stocky body was garbed in a neat blue cotton high-button jacket. A pair of deep-set, penetrating eyes gleamed under his heavy black eyebrows. He was not yet thirty, but his serious manner was that of a much older man and gave one a feeling of capability and prudence. His brows contracted slightly as he heard the newsboy's shouts, and he hastened his steps, swinging his arms vigorously. Either because he was hot or for convenience, he had rolled up his sleeves, revealing darkly-tanned forearms and large calloused hands (pp. 1-2).

In their introduction of Yu Xinjiang, Luo and Yang employ all of the now standard visual cues used to depict heroes in Socialist Realist fiction (e.g., youth, deep-set penetrating eyes, and heavy black eyebrows). In addition, there are two additional cues incorporated into this description that identify Yu Xinjiang's class background; his sun-tanned forearms and calloused hands mark him as a

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<sup>63</sup>Plaks, op. cit., (see above, note 43), p. 309. "...the opening chapters of *Shuihu zhuan*, seemingly among the most peripatetic in the book...can be seen to establish the favoured structural pattern of the 'billiard ball' shift in narrative focus, according to which we follow the course of one figure until he runs into another, whereupon the narrative then follows the new trajectory of the latter's adventures, leaving the former in his tracks, perhaps to be reintroduced at a later juncture."

worker. Far more than in either *Hurricane* or *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, the question of class status is a critical issue in *Red Crag*; a worker/peasant pedigree serves as an important attribute in validating a hero's right to elite status.

The importance of class origin in *Red Crag* raises the question of the status and role of intellectuals in the novel and, by inference, in the new society. Quite simply, there are two representatives of the intellectual class in *Red Crag*, Liu Ziyang and Fu Zhigao. At the start of the novel both men are working as agents of the Party underground, and both are killed during the course of events, but the path that each man follows to his death could not be more dissimilar. As the scion of a wealthy family Liu Ziyang must struggle to overcome his innate bourgeois tendencies. Through his ordeal in prison Liu gains mastery over himself, eliminating the individualism that characterizes the intellectual class; a characteristic inimical to the cause of socialist revolution. The novel's other intellectual, Fu Zhigao, betrays the Party at the first sign of trouble, and to this day in China his name is synonymous with treachery.

Apart from his regular job as the chief accountant of the Dachuan Bank, Fu Zhigao has been assigned the task of

opening a bookstore that will serve as a reserve liaison post for the Party underground. He is instructed to run a quiet, non-political shop and, above all else, to avoid attracting the attention of the secret police. In the manner of a "true" intellectual (in the context of the novel, that is), Fu Zhigao listens more to himself than to his superiors, a trait that sets him apart right from the outset of the novel.

Fu Zhigao lit another cigarette, mused a moment, then continued: "Something else has occurred to me. After expanding the bookshop we might publish some sort of literary journal, as another means of uniting progressive young people...."

This project took Chen Songlin by surprise. "Has the leadership approved this idea?"

"What's your opinion?" Fu Zhigao asked in return. "Has the Party ever vetoed work that is beneficial for the masses? A revolutionary, particularly an underground Party member, should always look boldly ahead, act in the interest of the masses and use his own judgement on how best to serve the Party! If an underground Party member cannot look into the future, doesn't anticipate victory and dares not risk his life for the sake of the Party and the masses, and merely sits around waiting for the Party to give him assignments, then he is not a real politically-conscious Communist..."

As he listened to Fu Zhigao's bold statements, he couldn't help comparing him with Yu Xinjiang. He and Yu Xinjiang had been friends since childhood days... Yu Xinjiang was a few years older, and

look an active part in class struggle before him. He had always been very strict with his younger comrade... Fu Zhigao's temperament and style of leadership were entirely different. He was never severe, encouraged him to be bold in his work, and was considerate in every way. Yet Chen Songlin felt that there was an undefinable something in their characters that stood between them. He attributed this, however, to the fact that they had only known each other for a short time and to his own personal failure to understand intellectuals (pp. 25-26).

But it is not Fu Zhigao's intellectual class background, in and of itself, that causes his traitorous behaviour, rather it is his tendency toward unrestrained individualism (i.e., "spontaneity"), his desire for self-promotion at the expense of the collective. Although he is, ultimately, a negative character, Fu Zhigao's function in *Red Crag* is substantially different than that of the novel's other villains. Fu Zhigao's character is essential to establishing the framework of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic which is based on the contradiction between individual and collective identity. Out of all the Party agents only Fu Zhigao fails to overcome his individualism, and he alone serves as the polar opposite of his comrades when they are betrayed by him and imprisoned.

In sharp contrast to the character of Fu Zhigao stands Cheng Gang, a manager at the Yangzi Ordinance Works. As

with Xu Yunfeng, the characters that make up Cheng Gang's name are a cue to his elite status.<sup>64</sup> More than a mere manager, Cheng Gang is the printer of the Party's underground newspaper *Forward*. Educated but not an intellectual, Cheng Gang is everything that Fu Zhigao is not: he is committed, courageous, loyal, obedient, pragmatic, and so completely identified with the cause of the class revolution that he is easily mistaken for an ordinary worker; a fact that is made clear by his younger sister, Cheng Yao.

Then another incident, hardly anything out of the ordinary, occurred to her and made her heart beat faster. It happened on her brother's birthday. The noodles were cooked and he had not returned and her mother said: "Humph! I suppose he's in the workshop again!" There she had found him, covered with grease, among the workers. On the way home, she had happily commented: "Brother, how much like a worker you are! No wonder everyone says that although you are a manager of the plant, you don't put on airs." Brother's expression suddenly clouded and he was never again seen with the workers (p. 57).

Despite his great affection for the workers, Cheng Gang severs his close ties with them to conceal his "true" identity. Unlike Fu Zhigao who indulges his personal ambitions, Cheng Gang willingly subordinates his own desires

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<sup>64</sup>The character for his Cheng Gang's family name, Cheng, can be read as meaning, "to become" or "to turn into." The character for his given name, Gang, is a homophone for the character, "steel." Read together the two characters of his name convey the meaning, "to become steel."

to the needs of the collective. Because of his commitment to the revolution Cheng Gang labours from dawn to dusk at the Ordinance Works, then returns home to secretly print thousands of copies of *Forward* on a hand made mimeograph machine. When cautioned by Sister Jiang (Jiang Xuejin) to pay attention to his health, Cheng Gang responds in true heroic fashion.

