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“Modernism” in Modern Chinese Literature: The “Third Type of Person” as a Figure of Autonomy

“... the first one to take up the challenge was Mr. Lu Xun. Venerable grandfather said ‘We need theory’...” (Su Wen)

Recent research in modern Chinese literature has witnessed a reintroduction of the term “modernism” to discuss certain forms of literary production in early twentieth century China. Xiaobing Tang reads Lu Xun’s canonical text “Diary of a Madman” (*Kuangren riji*) as a modernist text in which “the modernist obsession with language and with the condition of meaning comes in and asserts itself as deeply political. A modernist politics, in the end, invariably begins with examining how a given representation of reality is always outmoded” (Xiaobing Tang 73). According to Shu-mei Shih, “[t]he deployment of Western critical terminology in the analysis of non-Western writing can readily unsettle Eurocentric paradigms of cultural discourse. This is particularly the case when we use the term *modernism*, which has been invested with decades of scholarly attention and has acquired a kind of hegemonic cultural value in the West” (Shu-mei Shih 1). Although discussions of “modernism” in critical theoretical studies of modern Chinese literature has only occurred relatively recently, in China the term “modernism” is hardly new.

One group of writers often referred to as the New Sensation School (*Xin ganjuepai*) wrote some of the earliest modernist literature in China in the 1920s and 30s. Until Yan Jiayan initiated research into “New Sensation School” with a selection of short stories in 1985 (see Yan Jiayan, *Xin ganjuepai xiaoshuo xuan* [*A Selection of New Sensation Fiction*]), a critical silence surrounded the New Sensation School and “modernism” in mainland China for nearly fifty years. A few years later, Yan followed up with an historical study where he discussed the New Sensation School along with others in *Several Schools of the Chinese*

Modern Novel (1989). Yan contends the New Sensationists represent China's first modernist (xiandai zhuyi) school of the novel (1989, 125). Yan traces the modernism of the Chinese school through the *Shinkankaku ha*, a group of Japanese avant-garde writers. Citing Yokomitsu Riichi, Kawabata Yasunari, Nakagawa Yoichi, and Kataoka Teppeï, Yan also links the Japanese writers chronologically to European avant-garde movements such as Expressionism, Surrealism, Futurism and Dadaism (Yan 1989, 126). The French writer Paul Morand is cited as influential, and Valéry Larbaud is also cited as a precursor for having written about the city (Yan 1989, 127; 143). In his most recent study, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945*, Leo Lee focuses mostly on "New Sensation School" writers. Significantly, aside from the inclusion of the poet Shao Xunmei, the writers Lee chooses to focus upon in his literary readings correspond to the group established by Yan Jiayan in *Several Schools of the Chinese Modern Novel*, namely, Shi Zhecun, Liu Na'ou, Mu Shiyong, Ye Lingfeng, and Zhang Ailing. Lee's readings of authors remain firmly within the scope of the problem of influence, and Yan Jiayan's bibliography of influence on these writers "generally known as urban modernists" (Lee 1999, 153) is expanded: Shi Zhecun is read with reference to Arthur Schnitzler, Freud, and "uncanny" literature; Liu Na'ou and Mu Shiyong with regard to Paul Morand, film culture, and the "femme fatale"; and Ye Lingfeng is read as a sort of minor dandy to Shao Xunmei and the European decadents. Only Zhang Ailing seems to stand on her own, as a literary mediator between Shanghai and Hong Kong.

In this essay I discuss autonomy in modern Chinese literature through a reading of the "third type of person" debate that took place in Shanghai in the early 1930s. My research focuses on five "New Sensation School" writers: Liu Na'ou (1900- 1939), Mu Shiyong (1912-1940), Shi Zhecun (1905-), Ye Lingfeng (1905-1975), and Du Heng (1907- 1964). Most discussions about New Sensation writing tend to ignore Du Heng. However, I attempt to give an historical context to Chinese modernism through a reading of some of the critical writing he produced under the pseudonym Su Wen, in particular the so-called "third type of person" (disanzhong ren) debate.

Su Wen and Du Heng were both pseudonyms of Dai Kechong, who was born in the city of

Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.¹ Dai Kechong's life can perhaps only be understood within the complex political and cultural context of the 1920s and 1930s in China. Shi Zhecun claims Dai Kechong, Dai Wangshu (Dai Meng'ou, 1905-1950) and he all became members of both the Communist Youth and the Guomindang in 1925. Political affiliations aside, all three were enrolled in Aurora University, a Jesuit run institution in Shanghai, to study French in the mid-1920s. While they were students at Aurora, the three friends would publish a literary journal entitled *Yingluo* (*Necklace*) that lasted four issues. Despite Dai Kechong's later associations as anti-communist, when the Guomintang were rounding up suspected communists before the purges of 1927, Dai Wangshu and Dai Kechong were both held and questioned in a jail overnight until Dai Wangshu was able to get in touch with the influential father of one of their classmates to secure their release (see "Zhengdan ernian" [Two Years at Aurora], Shi 1995, 4-11; also, see Trumbull 21-23). In the early 1930s, Dai Kechong worked with Shi Zhecun as assistant editor of *Xiandai* (*Les Contemporains*).² However, especially after the "third type of person" debate, Dai seems to have had his back against the wall in Shanghai. During the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), Dai Kechong worked as a newspaper editor in Hong Kong. Dai would convert to Catholicism when he was concealed in a catholic church during the occupation of Hong Kong by Japanese forces. After the war, Dai Kechong worked for the Guomindang organ *Zhongyang ribao* (*The Central Daily*), first in Chongqing, then Nanjing, and finally, after the paper moved there in 1948, in Taiwan. Although Dai Kechong would be painted with a pro-Guomintang brush, so to speak, in 1953 he lost his post at *The Central Daily* for political reasons.³ After leaving *The Central Daily*, Dai wrote and edited for numerous newspapers and periodicals in Taiwan including *Ziyou Zhongguo* (*Free China*) until his death from emphysema in 1964. Aside from his work as an editor and critic (and a very polemical one at that), Dai published three volumes of short stories and two novels, *Pantu* (*Traitor*, 1936), and *Xuanwo liwai* (*Inside and Outside the Vortex*, 1937). He also published translations of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorion Gray*, and Anatole France's *Thais*.⁴ But Dai Kechong

1 Su Wen was used as a pseudonym for critical, and Du Heng for novelistic, works.

2 Dai joined *Les Contemporains* by the third volume (the second year of publication). *Les Contemporains* was the French title of *Xiandai*, an important literary magazine that ran from 1932-1935. Many of the articles comprising the "third type of person" debate were first published in *Les Contemporains*.

3 In particular, see Zhao Tingjun 10-13. Also, see, Ye Lingfeng, "Yige disanzhongren de xialuo" [The Fall of a Third Type of Person].

4 Biographical information on Dai Kechong is quite sketchy and difficult to come by. Aside from Shi, Zhao, and Ye, see Chao Yen-sheng and

is perhaps best known under the pseudonym Su Wen for his contribution to the "third type of person" debate in the early 1930s in Shanghai, one of the most important debates of the League of Left-Wing Writers.