"Sister Jiang, none of us will get old!  
How I wish I could fight forever  
shoulder to shoulder with you, with Xu  
Yunfeng and all our other comrades!"  
After a moment's hesitation, he  
continued pensively: "I may not live to  
see that day, but regardless of what may  
happen to me, I am firmly convinced that  
communism will be victorious! More and  
more people will awaken and fight in its  
cause!" (pp. 60-61).

Indeed, there is a certain irony in Cheng Gang's heroic pronouncement; neither he, Sister Jiang, nor Xu Yunfeng will grow old because before the novel comes to a close they will be dead. But as Cheng Gang states very clearly, the death of the individual is unimportant as long as the collective survives. As Clark points out, "this fact contributes to the extraordinary degree of depersonalization in depicting the hero [in Socialist Realist fiction]. Whether he lives on after the moment of death or not is of no great consequence,

for the individual tragedy is not History's tragedy."<sup>65</sup>

The fact that sacrifice and death are the principal thematic elements in *Red Crag* is reinforced by repeated descriptions (beginning with the opening paragraph) of a landscape in which the sun is continually obscured by dense fog. In reality, fog is endemic to Chongqing for much of the year,<sup>66</sup> and in this context the image is purely a function of the mimetic narrative. At the same time, the image of dank, weeping fog generates a strong sepulchral feeling; it is as though the city is an enormous tomb that pre-figures the many deaths that are soon to come.

From the roadside came the occasional shouts of vendors and the plaintive cries of beggars. Suddenly Sister Jiang heard a harsh-voiced command: "Step out! No straggling!" She looked around, a ghostly procession of conscripts wearing tattered uniforms shuffled wearily through the thick fog. Shivering with cold, they walked with hunched shoulder, benumbed hands hidden in their sleeves. Their cheekbones protruded sharply from emaciated faces, and their deep-sunken eyes reflected utter hopelessness (p. 64).

The sombre tone of the narrative in *Red Crag* contrasts sharply with the utopianism conveyed by the narrative in

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<sup>65</sup>Clark, op. cit., (see above, note 11), p. 182.

<sup>66</sup>Theodore H. White & Annalee Jacoby. *Thunder Out Of China* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1946), p. 5. "The city taken over the Central Government (Nationalist) as its house of exile was know even in China as a uniquely unpleasant place. For six months of the year a pall of fog and rain overhangs it and coats its alleys with slime."

*Hurricane*; the myth of the pastoral garden suggests that the triumph of communism over the traditional Confucian order will miraculously give rise to an egalitarian state comprised of workers, peasants, and soldiers. Despite this seemingly unrealistic view, Meisner points out that the founders of the People's Republic were far more pragmatic than their Soviet counterparts,<sup>67</sup> and there is a great deal of information in *Red Crag* about the difficulties of building a new society. Clearly, the myth of a rural utopia, depicted with such rich symbolic imagery in *Hurricane*, has been supplanted by a more sober view in *Red Crag*. Given the reality of widespread political purges and famine, it is not surprising that earlier images depicting a sun-filled pastoral utopia are absent in *Red Crag*.

It was already a year since she [Sister Jiang] has seen him [her husband] onto the boat at this very wharf last Spring. She wondered if he still coughed blood as he did when he was in Chongqing. Was he still fond of saying: "Every last spark of energy in us must go into the struggle for victory!"... He emphasized that building communism in a huge country of several hundred million people would be an arduous job.... The new generation of revolutionaries must be conditioned to an austere life from an early age (p. 65).

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<sup>67</sup>Maurice Meisner. *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 64. "The Chinese victors of 1949, by contrast, appear as somber realists; not seized by the same chiliastic revolutionary visions as their Russian predecessors, they were not to suffer similar disillusionments."

Not only is Peng Songtao (Sister Jiang's husband) totally committed to the process of building a new society, he is eminently pragmatic as well, often cautioning Jiang Xuejin that the transformation of Chinese society will not occur overnight, that the epic struggle will be passed onto the next generation. This rather stark assessment offered by Peng Songtao contrasts dramatically both with Zhou's depiction of an abundant rural utopia and Qu's depiction of the trains, planes, and factories of an industrial utopia. The utopian myth, seemingly so plausible during the "golden age" of the Maoist-Leninist revolution, is considerably less so in the context of the social and political realities of the early 1960s.

Not long after Sister Jiang's reminiscence about Peng Songtao she is forced to confront her most difficult test in the novel. Sent by the Party to smuggle medical supplies to the PLA guerrillas in northern Sichuan, she arrives in the rural city of Hechuan and discovers the severed head of her husband hanging in a bamboo cage atop the city gate. In a scene reminiscent of the one in which Shao Jianbo discovers his sister's mutilated corpse, Jiang Xuejin almost gives way to her powerful, personal grief, but at the critical moment when "consciousness" threatens to give way to "spontaneity" she remembers her duty to the Party. Sister Jiang correctly

subordinates her personal feelings to the needs of the collective, and in so doing signals her integration into the new social order.<sup>68</sup>

In her misery she reproached herself:  
Was this the time or the place for self-  
pity? What about the task with which the  
Party had intrusted her? She had no  
business to reveal her grief, and even  
less to linger (p. 79).

Among the agents of the Party underground in Chongqing (and by inference Party members everywhere) there is a sense of reverence for the written word, specifically, news of PLA victories and pronouncements from the Party elite (Mao Zedong). The reverential manner in which Cheng Gang cuts the stencils for and prints *Forward* reinforces this idea of the "sacred" word. During a meeting between Cheng Gang and Li Jingyuan, Vice-Secretary of the Chongqing Party branch, the mere act of cutting a stencil is used to create a scene that is imbued with a highly mythic quality. Curiously, the method used by Luo and Yang to build this scene is similar to that used by Zhou in *Hurricane*.

Cheng Gang watched Li Jingyuan's nimble fingers, and saw that this method was superior to his own. A stencil cut by Li Jingyuan was not likely to tear during the printing....

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<sup>68</sup>Clark, op. cit., (see above, note 61), p. 370. "Thus in the typical soviet novel you find a hero who pits himself against elemental (or elemental-like) forces in a series of trials which help him gain sufficient mastery of the self to ensure successful social integration."

Cheng Gang pulled a document out of a secret drawer and slowly unfolded it under the lamp. It had been given him by his elder brother two years before in Chongqing. The mimeographing showed that it had been printed from an extremely well-cut stencil. On the first page was Chairman Mao's poem *Snow* written in Red Crag village. It was done in Chairman Mao's calligraphic style and appeared so like the original that it was a joy to see...

Cheng Gang knew nothing about the work he had done before. but he did feel sure that this document from the East Sichuan Party Committee was made from a stencil done by Li himself....

Li Jingyuan looked at the document in Cheng Gang's hand and guessed what thoughts were going through his mind... He just looked at Cheng Gang, slightly adjusted his glasses with his fingers and went back to stencilling. The steady gliding of the stylus on the paper was like music to their ears (pp. 99-100).

While this particular scene has the quality of myth that is characteristic of the now familiar "elder/initiate" relationship, there is something else happening in the above passage that has little bearing on the events taking place in Chongqing; the deification of Mao Zedong. Cheng Gang is transported with joy just seeing Li Jingyuan's reproduction of Mao's calligraphic style; more important still, however,

is the particular poem chosen for reproduction.<sup>69</sup> Mao speaks of a greatness that transcends the exploits of China's legendary emperors: "For truly great men, Look to this age alone." While there are countless thousands of ordinary Chinese sacrificing themselves for the revolution, they are not the "great men" to whom Mao alludes; the "great men" are none other than Mao himself, along with the other elite leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, such as Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhou Enlai.

But *Red Crag* is not a novel about the Party power elite, and Cheng Gang's brief epiphany is quickly supplanted by events of a very different nature. It is only a matter of time before Fu Zhigao's activities alert the authorities. Completely disregarding standard operating procedure, he hires a Guomindang secret agent as a clerk in the bookstore/reserve liaison post. When Xu Yunfeng learns what has happened he immediately orders Chen Songlin and Fu Zhigao to abandon the shop. Additionally, he instructs Zhigao to warn Liu Ziyang that security has been compromised. Instead of doing what Xu Yunfeng asks, he takes refuge in a cafe where he considers his situation over a glass of brandy. In the midst of a rather lengthy internal monologue Fu Zhigao

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<sup>69</sup>See, Mao Tsetung *Poems* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), p. 23.

articulates the type of "spontaneous" individualism that makes his act of betrayal inevitable.

Although he had not known Xu Yunfeng very long, he had a rather unpleasant impression of him, for he was very strict and he and the usual worker's habit of being too much concerned about details. Xu Yunfeng was also rather self-opinionated, and his frequent criticism led Fu Zhigao to think that he was prejudiced against him. What kind of people did he like? Judging from Xu Yunfeng's messengers Cheng Gang and Yu Xinjiang...they were all young people, without vision or ambition, who thought of nothing but their work. Maybe Xu Yunfeng thought that such people were more easily controlled than highly experienced men like himself! Fu Zhigao had been harbouring such views for a long time....

That was why he could not blindly submit to their leadership. He believed that he must give some thought to his own personal ambitions and make some provision for the future, while working for the Party.... He had to use every means within reach to further himself, if he was going to make a name for himself in the revolution and not sink into oblivion (pp. 145-146).

Fu Zhigao's thinking epitomizes the type of individualism antithetical to the collectivism of the Maoist-Leninist social order. He dislikes loyal cadres like Xu Yunfeng and Jiang Xuejin who criticize his shortcomings; he is self-centred, self-opinionated (the trait he ascribes to Xu Yunfeng), and so completely consumed by personal ambition that he is totally incapable of subordinating his needs to

those of the collective (i.e., his comrades, the Party, and the Nation). However, Fu Zhigao does manifest a certain awareness beyond himself through his belated concern for his wife's safety. Although limited, Fu's "human feelings" distinguish him from the novel's other villains, such as Xu Pengfei and Mao Renfeng. It is specifically this touch of humanity that allows Fu Zhigao to function within the framework of *Red Crag's* variant of the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. Unlike the leaders and agents of the Guomindang, Fu Zhigao is not inherently evil; it is his unwillingness to submit to the will of the collective that is the cause of his demise. His arrest, when it does finally occur, marks a dramatic turning point in the novel.

Through the black, rainy night, deep-toned chimes slowly struck twelve. It was midnight in Chongqing—the city of darkness (p. 149).

Up to this point Cheng Gang and his comrades had confronted the enemy only indirectly; with Fu Zhigao's arrest the confrontation becomes direct. Not insignificantly, it is at this point in the novel that the narrative begins to take on an increasingly mythic quality. It is as though the novel's heroes (Xu Yunfeng, Cheng Gang, Jiang Xuejin, etc.), enter collectively into the same rites of passage experienced by Zhao Yulin and Shao Jianbo. The darkness, the rain, and the chime sounding cue

the reader that the heroes are venturing slightly beyond the purely mimetic realm. Clearly, Luo's and Yang's depiction of this ritual event differs from the other two in the number of participants. Far more significant is the fact that unlike in *Hurricane* and *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, where ritual sacrifice is one element in a larger transformational *gestalt*, in *Red Crag*, ritual sacrifice becomes the focal event for the remainder of the novel.

Not long after Fu Zhigao's arrest come those of Cheng Gang, Xu Yunfeng, Liu Ziyang and the others. Luo and Yang easily equal Qu Bo in producing graphic little bits of narrative detailing the excruciating minutiae of death by ten-thousand-cuts, or what have you. To endure these sadistic tortures the heroes in *Red Crag* must possess certain very specific qualities which Li Jingyuan helpfully articulates during a conversation with Cheng Gang's sister.

"Cheng Yao, are you brave?"

"What?" asked Cheng Yao, thinking that a strange question. "I'm not afraid of anything!"

"I don't mean that. The bravery I have in mind also implies steadfastness, perseverance and resolution. Let me tell you something. There was a comrade who never feared difficulties, who worked devotedly for the Party, never asking for honour or reward. Even those most dear to him did not know he was a Party member. He had a secret task, and even his family knew nothing about it. Unfor-

unately he was arrested. At the time of his arrest, his first thoughts were not for himself, but for the safety of the Party and his comrades. As the enemy was breaking down the door of his room, he calmly hung a broom outside his window, which was the pre-arranged danger signal. Don't you agree that this act of selflessness was bravery? Was he not a courageous man? (pp. 161-162).

In *Red Crag*, heroism is measured not in terms of peasant rebellion or cunning military victory, but by steadfast and resolute perseverance; Li Jingyuan states this explicitly. In contrast to Fu Zhigao, who sells out his comrades to save himself, Cheng Gang demonstrates just those qualities called for my Comrade Li when, under torture, he reveals nothing to Xu Pengfei. Xu Yunfeng, also being held for interrogation, demonstrates the same heroic qualities in a slightly "higher" variant when confronted with the tortured body of his beloved comrade, Cheng Gang.

"If you refuse to follow in Fu Zhigao's footsteps, another road is open to you!"