Before I discuss the actual debate, I will provide an historical introduction to the term "modernism" in modern Chinese literature. As well, I will briefly trace the concept of autonomy in Theodor Adorno, Peter Bürger, and Gregory Jusdanis. I will also discuss concepts of autonomy put forth by critics of modern Chinese literature. In particular, I note Michael Hockx's problematic recourse to Pierre Bourdieu. My strategy here is primarily an attempt to develop a theoretical foundation for autonomy while avoiding the pitfall of citing "textual mediations" as bibliographical sources for modernism in China.⁵ This paper is not an attempt to find a theoretical framework to account for all the writing by the "New Sensation School" writers, but I do believe the autonomous figure of the writer, as it was presented in the "third type of person" debate, accounts for specific aspects of some of their writing.

Wu Fuhui.

5 Shu-mei Shih relies on linkages based on what she refers to as "textually mediated" sources (342-48).

Much of the fiction by these writers was published within the Nanjing Decade (1927-1937). During the Nanjing Decade, the city of Nanjing served as a capital for the Nationalist government of China. In addition, this short period of ten years was important for many reasons. The first year of the Nanjing Decade was the year the city of Shanghai was given special status as a locally autonomous municipality.⁶ In the cultural field, the Nationalist government, the Guomintang, would launch a quasi-fascistic movement called the New Life Movement which purported to modernize Chinese culture down to the most minute quotidian details. The period is also referred to as the “Decade of the Left League,” for that loose affiliation of writers established in 1930 called the League of Left-Wing Writers that promoted a radicalization of culture based on Marxist-Leninist theory. As Wen-hsin Yeh notes: “During this decade of the New Life Movement and the League of Left-Wing Writers, culture was itself politicized. The full significance of the political disenchantment of the Nanjing years must be assessed, therefore, not only in terms of the quest for particular political alternatives and specific solutions; the climate of the decade calls for a fundamental reexamination of the relationship between culture and politics” (see Wen-hsin Yeh 232).

Xiaobing Tang’s discussion of modernism is informed by a sensitivity to the problem of influence in modern Chinese literature. “... the term *modernism*, when applied to a Chinese context, cannot be taken simply as a periodizing concept. It should not be forced to suggest a facile repetition, in the historio-graphical sense, of Western modernism as either a literary movement or a cultural experience” (see Xiaobing Tang 50). Tang’s contentions are important, particularly his comments regarding the imposition of a modernist pattern or stage on Chinese literary history based on a Western analogue. Nevertheless, I contend the invocation of the term “modernism” should be understood as having chronological relevance. That is to say, such a term is often posited as part of an attempt to link modern Chinese literary production to production in other cultures at, or around, the same historical time. Raymond Williams’ suggestion in his discussion of the word Modern is a fairly good starting point: “*Modernism* and *modernist* have become more specialized, to particular tendencies, notably to the experimental art and writing of c.1890- c.1940...” (Williams 1988, 208, italics in original). What is being expressed is the notion of a period.⁷ Furthermore,

6 For an historical discussion of the establishment of Shanghai as an autonomous municipality, see Christian Henriot, *Shanghai 1927-1937: Elites locales et modernisation dans la Chine nationaliste*.

7 In the context of China, Leo Lee’s discussion of “a new linear consciousness” is significant in this regard (Lee 1999, 43). Also, for a discussion of “shidai” (epoch) and “xiandai” (modern), see Lee 1990, 109-35.

the invocation of a term like modernism carries a considerable amount of baggage, so to speak. Cultural resonances to be considered, what could be called an aesthetic ideology. And one of the most important concepts for modern aesthetic ideology is autonomy.

One of the first theorists to develop the concept of autonomy with regard to modern art was Theodor Adorno. Adorno's theory of aesthetic autonomy is informed by a critique of European enlightenment thinking, but his aesthetics probably grew from his theory of avant-garde music (see Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music*). Adorno's concept of autonomy is quite complex and for the sake of my argument I will be guilty of a considerable amount of reduction here.⁸ Adorno's theory carries the most weight in the modern period. Adorno considers modern art to be a form of opposition or revolt against society:

Previously, styles and artistic practices were negated by new styles and practices. Today, however, modernism negates tradition itself. In so doing, it extends the sway of the bourgeois principle of progress to the field of art. The abstractness of that principle is tied up with the commodity character of art. Hence modernism in its earliest theoretical articulations, with Baudelaire, takes on a fatalistic ring. The new is intimately related to death. In this sense, Baudelaire's satanism is an identification with the negativity of social conditions, although he himself thought of it as a critical motif. (Adorno 31)

For Adorno, art is autonomous and not autonomous, because art intertwines dialectically with the empirical world it revolts against. Moreover, because of its relation to the world, art is rational: "In the eyes of the existing rationality, aesthetic behaviour is irrational because it castigates the particularity of this rationality in its pursuit not of ends, but of means. Art keeps alive the memory of ends-oriented reason. It also keeps alive the memory of a kind of objectivity which lies beyond conceptual frameworks. That is why art is rational, cognitive. It is the gaze which transforms empirical being into imagery" (Adorno 453). Autonomy is a problematical concept. Art, and the artist, should not be considered as autonomous in any absolute sense. While art may revolt against society, art inevitably gets caught up in the society it rejects.

⁸ Adorno discusses autonomy within an historical continuity reaching back to Kant's concept of disinterestedness and the aesthetic idealism of Hegel and Schiller, among others. Although Adorno eschews questions of origins, he will, for example, make claims for autonomous art in Greek antiquity.

Peter Bürger locates autonomy within the European Enlightenment and the founding of the discipline of Aesthetics: “With the constitution of aesthetics as an autonomous sphere of philosophical knowledge, this concept of art comes into being. Its result is that artistic production is divorced from the totality of social activities and comes to confront them abstractly” (Bürger 42). Taking a sociohistorical approach, Bürger traces the history of art through three stages: the sacral, the courtly and the bourgeois. In a sense, the concept of autonomy, like the concept of nation, is projected back from the present to the past: “...the *autonomy of art* is a category of bourgeois society. It permits the description of art’s detachment from the context of practical life as an historical development — that among the members of those classes which, at least at times, are free from the pressures of the need for survival, a sensuousness could evolve that was not part of any means-end relationships” (Bürger 46). But it is clear that, for Bürger, autonomy becomes a concept as bourgeois culture and the avant-garde come to blows: “The European avant-garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society. What is negated is not an earlier form of art (a style) but art as an institution that is unassociated with the life praxis of men” (Bürger 49). Bürger is selective and schematic; however, as an attempt to pinpoint the particularities of avant-garde opposition, his critique is quite important.