Xu Pengfei suddenly pointed to the otherside of the room. A strong light dazzled Xu Yunfeng. Xu Pengfei sprang to his feet and walked forward.

A heavy iron door in the wall creaked open and an even more dazzling glare came from the torture cell behind it. Gusts of cold air carried the reek of blood to Xu Yunfeng's nostrils....

A torn, bleeding body was lying on the concrete floor, with heavy fetters on

its ankles. Blood was still dripping from the motionless figure....

Xu Yunfeng cared nothing for his enemy's threats, but the blood on the floor aroused his fury....

Xu Pengfei's next words chilled him to the bone. "Your former message bearer, Manager Cheng Gang."

Xu Yunfeng rushed forward. He raised Cheng Gang and clasped him tightly to his chest. With tears in his eyes he brushed away the lock of hair covering Cheng Gang's eyes, wiped the blood from his pale cheeks and stared into his unconscious face.

"I told you it was a cruel business! How can you remain indifferent to the sight of your comrade being tortured?"

Xu Yunfeng jerked up his head, glared furiously at the vile brutes around him; then noticing Xu Pengfei's provocative manner, he immediately calmed himself. He could not afford to let a cheap outburst of emotion take the place of struggle. Loss of composure was just what the enemy was hoping for! He glared at Xu Pengfei but did not say a word....

"Even if you don't care anything about yourself, you should surely do everything possible to save the lives of your comrades! How callous you are! For the sake of your own reputation, you would send countless numbers of your subordinates to their deaths. You would let others pay for your stubbornness with their lives. You know the saying: 'A general builds his success on the thousand bleaching bones.' I really hadn't thought I'd find such feudal traits in you, Mister Xu—you, a self-styled Communist!"

The furious look on Xu Yunfeng's face had gradually disappeared and was now replaced by a scornful smile. Xu Pengfei was baffled. Tossing away his cigarette, he asked: "What are you smiling at? Why don't you talk?"

"I'm smiling at you...." Hugging the unconscious Cheng Gang, he said: "We Communists have no common language with people like you, but, I can tell you one thing: the victory of the people's revolution can only be won at great cost! We Communists consider it our greatest pride and joy to make such sacrifices for the sake of victory!"

"What!" exclaimed Xu Pengfei, recoiling a step.

"Your class nature dooms you to impotence. You are entirely incapable of understanding the great sentiments of a Communist" (pp. 176-177).

I have cited this rather long passage because all of the novel's major themes are touched upon in Xu Yunfeng's response to Xu Pengfei: the importance of control over one's emotions; the importance of subordinating one's individual needs to the needs of the Party; the willingness to sacrifice everything for the survival and the victory of the collective. That the "collective" is mythologized as a "Great Family" does not mitigate the terrible sacrifice that the Chinese people are being called on to make, the enormity of which is borne out by the millions of deaths that occurred in the wake of the Great Leap Forward.

Interestingly, there is a subtle distinction made between the way that Xu Yunfeng and Cheng Gang express their heroism. As a junior member of the "Family" Cheng Gang must withstand physical torture (he is beaten beyond recognition) to prove his worthiness of elite status; Xu Yunfeng, on the other hand, is threatened not with his own life but with the life of a comrade. Cheng Gang will proudly sacrifice himself to protect the Party, but Xu Yunfeng is willing to sacrifice the lives of others. Xu's behaviour articulates a slightly higher level of "consciousness," one that is commensurate with status as a leader.

Shortly after his arrest Xu Yunfeng is taken to a lavish banquet at Xu Pengfei's house, where he is to be manipulated into having his picture with the leaders of the Guomindang security service. But Xu Yunfeng, a hero of the revolution, easily out-manoeuvres his rather dull-witted adversaries, taking advantage of their ineptitude to lecture them on Marxist-Leninist ideology.

"Mr. Xu, you speak very well!" Mao Renfeng's short pudgy neck swayed lightly. then with a significant twist in his voice, he continued: "But now, let me ask you: aside from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, who else do you have?"

"Mao Zedong!" Pointing at Mao Renfeng, who gave a start and stepped back, he went on in a loud voice: "He has combined the general truth of Marxism-

Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, greatly enriched Marxism-Leninism and made its influence more keenly felt throughout the world. Marxism-Leninism will never become out of date. Armed with Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, the invincible Chinese people and the Communist Party will wipe out all reactionaries, including your pack of Yankee-nurtured secret agents!" (p. 205).

Luo's and Yang's rhetoric speaks for itself; nevertheless, I have cited this passage because it dates *Red Crag*, that is, it pin-points where the novel sits on the ideological time line between Yan'an and the Cultural Revolution. While the basic elements of the "Maoist myth" had begun to emerge as early as 1938, it is slightly anachronistic to suggest that, for the members of the Chongqing Party underground (ca. 1948-1949), Mao Zedong Thought was already being perceived as a formally defined and widely disseminated ideology.<sup>70</sup> Such anachronisms are not necessarily flaws in the narrative; rather they articulate ideological values that reinforce current Party historiography. To understand the various depictions and permutations of heroes and heroism in Chinese Socialist

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Raymond F. Wylie. *The Emergence of Maoism: Mao Tse-tung, Chen Po-ta, and the Search for Chinese Theory, 1935-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), p. 75. "By the summer of 1938 the major elements of the future "Maoist myth" were clearly discernible: (1) Mao's successful leadership of the practical movement since the Tsunyi conference; (2) his gradual displacement of all opposition groups in the Party; (3) his increasing independence from the influence of Moscow; (4) his growing stature as the party's leading military strategist; and (5) his emergence (however tentative) as a Marxist-Leninist theorist in his own right."

Realist fiction it is necessary to understand the ideological context within which a particular work is written.

Xu Yunfeng arrives at the Zhazidong prison having been severely beaten, unconscious, and manacled with heavy chains. When he regains consciousness he drags himself to the barred window in his cell door and begins to sing the *Internationale*. As the highest ranking cadre held in Zhazidong prison it is Xu Yunfeng's responsibility to act in such a way that his behaviour generates a sense of cohesion among the prisoners. Xu accomplishes this task by reaching out in song to his comrades; one by one their voices join his and soon the prison is filled with the power of their collective presence.

The bulb shone dimly on Xu Yunfeng's gleaming face. Since he had recovered consciousness he had become strongly aware of an indomitable force uniting the inmates of the concentration camp. It was invisible, yet he could see it in the faces of his sick, weakened and scarred comrades, in the bearing of these men and women who underwent fearful tests without a murmur, in those singing voices which expressed every man's determination (p. 236).