The concept of autonomous art could be considered as “Eurocentric,” but care should be taken when discussing the “location” of autonomy. Gregory Jusdanis, in a study of national culture in Greece, makes the claim for autonomous art as an integral aspect of cultural modernity: “The Greek case indicates that the dichotomous thinking underlying the whole argument for Third World modernization has been present right from the beginning. The initial encounter with modernity launched Greek society on a cataract of ideological oppositions (East-West, traditional-modern, purist-demotic, classical-contemporary, ethnicity-state) which lead to instability and sometimes to violence. To resolve these tensions, if only in an imaginary way, another modern construct was imported, the autonomous aesthetic” (Jusdanis xiv). And more importantly, autonomous art is, above all, indication of an institutionalization of culture. As Jusdanis remarks of the changing role of music in Europe beginning in the eighteenth century: “People paid for it as for any other commodity. It became autonomous and secular when, separated from the background noise of the festival, court ceremony, or church, it emerged as an autotelic form to be appreciated for itself. No longer in the air, part of the life-praxis, music became an art” (Jusdanis 98). Jusdanis’ approach is sociological, and Habermas’ concept of the public sphere is never far away: “... the purposeful introduction of cultural and political institutions was not accompanied by similar transformations in society and the

economy. A parliamentary democracy was installed and an autonomous literature constructed without a bourgeois civil society" (Jusdanis 81).

Much work is needed to account for the concept of autonomy with respect to the context of modern China. Lydia Liu's contention that the (autonomous) aesthetic is "a domain of symbols and representations that determine the meaning of the national culture" covers part of this problem.⁹ Michel Hockx's recent work on the Literary Association (Wenxue yanjiuhui) is significant in this regard. Hockx's discussion of autonomy is an attempt to apply Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the "literary field" within the context of modern Chinese literature: "The method of study employed in this article is inspired by the work of the French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu, especially by his conceptualization of literary practice as a relatively independent space ('the literary field'), providing agents with possibilities to distinguish themselves from other agents in terms of at least one shared principle. The advantage of this view in comparison with other theories of literature is that it makes no prior assumptions about the nature of this so-called 'autonomous principle'" (see Hockx 51). On the contrary, I would contend that Bourdieu's theory of the autonomy of the literary field relies on a number of assumptions, not the least of which is the question of autonomy itself. Hockx is clearly aware of the cross-cultural limitations of Bourdieu's literary field when he refers to a notion of "collectivity" in Modern Chinese literary practice (Hockx 76). Another assumption in Bourdieu is the "generative principle" of what he refers to as a "double rupture." The "double rupture" was a "double rejection" of social art and bourgeois art by writers like Flaubert and Baudelaire, which Bourdieu contends was a significant aspect of "position taking" in nineteenth century French literature (see Bourdieu 77 *et passim*).

9 See Liu 183. Liu is responding to Gregory Jusdanis here. Although Liu does not use the term "autonomy," it is an implicit aspect of her argument surrounding what she refers to as the "discourse of legitimation" and the formation of a "canon" of modern literature in the 1930s in Shanghai. In particular, see Liu 183-238.

Unfortunately, such a category would seem to reproduce itself as a narrow structural model when applied within the Chinese context: “The writers of the 1920s were students, professional educators or professional editors, who wrote literary work mainly in their spare time. By writing so-called new literature, they adopted a position within the literary field of the time, which was dualistically structured around an opposition between high and low literature” (Hockx 75-76). Furthermore, it is clear that Bourdieu’s dualistic category unambiguously encompasses more than solely cultural production: “I am thinking, for example, of their political neutrality, which shows itself in the complete eclecticism of their relationships and friendships and which is associated with the refusal of any engagement in action [...] of any official consecration [...] and above all of any kind of ethical or political preaching, whether glorifying bourgeois values or instructing the masses in republican or socialist principles” (Bourdieu 79). The specificity of the “double rupture,” therefore, can hardly be treated as a universal category.¹⁰

10 “The degree of autonomy of the field (and thereby, state of relations established there) varies considerably according to periods and national traditions” (Bourdieu 221).

As a theory of elite competition, Bourdieu's concept of the literary field is perhaps the most sociologically rigorous description of European aesthetic autonomy to date. Moreover, Bourdieu's chronological location of the assertion of autonomy occurs at that moment often associated with the emergence of an historical avant-garde in the late nineteenth century.¹¹ In its most generalized sense, autonomous art represents the differentiation and privileging of culture for particular ends, even if those ends are something as vague as "artistic appreciation." Autonomy for art occurs the moment the concept of art itself is invoked and separated into a discipline.¹² Nevertheless, a distinction must be made between autonomy as a *concept* and as an *institution*. In the same way that Habermas' public sphere fades off into the utopian distance of male coffeehouse patrons in seventeenth and eighteenth century England, autonomy is also a theoretical fiction, which may have disappeared with the modern period.¹³ As Marx Wartofsky put it rather succinctly: "[the institutional theory of art] is an *ad hoc* theory, since the problem it addresses is a problem which first appears in nineteenth-century art, and then, more sharply, in the twentieth century. It is just the problem of that art whose purpose it is to challenge all previous standards or criteria of art" (Wartofsky 244).

The founding of the League of Left-Wing Writers (or the Left League for short) in 1930 signalled a further politicization of culture in China. Nevertheless, literature also maintained a certain amount of autonomy because literary production was being separated as an entity within society for its function, more specifically as a (political) pedagogical tool. Despite the obvious political implications of its formation, the Left League was formed to function as an inclusive common front regardless of a writer's particular party affiliation.¹⁴ Su Wen's category of the "third type of person" was a challenge to the openness of the Left

11 To be more precise, for Bourdieu, it is the 1880s. See Bourdieu 113-40.

12 Something which continues to this day in varying degrees in universities around the world.

13 Thus, Bourdieu's concept of autonomy may be appreciated not merely for its scientific, but also its polemical value. See "Postscript: For a Corporatism of the Universal" in Bourdieu 337-48. My sweeping comment concerning Habermas is perhaps an overgeneralization. Nevertheless, there is a sense in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* that Habermas' historical argument follows a trajectory from the almost nostalgic example of the coffee houses of seventeenth and eighteenth century England (see 42 *et passim*) to end somewhat pessimistically in front of television sets of twentieth century America (see 163 for a contrast between the two). See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*.

14 The complex circumstances around the formation of the Left League deserve much more space than I can give it here. For an excellent treatment of Left League history, see Wang-chi Wong, *Politics and Literature in Shanghai: The Chinese League of Left Wing Writers*,

League, a challenge to political over artistic commitment.¹⁵

1930-1936.

15 Wong Chi-wang gives a good reading of the debate under discussion, see Wong 120-51. Also, see Tang Tao 33-55, and Trumbull 209-25. For an important personal account of this debate, see Shi Zhecun, "Xiandai zayi" (Random Recollections of *Les Contemporains*) in Shi Zhecun 1995, 26-57.

The infamous "third type of person" debate actually started with Hu Qiyuan's (1910-) critique of nationalist literature and art (*minzu wenyi*), which he read within the context of contemporary world fascist movements, and arising in China as the result of an "internal disorder" (*neiluan*).¹⁶ Setting the historical context, Hu cites examples in Italy, France, and Japan, as well as China's "National Essence" (*guocui*): "Although art is 'not predominant' (*feizhishang*), it's certainly 'not subordinate' (*feizhixia*). To degenerate art into some kind of political gramophone (*liushengji*), is simply artistic treachery" (Su 7). Hu Qiyuan denounces contemporary nationalism having already by this point declared himself as "...of the class of liberal intellectuals (*ziyou de zhishi jieji*), coming from an objective standpoint ... not affiliated with any party or school" (see "Zhenli zhixi" [A Call to Truth] in Su 302-05). Hu's appropriation of "historical materialism" was not welcome by some leftist writers and will come under attack as being false. Moreover, Hu was asking for trouble when he wrote his critique of Qian Xingcun (A Ying 1900-1977), a former member of the radical literary group the Sun Society, who had virulently attacked Lu Xun a few years before. However, Hu Qiyuan's critique of Qian Xingcun is as much a defense of May Fourth figures like Mao Dun (1896-1981) and Lu Xun (1881-1936) as it is a denunciation of a particular Marxist literary critique.¹⁷ What should be kept in mind is that Hu Qiyuan's comments represent positions on at least three fronts. First, Hu critiques the rise of fascist inspired literature in the early 1930s.¹⁸ More importantly however, although he critiques of Qian Xingcun from a tacitly "Marxist" perspective, Hu's position is best understood within the context of a reevaluation of the May Fourth period through a Marxist-Leninist historiography, a reevaluation that dated the May Fourth period as one link in a causal chain of

16 See Hu Qiyuan, *Yishu feizhixia* (Art is not Subordinate) in Su 4-9. I have used the articles from this debate edited in the collection by Su Wen, *Wenyi ziyou lunbianji* (*Anthology of the Debate on Literary and Artistic Freedom*). The translations in this paper are my own, although I consulted translations of key articles from this debate in Denton 363-86.

17 See "Qian Xingcun zhi qingsuan" ([A Settling of Accounts with Qian Xingcun's Theory]) in Su 24-55. May Fourth, or *Wusi* in Chinese, refers to student demonstrations that took place in Beijing on May 4, 1919, to protest the ceding of German territories in China to Japan at the Treaty of Versailles. The term "May Fourth," however, is used to designate the social, political and intellectual climate of the whole period at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as a generation of intellectuals active during this time and after.

18 For a discussion of certain aspects of fascist literature in 1930s China, see Tang Tao, vol. 2, 21-33. Lydia Liu objects to attaching the term "conservative" to certain streams in modern Chinese literary production (241). However, the Guomindang did intervene in the cultural arena. Wen-hsin Yeh notes the university campus as an important space of intervention by the state after the Nationalists came to power in 1927, in particular the attempted "danghua" (participation) of institutions of higher learning (173-79).

revolutionary teleology.¹⁹ Therefore, Hu Qiyuan's "free man" or "liberal," as I have translated it, carried a May Fourth resonance.

¹⁹ As to the initial attacks on Lu Xun, Wang-chi Wong contends it was a type of "Fukomotoism," named for an attempt by Japanese communists in the 20s to "break away before unite (sic)," to separate the "fellow travellers" from the true revolutionaries (19). For a contemporary (circa 1932) Marxist-Leninist reading of the May Fourth movement, see Qu Qiubai, "Wusi he xin de wenhua geming" ([May Fourth and the New Cultural Revolution]).

In effect, the "third type of person" category arose as part of Su Wen's rebuttal of Hu Qiuyuan.²⁰ Su Wen's response to Hu Qiuyuan is, to put it lightly, sarcastic. He opens with a joke and continues by citing Confucius (Kong Fuzi 551-479 B.C.): "Confucius' thought wasn't very penetrating, so there's no reason to haul him into Marx's ancestral hall. Nevertheless, he did say a few clever things: 'When opinions aren't the same, there's no communication' (dao butong buxiang weimou)."²¹ Through his critique of Hu, Su Wen criticizes what he perceives as aspects of the Left League program: "They regard the workers as having nothing to read, only finding old-fashioned comic strips and song books filled with a feudalistic flavour (that's too say, harmful). Therefore, they want writers to simply write beneficial comic strips and song books to give the workers something to read.... Certainly, comic strips will never give birth to a Tolstoy or a Flaubert" (Su 67).²² Su Wen's remark is elitist, but as he asks rhetorically in another instance: "You say you still have to learn from the masses, but are you qualified to teach the masses to improve themselves!" A great part of the Left League's project was, after all, educational.²³ Su Wen makes it clear that the debates concerning revolutionary literature had already taken place in the Soviet Union, only to be repeated in Japan. Therefore, the Left League's concerns about proletarian literature and art were "imported": "As a result, the same discourse gets borrowed in Tokyo and then comes over to Shanghai where, all you need to do is use square, four-cornered characters, and it's just as if the theory belonged to the Chinese people to

20 Although Su Wen's opinions diverge very little from Hu Qiuyuan's contentions concerning literary autonomy, his entrance into the debate is still formed as a "rebuttal" of Hu Qiuyuan. See below.

21 See Su Wen, "Guanyu Wenxin yu Hu Qiuyuan de wenyi lunbian" ([On the *Literary News* and *Hu Qiuyuan's* Arguments Concerning Literature and Art]) in Su 62-76; 64. For a full English translation of this article see Su Wen, "Regarding the *Literary News* and Hu Qiuyuan's Literary Arguments," trans. Jane Parish Yang (Denton 367-75). Also, see Hu Qiuyuan's "Wu qinlüe wenyi," which appears in Su 10-13, and in English translation as "Do Not Encroach Upon Literary Art," trans. Jane Parish Yang (Denton 363-66).

22 According to Wang-chi Wong, Su Wen was a member of the Left League, so he would have known about the Association for the Study of Cartoons (Manhua yanjiuhui), a study group founded by the League at its inaugural meeting. Concerning the Association for the Study of Cartoons, see Wong 63. Wong does not supply official documentation concerning Su Wen's membership in the Left League (130); however, he does give evidence that Su Wen was present at the inaugural meeting (60-61). Lu Xun took Su Wen to task for this comment in "Lianhuanhua' de bianhu" ([In Defense of "Comic Books"]) in Lu Xun, vol. 4, 445-50.

23 See Su Wen, "Disanzhongren' de chulu" ([The Way out for the "Third Type of Person"]) in Su 112-36; 124. Su Wen's charge would have carried weight considering the high educational requirements for membership in the league, requirements which, until they were modified, would have excluded the possibility of admitting illiterate members. See Wong 65-67.

begin with” (Su 64-65). And Su Wen’s sarcasm concerning “influence” is not without a certain generational bite:

But the Left literary arena’s own “aufheben” is not something that happened over night. From the time it started beating the drum in China, the first one to take up the challenge was Mr. Lu Xun. Venerable grandfather said “We need theory,” and Plekhanov and Lunacharsky were translated. True, the translations weren’t very intelligible, but Mr. Lu Xun was satisfied. Then Mr. Mao Dun leapt to the challenge saying “We don’t want to hear any eighteen line itinerant rhymes, we want to see the goods.” There is still no sign of the goods, but the problem of art and technique got some attention, so Mr. Mao Dun was satisfied. (Su 65)

Indeed, Su’s comments may be read as an aspect of a generational *aufheben*. Unlike Hu Qiuyuan, Su Wen seems to attack May Fourth generation writers like Lu Xun and Mao Dun. Indeed, in this instance, Bourdieu’s contentions about generational competition are relevant: “The new entrants are bound to *continually banish to the past ... those consecrated producers against whom they measure themselves...*” (157).²⁴ But that the term comes within a discussion of translation and theory is important. Su Wen is again casting doubt on the educational value of the work of the Left League, making light of the quality of the translations of the period, and suggesting that theory was being written at the expense of literary works. Su Wen does not show himself to be very knowledgeable of “Marxist theory.” Nevertheless, his criticism shows an intimate understanding of what was going on within the League.