The most dramatic imagery in *Red Crag* is used to depict the terrible pain and suffering inflicted on the inmates. Because heroism is largely a function of rhetoric, graphic descriptions of torture are used to validate the prisoners'

heroic status, and no scene in the novel is more graphic than the interrogation of Sister Jiang.

"Don't think we can't tame a mere woman Communist! If you don't want to talk, all right, we'll help open your mouth. Tie her up!"

More savage yells.

The night dragged on endlessly through hours of pain and suffering, until finally the stars paled and the cocks began to crow.

Sister Jiang was no longer silhouetted against the blood-stained wall. She had been hung head down from a beam in the ceiling.

"Will you talk now?"

Grotesque shadows danced on the walls.

"No." Her voice was weak, but calm as ever.

"The nerves of the fingertips are linked with the heart, so think it over!"

"Will you talk?"

No reply.

A hammer was raised, throwing a heavy black shadow on the wall.

"Drive it in!"

The inmates visualized tightly bound hands, the bamboo splinter piercing a fingertip...blood spurting...

"Will you talk?"

No reply.

"So you won't talk? Pull it out! Drive it in again!"

No sound came from Sister Jiang in spite of the excruciating pain. The inmates felt as if the bamboo splinter had been driven into their own hearts...

Water splashed.

"Revive her! Drive it in again!"  
(pp. 280-281).

In this scene of sadistic torture Jiang Xuejin acts out the part of the perfect victim (although weakened and in pain she never loses her composure), which says a great deal about the values used by Luo and Yang to define heroism. Unarguably, Sister Jiang's behaviour is heroic, but acts such as this no longer refer back to the "golden age" of heroism personified by Zhao Yulin and Shao Jianbo; instead, they lay the foundation for the new (politically convenient) myth of heroic victimization.<sup>71</sup> Not surprisingly, victimization is dressed up and called martyrdom; a sleight-of-hand that is accomplished by turning the whole business into a ritual event, a collective rites of passage into the very utopian landscape depicted by Zhou Libo.

Li Jingchu gazed at Sister Jiang with deep emotion. Ten years ago they had studied and worked together. One scene in particular stood out in her mind: a sun-drenched valley, a sparkling

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<sup>71</sup> Following the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign, and the disastrous effects of drought during the Great Leap Forward, by 1961, the year of *Red Crag's* publication, China was awash in victims.

mountain stream, a bamboo grove. Sister Jiang was gazing reverently at a red flag emblazoned with a hammer and sickle. The valley echoed her solemn pledge: "It is my desire to join the Communist Party of China" (p. 287).

It is, at the very least, ironic that Luo and Yang exploit the canonical image of a pastoral utopia to validate the sinister myth of heroic victimization; the landscape depicted above is clearly reminiscent of the symbolic tableaux found in *Hurricane*, particularly those of Zhao Yulin's initiation and funeral. Significantly, this brief glimpse of utopia, the only one of its kind in *Red Crag*, refers not forward in time to some soon to be realized utopia, but backward, as Eliade suggests, to "the age of gold of the archaic eschatologies."<sup>72</sup> Ultimately, then, the informing scheme that validates Sister Jiang's heroism is based not on the "concrete" reality of socialism, but on the utopian myth encoded by Zhou Libo and others more than a decade earlier.

As events outside the prisons move *Red Crag's* heroes toward their inevitable fate, Luo and Yang reinforce the differences (in "consciousness") between characters that mark their positions in the hierarchy of heroic status. Clearly the Zhazidong concentration camp is a hellish place,

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<sup>72</sup>Mircea Eliade. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 149.

but it is neither as dark nor menacing as the Bai House prison; a place reserved for those elite cadres judged most dangerous by the Guomindang security police.

Both Bai House and Zhazidong were SACO concentration camps, yet they were quite different. There were fewer prisoners in Bai House, but their cases were regarded as more serious. They calculated time not by the day or the month, but by the year. Many of those pale, enfeebled men had been brought to this living tomb eight or ten years ago. Perhaps they had lost all hope of freedom (p. 378).

As part of an elaborate ruse Liu Ziyang is released from Zhazidong; however he is rearrested attempting to escape from Chongqing and is taken to Bai House. This particular sequence of events does more than bridge the action between the two prisons; as the only transitional hero in the novel Liu's development re-enacts the various stages of the "master plot," that is, the transformation from bourgeois "spontaneity" to revolutionary "consciousness." Until his release from Zhazidong, Liu survives his imprisonment by drawing on the strength of the collective; his real test comes, however, when he is isolated from his comrades and must face the enemy on his own. Lest there be any doubt about the ideological tempering that Liu has undergone during his stay at Zhazidong, upon his departure an older prisoner, known only as Elder Brother, confers on him the following blessing:

"Don't worry. There will be comrades at the new place too. Besides, you have already gone through enough ordeals to be able to overcome the weaknesses of an intellectual." (pp. 346-347).

Conveniently, at Bai House Liu is placed in a cell with Cheng Gang and, after a suitable period of scrutiny by the other inmates, he is acknowledged as a "true believer" and once again welcomed into the nurturing embrace of the collective. Although conditions at Bai House are far worse than at Zhazidong, this fact is incidental because the men imprisoned there are the most steadfast, the most resolute, and show the most perseverance. This is particularly true of Xu Yunfeng who, singled out for the cruellest form of treatment, is locked away alone in a dungeon beneath the prison. Xu Yunfeng's total isolation is the ultimate test of a true revolutionary; cut off from all contact with the sustaining power of the "family" he has only his internalization of the collective ideal to draw on for courage and strength.

There were no day and no nights here. Time dragged on endlessly, second by second, in impenetrable darkness. After Xu Yunfeng recovered consciousness, the darkness and loneliness began to torment him. No comrades, no possibility of carrying on the struggle, and for a long time no knowledge of where he was nor how long he had been here. One thing he remembered clearly was that he had left Zhazidong on New Year's Day, 1949. The memory of the jubilant victory

celebrations would forever remain fresh in his mind—more vividly than all the subsequent tortures he had undergone—and this memory sustained him in his solitary struggle (p. 489).

Entombed alive like some character in a Gothic novel, Xu Yunfeng finds the strength to steadfastly persevere by conjuring up an image of his prison "family" at Zhazidong which is, ultimately, a mythic representation of the Party as the "Great Family." The power of the collective is so great that even in total isolation Xu Yunfeng resolutely carries on the struggle; using only his bare hands he claws his way through the solid stone wall of his dungeon.