24 Although Su Wen seems to mean simply “Marxist theory,” the term *aufheben* has an important place in Chinese Marxist criticism before and certainly during the debate under discussion. In her discussion of Cheng Fangwu (1897-1984), Marián Galik noted that, Cheng seemed to translate this hegelian term as “to cancel” and “to lift up,” leaving out the first definition of “to preserve” (99). And the term is no less alive in Hu Qiuyuan’s defense of May Fourth figures. As Wang-chi Wong notes: “[Hu] denied the charge that he wanted to revive the May Fourth. What he wanted to do was to *surpass* the May Fourth” (129, italics mine).

As a result, it is possible to read Su Wen's controversial "third type of person" category as an internal critique of the League of Left-Wing Writers by one of its members. Simultaneously critiquing Hu Qiuyuan and the Left League, Su Wen sets up a binary for which the "third type of person" represents a solution: "As the 'liberal intellectual class' and the 'non-liberal, party affiliated' class battle for hegemony in literary circles, the most miserable is actually a third type person who is affiliated to neither. This third type of person is simply the society of writers (*zuozhe zhi qun*)" (Su 73). Su Wen would seem to be taking a position here somewhat in line with Bourdieu's "double rupture," except that in another instance, he will also distance himself from modernism, or any "ism" for that matter, claiming that he is no more modernist than Shi Zhecun is New Sensationist.²⁵ The rhetorical claim of dissociation (I am / we are neither this nor that) could be read as merely an argumentative tactic, a loophole in case of accusations of political or aesthetic association. In Su Wen's case, he positions himself within the local debate, as well as distancing himself from foreign influence. Su Wen's contention was that with political alignment "... literature is no longer literature, and becomes a type of comic book, and the writer is no longer a writer, he becomes an agitator (*shandongjia*)" (Su 74). Although they were relatively abstract notions of political non-alignment at first, Hu's "liberals" and Su's "third type of person" would be turned into a politically charged concepts by Left League members.

25 Su Wen 135-36. As Michel Hockx shows, "position-taking" sometimes came down to an attempt to differentiate one position from all the other (perceived) positions. Hockx cites a list by Xu Zhimo (1897-1931) of no less than "thirteen vendors selling their goods," thirteen different "schools" (*pai*) (68-69).

Su Wen was basically concerned that politicized literature would lead to the writer “putting down his pen” (gebi). Qu Qiubai’s (1899-1935) response to Hu Qiuyuan and Su Wen is in a sense typical of the Left League response.²⁶ His article “Literary and Artistic Freedom and the Writer’s Lack of Freedom,” was published under the pseudonym Yi Jia, and takes aim at both Hu Qiuyuan and Su Wen. Hu’s citations of Plekhanov bring him in for accusations of being a Menshevik, and his position as a “liberal” disallows him from becoming a true Marxist, and from criticizing other Marxist writers. More importantly, however, Qu Qiubai’s critique of Hu’s concept of art (yishu) represents a clear critique of autonomy: “Fundamentally his position is still that he believes art should have noble sentiments and it shouldn’t serve as a political ‘gramophone.’ Therefore, he believes art is autonomous (duli)... What he is endorsing isn’t a type of Marxist theory or art; rather, it seems to be an autonomous, noble art.”²⁷ Qu Qiubai’s attack of Su Wen opens with the epigraph of a poem recited by Lin Daiyu in *The Story of the Stone* and continues with a slightly altered citation from *The Analects* by Confucius: “Sorrow without resentment, joy without dissipation,” (ai er bu yuan, le er bu yin).²⁸ Su Wen’s style is mocked in turn as an example of “artistic value” (yishu de jiazhi), and Su Wen’s “society of writers” (zuozhe zhi qun) as a “flock” of sheep.²⁹ Qu links Su to classical writers like Yuan Mu (Yuan Suiyuan 1716-1798) and Li Bai (701-762) as part the “aristocratic world of the ‘salon’” (Su 97). Finally, Qu picks up on Su’s metaphor of a prostituted literature to close his critique of value based literary theory: “Beauty is good-looks, beauty is also ‘artistic value,’ an abstract beauty, a beauty which will tolerate no attachments. Sacrificing all for ‘beauty,’ that’s the way out for the ‘third type of person’”(Su 99).³⁰

26 He was, after all, an ex-secretary of the CCP and his opinion would have carried a certain amount of weight.

27 See Yi Jia (Qu Qiubai), “Wenyi de ziyou he wenxuejia de buziyou” ([Literary and Artistic Freedom and the Writer’s Lack of Freedom]) in Su 77-99; 80-81. For a full English translation of this article, see Qu Qiubai, “*Freedom for Literature but not the Writer*,” trans. Kirk A. Denton, in Denton 376-82. In my use of the word *autonomy* for *duli*, I am in agreement with Denton.

28 *The Story of the Stone* (*Honglou meng*), the famous eighteenth century novel written by Cao Xueqin (1715-1763). The *Analects* (Lunyu), a collection of dialogues between Confucius and his students, is one of the most important texts of Confucianism.

29 A pun on the character “qun,” meaning a “crowd,” or “group” (or a “flock” of sheep).

30 Qu Qiubai is actually appropriating the metaphor of a woman prostituting herself from the Su Wen article “On the *Literary News* and *Hu Qiuyuan’s* Arguments Concerning Literature and Art”; Su Wen takes up the metaphor of the prostitute again in “‘Disanzhongren’ de chulu” ([The Way Out for the “Third Type of Person”]) in Su 130-31.

In "The Way out for the 'Third Type of Person,'" Su Wen first of all replies to Qu Qiubai by saying that, at any rate, being a sheep is better than being a dog. Su Wen contends that Qu Qiubai believes in the idea of literature as a weapon to agitate for social change. In his critique of the inevitability of class based writing, Su Wen cites writers as diverse as Byron, Shelley, George Sand, Turgenev, and Zola to show that, although these writers were in fact bourgeois, in no way were they "spokesmen" (daiyanren) of their class, that in actuality they "reacted passively" (xiaoji de fandong) towards their own class. As Wang-chi Wong notes "... neither Hu Qiuyuan nor Su Wen considered themselves enemies of the Left League" (Wong 132). In his reply to Qu Qiubai, Hu Qiuyuan makes it clear that he was not against proletarian literature per se, merely that he did not want proletarian literature to "monopolize" (duzhan) the literary field (Su 209). Denying any ulterior political motive besides the wish to open up the debate surrounding the problem of proletarian literature, Hu also defends himself of charges by some of the leftists of working in consort with Su Wen, that Su Wen's articles were actually clever attempts to help his political cause (Su 218-19). On the one hand, the arguments presented by Hu Qiuyuan and Su Wen are more subtly formulated than those of their detractors. On the other hand, when Hu Qiuyuan and Su Wen resort to vague notions of "value" (jiazhi), such notions remain undefined except as aspects of implicitly class-based cultural values critiqued with good reason by the leftists. Both Hu Qiuyuan and Su Wen modify their positions, or rather, their positions are formed through the debate. Whether or not Su Wen and Hu Qiuyuan were acting together in the debate is open to historical conjecture, but by the end they will acknowledge each other's positions: Hu will make concessions to the "third person" and Su Wen will, borrowing Hu's metaphor, discuss "literature as a political gramophone."

Perhaps the clearest statement of both the "liberal" and the "third type of person" position comes in Su Wen's "On Literary Interventionism."³¹ Su's article opens with a general argument about the relationship between literature and life. Recalling the separation of art from social life in Adorno, Bürger and Jusdanis, Su Wen attempts to show the incapacity of the writer to understand either the artistic value or the goal oriented aspect of his own writing: "Tolstoy thought the non-utilitarian idea of art did not exclude a sermonizing aspect, and although Ibsen considered his own works as pure poetry, the result was that the influence of Ibsen on modern life was in no way less significant than Tolstoy's" (Su 180). Su's argument extends from the problem of goal oriented literature to a rejection of any historic teleology, since "the

31 See Su Wen, "Lun wenxueshang de ganshezhuayi" ([On Literary Interventionism]), in Su 179-94.

evolution of history has no ultimate aim,” Su claims that “social order (shehui zhixu) has no ultimate aim.” In what is a rather vague reference to culture as a type of artefact, Su will posit what he calls a “mirror of contradictions” which can be analysed historically. Social thinkers use this mirror of contradictions to analyse society but “the critique and analysis of pure reason is insufficient, we still need our senses to experience these contradictions intimately” (Su 181). Therefore, for Su Wen, the “eternal task of literature” is to “point out social contradictions from the point of view of intimate sensations (qieshen de ganjue) and, either through a period, or directly, to improve [society]” (Su 181).

From a generalized abstract language Su gets down to specifics by describing the writer in Chinese history, where attempts to point out contradiction were suppressed in place of the defense of traditional morality and the maintenance of social order: “Not only was it like this in China, but in Europe it was the same. In feudal society, the patronage (jiangye) of aristocratic literature only allowed the writer to say what the aristocratic class wanted him to say” (Su 182). The English term “patronage” is Su Wen’s; all I have done is reverse the bracketed English. Interestingly, when Su uses the term “feudal society” it is not clear whether Su is referring to China, Europe, or both. Above I noted the way Hu Qiuyuan’s “liberals” read as a defence of May Fourth figures like Lu Xun and Mao Dun. As I said, this debate occurred within the context of a reappraisal of the May Fourth movement within a Marxist-Leninist historiography. Indeed, such historic discourse had even more wide-ranging effects in China in the 1920s and 1930s as Su Wen’s recourse to a term like “feudal society” attests. D.W.Y. Kwok describes one polemic on the history and nature of Chinese society that began in 1928 in which “[t]he participants expected to make Chinese history and society conform to the laws of the dialectical development of society, thus merging it with universal history and lending it cosmic meaning” (163). It could be said that if Su Wen has anything to contribute to the discourse of Marxist-Leninist historiography, it would be in his assertions of “reform” over “revolution.”

For Su Wen, the idea of pointing out contradictions is intertwined with a notion of historic progress so that “those who represent (daibiao) a particular class interest” renounce the historic task of literature and “become an impediment to historic progress” (Su 184). Furthermore, according to Su Wen, “the revolutionary does nothing more than remove this impediment” (Su 185). Su Wen’s argument is contradictory here, he criticizes the idea of goal oriented literature and then proceeds to set up an alternative goal not much different from the first. However, Su Wen is more concerned about what he calls “literary interventionism” (ganshe zhuyi), and he will first enumerate a few salient examples, such as the

political imprisonment and execution of authors, the inspection of publications, and official criticism (Su 186). Su's argument is that, as a result of literary interventionism, literary works no longer originate in the "author's own ... autonomous (dandu) decision" but are the result of "decisions made during a meeting of official critics" (Su 186).

Su Wen then turns to the problem of proletarian literature and the writer. Citing Demyan Biedny as an example of "purely political" (chunzhengzhi) literature (Su 186), Su critiques what he considers to be the leftists' position, that the writer who exhibits party affiliation is closer to the truth (zhenshi). Su Wen's contention is simply that what may be considered politically or ideologically correct (zhengque) is not necessarily realistic (xianshi) (Su 188-89) when it comes into the hands of what he calls "official critics" (guanfang de pipingjia).³² Su Wen's critique, written in the context of a debate within the Left League, reads quite easily as a possible example of reactionary, that is to say, anti-leftist discourse. However, it should be noted that Su Wen's discussion of "interventionism" came at a time when the Guomindang, through the Public Security Bureau, was involved in a series of raids and arrests at bookstores and printers, directed against Communists and other "reactionary" elements opposed to the Chiang Kai-shek regime.³³

32 The English term "official critics" is Su Wen's.

33 Su Wen's critique would seem to inhabit a "double" context, so to speak. See Frederic Wakeman, Jr. 169-81.

Su Wen's notion of "truth" (zhenshi) here is not very clear, and it may be more accurately translated as "a true depiction," because he seems to be referring to a writerly depiction of reality.³⁴ However, Su Wen is more concerned here with the place of the writer in society and he does this by playing off notions of "correctness" and "truth": "When official critics use correct or incorrect ideology (yishi) to evaluate (pingheng) works, they very rarely inquire into the truth or untruth (zhenshi bu zhenshi) [of those works]" (Su 188). The idea that writers could be responsible for the evaluation of literary works simply by upholding certain political ideas is phrased in terms which imply an historic foreshadowing:

Actually, one hundred percent correct ideology simply doesn't exist in present day China; it goes without saying that most writers don't possess [correct ideology], and it won't necessarily be found in the ranks of the proletariat [writers]. Such an absolute ideological correctness will simply never appear amongst the upper echelons of social organizations; rather, [ideological correctness] is molded (suzao chulaide) by theorists (lilunjia). They foretell (yuyan zhe) that a future proletarian literature will be this way, and so they sell tickets for this rendezvous to the writer: which is to require of the writer to write idealistically (xie lixiang), and to not write realistically (xie xianshi). (Su 188)

Su Wen's writer/producer, or, to use a more contemporary term, cultural producer, would still have to take the burden for filling the void left by politics: "The condition for composing excellent works of art (yishu pin) means the complete union (zhengge ronghe) of the producer and the work (zuopin), not the union between the producer and politics. In this way, concerning those works described as gramophones for politics, it would be just as well to say they are gramophones for the writer himself" (Su 189). Nevertheless, it could be argued that Su Wen's answer to an absence of "literary interventionism" showed a certain historical idealism. For Su Wen "Capitalism" represented a preferable opposition to a posited "feudal" society: "Freedom under Capitalism may appear hypocritical and fraudulent in some areas, but this is not necessarily the case in literature: the reason for this is that writers can take their works as commodities (shangpin) into the marketplace and compete freely. And [they] need not worry, as in feudal society, that [their works] must be bought, and kept (haunyang) before they can live. Allow me to insert some levity here, even in a barbaric country like China, like-minded (zhugong) leftists can take their anti-bourgeois

³⁴ Su Wen does touch upon the problem of representation in passing when he discusses "individualistic" aspects of the character Kozhukh in Alexander Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood* (Su 189-91).

works and exchange them for a contribution fee" (Su 121). It could be said that, for the "third type of person," autonomy floats somewhere between an imaginary free market and politics.