The days passed, Blood dripped from his lacerated fingers, but still he scraped away. The deeper he got into the rock the slower his progress. The fetters on his wrists and ankles impeded his movements and the narrowness of the opening made it hard for him to insert his hands. Yet no difficulties could deter him from this stupendous task (p. 491).

But, it is not enough that Xu Yunfeng scrapes his way through solid stone, and herein lies *Red Crag's* central message; such an act takes on a truly heroic character only when it serves the needs of the "collective."

He was certain that he was imprisoned in some SACO concentration camp. Perhaps this was Bai House, that hell-hole with which the enemy had threatened him. But no matter where he was, he could not be the only prisoner. The escape route he was digging might do for the other

comrades too. If such a thing were possible, he would prefer to keep it as a reserve exit for them, when they made their break for freedom, rather than use it himself. What an unexpected stroke of luck that the enemy had decided to lock him up here (p. 491).

Although Xu Yunfeng is the nominal leader of the Bai House prisoners, he ceases to function in the mimetic mode as soon as his ordeal in the dungeon begins. It is heroic that he survives his isolation in the black depths of the prison; it is mythic that he triumphs ("spiritually") over his captors. His transformation from a revolutionary leader into a political myth occurs not because he wills himself to claw through stone; rather, it occurs because he is resolute in his selfless commitment to the survival of the Chinese Communist Party. Predictably, when his time comes, Xu Yunfeng goes proudly and silently to his death, never revealing the escape route he created for his comrades.

With the fall of Chongqing at hand the cast of heroes who have survived the rigors of Bai House and Zhazidong face certain execution if they remain in prison. With the sound of PLA artillery thundering in the distance, and a hail of gunfire decimating their numbers, Liu Ziyang, Ji Xiaozuan and the others prisoners make a break for freedom.

Bullets whined past their ears. Grasping the wild grass in the fissures of the rocks, Liu Ziyang kept climbing. Gusts of mist-laden night wind cooled his

burning face. How wonderful to be free! He forced open this iron prison with his own hands and escaped from the hell-hole on his own feet! As he breathed the bracing mountain air, freedom seemed to be just ahead, even though the firing of their pursuers was getting heavier. But as he was leaping over a thorn bush he suddenly cried out

"What is it?" Ji Xiaozuan immediately caught hold of him.

Liu Ziyang did not reply. His hand moved slowly to his breast. He felt a warm liquid running down. A quiver ran through him, but then he thought of Cheng Gang, Lao Xu, Sister Jiang, of the many comrades whose fate he did not know, and of Sun Mingxia. Thorns tore his prison uniform as Ji Xiaozuan gently eased him to the ground....

Liu gazed at the glow of the flames rising from Zhazidong on the other side of the mountains. It cast a red reflection on his pale face. Was there a song in those flames? Liu Ziyang's lips moved imperceptibly, and almost inaudibly he breathed:

*Listen comrades:  
Rolling like the spring thunder,  
The artillery of the People's Liberation Army!  
The people are liberated!  
The people are victorious!  
We have not sullied  
The honour of the Party!  
We... (pp. 602-603).*

Finally, then, as in all Socialist Realist fiction, the death of the individual is unimportant. What does matter, on the other hand, is the honour of the Party and the victory of the "masses." The fact of Liu Ziyang's death is

incidental to the manner of his dying; his last thoughts are not about his own survival but about the survival of the all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-caring Party. The complete subordination, through death, of the individual to the collective is an extremely high price to pay for social change. However, the heroes depicted in *Red Crag* are willing to make this ultimate sacrifice, and for their selfless devotion they are accorded the highest status; i.e., their passage to the Chinese Socialist Realist variant of the Elysian Plain<sup>73</sup> is assured.

If, after all the deaths that have occurred in *Red Crag*, there remains any ambiguity about the source of power and social vision that inspired the prisoners' heroic behaviour, the novel ends with one last bloody ritual, offered up to the stern masters of social change.

The searchlight pursued the prisoners as they scattered. Bullets traced threads of fire in the night sky. Then the finger of light caught Ji Xiaozuan and stayed on him. He made no attempt to evade it. Instead he stopped and straightened up in its glare. He looked at his departing comrades, then calmly turned around to face the hail of bullets.

Scornfully, Ji Xiaozuan stared down at the enemy below. Standing erect on a lofty boulder, he drew their venomous

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<sup>73</sup>see Joseph Campbell. *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 53.

fire, determined to win time for his comrades' escape.

"Go ahead and shoot!" Crossing his arms, he spread his legs apart to get a firm stance. "Bullets cannot subdue a Communist!"

A smile on his pale face, the blood flowed unchecked from the wounds on his body and dyed red the crag on which he stood.

The searchlight suddenly went dead, but Ji Xiaozuan still stood on the blood-stained red crag, gazing at the prisons lying at his feet. In the distance, the fierce fires consuming Zhazidong illuminated the pines on the crest of the mountains. Nearby, a conflagration lit up the ruined walls around the shattered remains of Bai House. Explosions thundered far and near, as everything in SACO—that hell on earth—perished in flames and smoke.

Before Ji Xiaozuan's glazing eyes rose a vision of countless golden starred red flags swirling and dancing in the breeze, and merging into a sea of crimson. His lips moved in a last smile (pp. 605-606).

With this final bloody ritual *Red Crag* is brought to a close. The now standard symbolic cliches and didacticism aside, what is most curious and interesting about this novel is way that Luo and Yang magnify one specific element in the Chinese Socialist Realist mythopoeic *gestalt* (i.e., ritual sacrifice), and manipulate the event's informing values so as to mythologize the terrible historical reality of what was occurring in Chinese society. The emergence of death as

a *leitmotif* signals a fundamental shift in the function of myth in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction. Despite their structural and thematic differences, in both *Hurricane* and *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* myth is used to validate the Party's heroic struggle for revolutionary change; in *Red Crag*, however, myth is used to vindicate the Party's widespread victimization of the Chinese people themselves.

Neither the fact that Chinese Socialist Realist writers, such as Luo Guangbin and Yang Yiyan, were not the first "workers in literature" to use popular fiction as a vehicle for putting a heroic face on political terror, nor the authors' paean to death does anything to mitigate the sad, if not sinister, reality of the high price being imposed on the Chinese people as the cost of "making real" the political myths that "validate" Mao Zedong's vision of social change.<sup>74</sup>

The depiction of Ji Xiaozuan's death ends the novel with a single powerful image (a kind of socialist *imitatio Christi*) meant to reinforce the myth of heroic sacrifice. Interestingly, this final glorious scene is constructed without invoking the Party's primary icon (i.e., the red sun

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<sup>74</sup>Clark, op. cit., (see above, note 10), p. 177. "The increasing emphasis on revolutionary sacrifice in Stalinist hagiography more or less coincides with the increasing 'sacrifice' in Soviet political practice, i.e., with the intensification of the purges. Indeed, the emphasis laid on the personal price paid by Bolshevik leaders in earlier years can be seen as an indirect vindication of the 'price' they were exacting on their own victims."

rising in the east). Ji Xiaozuan does allude to it indirectly when he rhapsodizes about the timely arrival of the Party, but it is not the rays of the red sun rising that casts a glow on his pale face, but the red flames of destruction lighting up the pre-dawn sky. It is this light, then, that is flickering in Ji Xiaozuan's eyes when he envisions "countless golden starred red flags, swirling and dancing in the breeze, and merging into a sea of crimson."

In what is perhaps the novel's final prophetic irony, the Party (the Army) does arrive, but not in time to save their comrades who languished so long in prison. This particular scenario is not surprising given the historical reality that cadres taken prisoner by the Guomindang were forever after regarded with suspicion. History decrees that the heroes of Zhazidong and Bai House must die; there is no other fate available to them. It would seem, then, that *Red Crag's* final message is that bitter sacrifice and widespread death are the necessary pains of a new nation giving birth to itself.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

Even the most casual reading of Chinese Socialist Realist fiction, particularly the canonical works, reveals that the principal characters are, to a significant degree, shaped by elements of popular mythology. This fact is not, in itself, unusual; all of the heroes and heroines in genre fiction are popularization of cultural archetypes. However, the mythopoeic function of Chinese Socialist Realist fiction has been largely overlooked by Western critics, and it is this oversight that I have attempted to redress in the preceding paper. Admittedly, my analysis is brief and, of necessity, limited in scope, but it was not my intention to present a definitive work on Chinese Socialist Realist fiction; rather, to suggest an alternative approach to understanding the meaning and value of popular fiction in Communist China prior to the start of the Cultural Revolution.

In the sense that Socialist Realism is genre fiction, not unlike adventure stories, murder mysteries, and romance novels, it shares certain general characteristics with popular fiction written in the West; the plots are basically simple, characters are stereotypic, and the good guys always win in the end. At the same time there are fundamental differences; in Socialist Realist fiction plot development

and characterization are governed by an extremely high level of formalization. This is not to be confused with formularization; all popular fiction is formulaic, but Socialist Realism is formally so. Clark attributes this formality to the fact that all Socialist Realist fiction conforms, in varying degrees, to a "master plot." I would expand on this idea by pointing out that Maoist-Leninist political mythology elevates popular culture to semi-religious status, and because of this there is a strong element of religiosity in Socialist Realist fiction.

Having rejected the ordering myths of China's traditional, elite cultural institutions, the Party had to offer an alternative mythology to explain and validate its radical restructuring of Chinese society. Initially, with nothing else to choose from, Socialist Realist writers drew on their own experiences of the revolution as the raw material for creating a new secular mythology. Thus, the heroes in *Hurricane*, *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, and *Red Crag* are more than fictive agents operating in the mundane worlds of Yuanmao, Peony River, and Chongqing; from Zhao Yulin to Ji Xiaozuan they all participate in a higher order of meaning, one that finds expression in the myths of heroic sacrifice, ritual death, and initiation into the Party's ever growing pantheon of martyrs and saints.

The principal informing element in this new mythology is the Chinese Communist Party as paterfamilias; from this idea derives the Great Family, and from the Family derive the heroic daughters and sons of the revolution. However, as evident in the evolution of myth from *Hurricane* to *Red Crag*, all was not well in the Family. What is, perhaps, most startling about the evolution of myth in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction is the speed at which Zhou Libo's carefully crafted pastoral utopia is transformed into a macabre landscape littered with the bodies of the Party faithful.

*Tracks in the Snowy Forest* is a transitional novel in the sense that it stands between *Hurricane's* utopia and *Red Crag's* execution ground; Shao Jianbo still personifies the socialist *hao han* spirit but his adventure ends on a note of ambiguity. In part this can be attributed to Qu Bo's lack of skill as a writer; he is never able to effectively integrate the text and subtext, and unlike Zhou, who uses symbolic imagery with great skill, Qu handles symbols like pieces of *applique* that he layers, rather willy-nilly, onto the fabric of the mimetic text; the final "chapter" is the most egregious example. At the same time, it should be recognized that the ambiguities in this novel also reflect the uncertainty of the times in which it was written.

While Shao Jianbo's adventure is entertaining, and highly instructive regarding the need for self-control, objectivity, and Party loyalty, it is the last page of the novel that I find the most informative because the image it presents is so totally out of keeping with everything that precedes it in the novel. What occurs so abruptly here at the end of *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* mirrors rather accurately the fundamental reorientation occurring in Chinese society — the displacement of the pastoral utopian myth, propagandized to win peasant support, by the new, more doctrinally relevant myth of a pristine industrial utopia.

Clearly it was not Qu Bo's intention to undermine the stature of his hero, but Shao Jianbo's sudden arrival in utopia is problematic at best; there is nothing in the novel that suggests the existence of such a place. In contrast, when Zhao Yulin is laid to rest the symbolic ground in which he is buried has been carefully prepared earlier in the novel; his life and death fit neatly within the parameters of his own mythology. For Shao Jianbo this is not the case, he is completely out of context in this dramatically reordered utopian landscape of factories, planes, and speeding trains; it is as though Qu allows Jianbo to outlive his own myth. What is, in the end, most telling about Shao Jianbo's fate is that it lacks finality, that there is no

unifying moment of ritual closure; instead, he is left standing in an alien landscape awaiting marching orders into an ill-defined and uncertain future.

Nonetheless, as uncertain as the future might be, when the flags wave and the bugles sound, Shao Jianbo and his comrades begin their heroic march south towards Chongqing and the liberation of China. It is a journey that takes three years and, as seen in *Red Crag*, when the soldiers finally do arrive, they are just moments too late to save their comrades in the Bai House and Zhazidong concentration camps.