Ideas surrounding the Su Wen's "third person" can be found in the works of his alter ego Du Heng in the humorous story entitled "Unemployment," in which the protagonist, Ke Ping, a bookish writer of sociological articles, is incapable of showing any sympathy for his landlord, Gan Yangwu and his family. After Mr. Gan loses his position as a minor official at the local tax office, Mr. Ke lends him a book about unemployment and economic relief which Mr. Gan returns at the end of the story admitting that he really did not understand the book (Du Heng 1934). Du Heng's "The Death of Esenin," about the Russian poet's suicide, a *bête noire* of the leftists, is another more provocative example (Du Heng 1986).³⁵ Of course, Du Heng was being his own gramophone here.

35 Du Heng calls it an "unpromising work appended at the end of the collection." For a rare reading of this story, in relation to Su Wen's "third type of person," see Trumbull 221-25. For a "leftist" reading of Esenin's suicide see Lu Xun, "Duiyu zuoyi zuojia lianmeng de yijian" ([Suggestions for the League of Left-Wing Writers], Lu Xun, vol. 4, 233-39).

Perhaps one of the best examples of a problematization of the “third type of person” figure is self-censoring writer in Mu Shiyong’s well-known story “Shanghai Foxtrot.” The anonymous writer who, musing about which magazine will accept his story, worries about being accused of humanitarianism (*rendao zhuyi*) while finding the perfect material in a young woman forced into prostitution.³⁶ I am not necessarily speaking of an influence on writing by a certain critical tendency. If anything, the “third type person” debate may be read as an articulation of a particular attitude which was *in the air* at the time. Shi Zhecun’s claims for non-affiliation in the opening issue of *Les Contemporains* is another example of a “theoretical” or critical statement which would have been in agreement with Su Wen’s. The contention that Shi Zhecun “seemed to have no choice but to lend tacit support to Du Heng [Su Wen]” (Lee 1999, 136) is debatable, especially in light of the preface to *The General’s Head*, where, disappointed by some of the criticism of the stories, Shi Zhecun states: “... some said I was criticizing proletarian ideology in these stories, some that my goal (*mudi*) was to promote nationalistic literature ... even I myself am sceptical of their methods (*fangfa*) and goals ...” (Shi Zhecun 1986). Yan Jiayan’s contention that this “modernist school and China’s proletarian literary revolution” were both “products” of the same period certainly has credence (Yan 1989, 125). Liu Na’ou’s wavering leftist protagonist in “Flow” is an earlier example (Liu Na’ou 1988). Although Mu Shiyong’s “PIERROT” “may have inherited the French tradition” because of its title (Lee 1999, 229), the story could be read as a triptych of the autonomous figure of the writer: part one, the writer and his market, including witty banter with his intellectual friends and those redundant interior monologues about the gap between his own intentions and reception by his readers; part two, the writer under colonialism; and finally, part three, in which the writer throws his hat in with the revolutionary masses only to have the masses forget his name (the writer as celebrity) (see Mu Shiyong 1998, 410-38).

Ye Lingfeng’s “Forbidden Territory” has been read as an example of decadence, but what is even more fascinating about this story is the way in which the writer becomes a kind of celebrity, almost approaching the status of a movie star.³⁷ Ye Lingfeng is a problematic writer, and his story “Female No. 7”

36 Mu Shiyong’s “Shanghai de hubuwu” ([Shanghai Foxtrot]) and Su Wen’s “Lun wenxueshang de ganshezhuayi” ([On Literary Interventionism]), appeared in the same issue of *Xiandai* (*Les Contemporains*) 2. 1 (November 1932) 112- 120 and 128-36. Shi Zhecun’s statement of non-affiliation may be found in *Xiandai* 1. 1 (May 1932) 2.

37 See Lee 258-62; Zhang 211. Ye Lingfeng’s “Jindi (duanpian)” (Forbidden Territory – fragment) may be found in Ye Lingfeng 259-91. Also, see Zhang’s discussion of Ye’s use of film titles in this story (Zhang 317, note 45).

is a considerably indirect novelization of the "third type of person" controversy. A perverse and somewhat masochistic well-known writer takes the same bus every day during a transportation strike where he leers at women and describes them in his journal. Fully aware of the danger that the bus may be attacked by strikers, he wears a helmet and declares at one point: "... I have become the third type of person. My only wish is that the buses keep running, I don't care which side wins." Finally, the bus is attacked and the writer will end up with a bandaged head, and exhibiting symptoms of traumatic neurasthenia, in the hospital. Yet, the story's self-referential irony doubles back upon itself, the visuality perhaps indicating a satirical intent.³⁸

38 See Ye Lingfeng, "Diqihao nüxing" ([Female No. 7]) in Ye Lingfeng 335-43. My feeling is that the story was a satire on Lu Xun.

The problem of autonomy in the “West” is complex, and perhaps even more so within the context of modern Chinese literature. The contention that, unlike their European counterparts, the Chinese practitioners of “aesthetic modernism” lacked “[...] tangible masses of the bourgeoisie to shock [...]” (Lee 1999, 147) is problematic. Ironically (as Su Wen put it so snidely) it was the Left League who were “anti-bourgeois” by definition, and in this they would seem to share something with the European avant-garde.³⁹ But, as Wang-chi Wong points out, this did not necessarily mean that Hu Qiuyuan and Su Wen were taking the side of those in power, that they were “exponents of reactionary bourgeois literary theories.”⁴⁰ The “third type of person” debate of the Left league was significant as an assertion of autonomy within the context of modern Chinese literature. One aspect of this is the privileging of the writer as a figure of autonomy and, by the same token, literature and art (*wenyi*) are discussed in the abstract, consistently referred to as *ta* with the *niu* (cattle) radical.⁴¹ In this way, literature and the writer are “theorized” as autonomous.

39 In the case of the European avant-garde, to attack the “bourgeoisie” meant very often to simply attack tradition, but the motives behind such totalizing gestures were often

irrelevant to the results. Bourdieu notes the futility of “reconciling political vanguardism and avant-gardism” (Bergère 386).

40 Concerning this “prevailing idea in mainland China,” Wong cites Tang Tao: “One of the arguments is that both Su Wen and Hu Qiuyuan shortly turned to and worked for the GMD [Guomindang]” (132).