The stench of death permeates *Red Crag* from the opening paragraph ("A heavy grey fog lay like a pall over the mountain city") to the final, glorious moment when Ji Xiaozuan plants his feet, crosses his arms and declares: "Bullets cannot subdue a Communist!"<sup>75</sup> Of course, just the opposite is true, and as he stands there atop the bloody crag, his body pierced throughout by enemy bullets, the image calls to mind Mantegna's painting of St. Sebastian. Such a parallel is, perhaps, more accurate than might at first be apparent; this is exactly the type of imagery that

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<sup>75</sup>This is just the type of subjective thinking Shao Jianbo's adventure of self-mastery was designed to eliminate. Unlike Qu Bo, whose hero rationally articulates the qualities needed for smooth assimilation into the new social order, Luo Guangbin and Yang Yiyan write more in the style of Zhou Libo, who very skillfully uses the symbolic elements of the mythic subtext to manipulate the readers' emotions.

Clark points to in Soviet Socialist Realism to suggest that by historicizing the events of their own lives (lived or observed) Socialist Realist writers transformed autobiography into autohagiography.<sup>76</sup>

At the moment of his death, Ji Xiaozuan is moved by the same vision, the same force that carries Zhao Yulin forward into a barrage of enemy fire; a belief in the Communist Party, not as a political entity, but as the unifying myth in modern Chinese society. But something very dramatic occurs between the time of Zhao Yulin's martyrdom and Ji Xiaozuan's execution; the utopian vision that justifies heroic sacrifice and legitimizes the Party's social agenda, so immediate in *Hurricane*, is reduced to a brief memory in the thoughts of a peripheral character in *Red Crag*.

When *Hurricane*, *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, and *Red Crag* are looked at in consecutive order, the three novels recount fairly accurately the Communist Party's strategy for winning the civil war against the Guomindang: 1) overthrow the rural landlord class and redistribute its wealth; 2) root out and eliminate pockets of resistance; 3) liberate the cities for the final victory of the revolution. On the surface, then, each of the novels uses the same general

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<sup>76</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, (see above, note 11), p. 44.

historical framework to tell what is, essentially, one long story; that of the Chinese people's (i.e., the Party's) heroic struggle against the forces of feudal oppression. What is striking, however, is that for all of the novels' apparent similarities, their subtexts convey very different messages; this is particularly true in regard to *Hurricane* and *Red Crag*.

The point I want to make here is that the fundamental and very dramatic shift that occurs in the Party's utopian vision (from pastoral landscape to prison cell) is articulated not in the mimetic but the mythic text. It is for this reason that the mythopoeic function in Socialist Realist fiction should not be overlooked or dismissed as trivial. When all is said and done, it is these myths that serve as a unifying force in China's new social order, and legitimize the Party's political agenda. As Nietzsche quite rightly observed:

Without myth every culture loses the healthy power of its creativity: only a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement.<sup>77</sup>

What, then, is the horizon defined by Chinese Socialist Realist mythology? As shown in the preceding analysis, the answer to this question changes over time. In fact, during

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<sup>77</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche. "The Birth of Tragedy" in Walter Kaufmann, trans., ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), p. 135.

the little more than a decade that separates the publications of *Hurricane* and *Red Crag*, the mythic horizon defined by Marxism–Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought (particularly the latter) becomes increasingly ambiguous. In *Hurricane*, Zhou takes great care encoding symbolic images that depict a utopian landscape filled with light, hope, and optimism. Even the contrived horizon offered up at the end of *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* is animated by a poorly defined but positive force. By the time that Luo Guangbin and Yang Yiyan write *Red Crag*, social, economic, and political realities in China have reduced that earlier utopian horizon to a single, highly attenuated memory.

By reading the mimetic text in *Red Crag* I learn that many members of the Chongqing Communist Party underground, captured and imprisoned by the Guomindang, did not survive the experience. By reading the symbolic subtext I learn that the utopian myth, so believable<sup>78</sup> twenty, ten, even five years earlier did not, in fact could not, survive the historical reality of events such as the Anti–Rightist Campaign and the Great Leap Forward.

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<sup>78</sup>As testament to the initial power of the Party's utopian socialist mythology one has only to read the sampling of books written by Western journalists, missionaries, and military men to realize that the myths of Chinese Communist Party captivated even foreign visitors. Cf. Claire & William Band, *Dragon Fangs: Two Years with the Chinese Guerrillas* (London: George Allen & Urwin, 1947); Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1949); Evans Fordyce Carlson, *Twin Stars of China* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1940); Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Random House, 1938); Ilona Ralf Sues, *Shark's Fin and Millet* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1944).

Finally, then, what one learns from the mythic subtexts in *Hurricane*, *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*, and *Red Crag* is about the "orthodox" intellectual, moral, and spiritual values that informed Chinese society between 1948 and 1961. Needless to say, there are other novels written during this period that I could have used for my analysis, but these three works in particular illustrate very clearly the rapid disintegration of the utopian horizon in Chinese Socialist Realist fiction.

It is not dawn that lights up the last horizon in *Red Crag*, it is the fires of destruction, and the swirling red flags envisioned by Ji Xiaozuan do not enhance but obstruct the horizon. By reading *Red Crag's* mythic narrative one begins to discern that this is not a novel about heroes but about victims. This is not what I thought when I first read the novel; I believed it was another Socialist Realist adventure story that more or less conformed to the pattern seen in *Hurricane* and *Tracks in the Snowy Forest*. I recognized immediately that it was a highly manipulative text, but I did not understand the extent of the manipulation. Instead of lauding the heroes of the revolution, Luo and Yang exploit their deaths to legitimize the Party's victimization of the Chinese people. In *Red Crag*, there is nothing left of the life-giving force, or

energy of renewal in the myth of revolutionary sacrifice. It is a bitter irony, indeed, that such acts of heroism that did occur at the Bai House and Zhazidong concentration camps were used to justify the stark reality that terror and death, not utopia, that awaited the arrival of China's masses at the horizon of their own revolutionary history.

Luo and Yang perform their sleight-of-hand quite skilfully. One can almost feel up lifted and inspired by Ji Xiaozuan's (melo)dramatic sacrifice. Certainly, there were millions of ordinary Chinese who wanted to believe in the transmutation of victimization into heroism, despite all of the terrible evidence to the contrary. But a people cannot abandon their own myths without having something with which to replace them; consequently, in the wake of the Great Leap Forward a new myth began to emerge in China, the myth of believing in the myth of the revolution.

The heroic vision depicted in Zhou Libo's novel *Hurricane* marks the highest point of correspondence between myth and society in Communist China. In *Red Crag* the mimetic text illustrates the distance travelled from Yuanmao's ripening fields of corn and wheat to a prison cell on the outskirts of Chongqing; the mythic subtext reveals just how very far that distance really was.

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Title of Thesis: A Dream of Red Heroes: Myth in Chinese Socialist Realist Fiction

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August 28, 1992

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