41 That is to say, as the gender neutral “it.” Lydia Liu discusses this “neologism” in the context of Lu Xun’s work (37).

Autonomy often expresses itself as social and political opposition, and one of the best descriptions of this in modern Chinese culture is what Lin Yü-sheng referred to as the anti-traditional iconoclasm in May Fourth thought (Lin 1979). One member of the Left League in 1930s Shanghai, "Venerable grandfather" Lu Xun, was perhaps a little ambivalent about the "third type of person."⁴² And well he should have been, with the young, liberal, and individualistic "May Fourth" Lu Xun standing behind him in the shadows. Lu Xun's "On the Power of Mara Poetry" has been read as "a romantic manifesto in which Lu Xun proclaimed his new role as a writer" (Lee 1987, 21), and an example of the use of a "rhetoric of (in)authenticity with regard to individualism to criticize the constitutionalists for their worship of wealth and power" (Lydia Liu 85). Both readings are possible, it all depends on where you want to put the emphasis. With Lu Xun's privileging of the writer, in this case the exemplary figure of the poet Lord Byron and what could be called a poetics of social opposition, one of the key notions in Lu Xun's discussion is the word "duli" which I translate here as autonomy. And for the young Lu Xun of "On the Power of Mara Poetry" there are three types of autonomy (not necessarily in this order): the autonomy of the poet and his works in opposition to society, the national-political autonomy of a country, and last but certainly not least, the autonomy of the writer in relation to other writers of influence.⁴³

42 Besides "'Lianhuanhua' de bianhu" ([In Defense of "Comic Books"]), Lu Xun also discussed "the third type of person" in "Lun 'disanzhongren'" ([On the "Third Type of Person"]) and "Youlun 'disanzhongren'" ([More on the "Third Type of person"]) (Lu Xun, vol. 4, 438-44; 531-36). For a complete English translation of "Lun 'disanzhongren,'" see "On the 'Third Category,'" in Denton 383-86. Concerning Lu Xun's silence regarding Hu Qiuyuan, and his "willingness to accept different viewpoints," see Wong 133.

43 See Lu Xun, "Moluo shili shuo" ([On the Power of Mara Poetry]), in Lu Xun, vol. 1, 63-115. Lu Xun uses the notion of "duli" when, within the context of a Byronic poetics of opposition, he first discusses Byron's involvement in Greek independence (79); when discussing Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (79); with respect to independence for Greece and Italy (80-81). With regard to Byron's influence on Pushkin, Lu Xun discusses this in his reading of *Eugene Onegin*: "Thereafter, the form changes (waiyuan zhuanbian) and [he] gradually parts ways with Byron, his writing day by day tending to stand on its own (duli)..." (88). He also discusses this with regard to the influence of both Byron and Pushkin on Lermontov as well (89).

Thus in Shi Zhecun's "The Demonic Way" (Modao), as the paranoid narrator fears the "impressions" (yinxiang) made upon him by an old woman sitting across from him on the train, he also wonders whether or not his fear is nothing more than an "influence" (yingxiang) of the fantastic and psychological reading material he has packed with him for his trip, only to quip at one point: "I don't eat very much, just give me a glass of water and some well buttered bread ... who's that, Lord BYRON? The poet? Haha, have I only learned his eating habits?"⁴⁴ The seats which the narrator "monopolizes" (duju) with the old woman signify an absence that signifies death, a death that appears as a traumatic sign with no referent, as an autonomous floating signifier. Like money devoid of a gold standard, this trauma is a symptom of a crisis of representation, but I do not think this problem was solely a question of the "traumatic choices that the coming of West presented China."⁴⁵ As well as the question of this or that "imported" theory or mode of representation, a significant part of the trauma for intellectuals in the twentieth century is precisely a newfound autonomy. As Leo Lee put it some thirty years ago: "Behind the facade of decadence, escapism, and self-pity lurks a larger problem, the significance of which can only be seen from an historical perspective. Perhaps for the first time in Chinese history, Chinese intellectuals have become intelligentsia, in that the majority of them are alienated from the seat of political power" (Lee 1973, 73).

Without making any grand claims of a zero hour for modernity in China, what needs to be considered are the *ruptures and continuities* forming the background to the modern period. The logic of cultural autonomy in China is perhaps best linked to the new intelligentsia of the coastal port cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the abolition of the examination system being just one among many examples of changing relationships to the state.⁴⁶ In the case of May Fourth intellectuals and those who came after, urban centers were also a common destination for students after they had returned from studying abroad. Indeed, there is an interesting parallel in China to Bourdieu's contentions of an "inflow of a substantial population of young people without fortunes," namely, the bohemians (54-57).⁴⁷

44 See Shi Zhecun, "Modao" ([The Demonic Way]), in Yan 1995, 109-26; 119.

45 See Hutters 149. My reference to the "autonomous floating signifier" and the "gold standard" owe a debt to Jean-Joseph Goux's *The Coiners of Language*.

46 See Bergère 48-49. The phrase "ruptures and continuities" is Bergère's.

47 Also, see Qu Qibai's extraordinarily subtle critique of Lu Xun, the May Fourth generation, and the Chinese "bohemians" in "Lu Xun

However, as a concept, autonomy is also an indication of institutional realities. In contrast to the earlier May Fourth generation, intellectuals in 1930s China may be distinguished as part of an “emerging ‘class’ of modern professionals” that included specialists in the technical, legal, financial and political fields in the urban centers of China, and most evidently in the autonomous municipality of Shanghai (see Greider 338). But as an assertion of autonomy, the “third type of person” remains fundamentally heuristic. In the end, Su Wen’s autonomous gesture is socially responsible and literature is viewed as an agent of social reform. Cross-cultural potential aside, Bourdieu’s autonomous figures are far too *disinterested* to be held as any type of model for Chinese writers.⁴⁸ While groups and individuals competed for positions within the literary field of the 1920s and 30s in Shanghai, the “third type of person” debate, as one of the shrillest rhetorical ruptures in modern Chinese literature, occurs from a position which is fundamentally pedagogical, even didactic. Literature, and the writer, is defined within a context of social function.

The apparent extremism of the “third type of person” position remains part of a tradition in which the well-being of the “masses” remains a moral duty of the elite as cultural guardians.⁴⁹ In China, literary associations of the period may have more in common with late nineteenth and early twentieth century educational associations. Nevertheless, Su Wen’s trenchant critique of political intervention remains relevant. Whereas his detractors, from a Marxist-Leninist perspective, criticized Su Wen for maintaining a fundamentally bourgeois position, Su Wen’s critique of feudal patronage (*jiangye*) and the role of theory in official criticism were clear reminders that the concept of revolutionary literature would need the support of the legitimating institutional powers of the state. Moreover, Su Wen’s critique did rest upon a certain attitude towards the market. While it would be too much to say that he embraced the market unconditionally, as Su Wen and his friends “played the field,” it would be just as well to say they “played the market” as well. Indeed, the 1930s in China represent an interesting confluence. While literature “became so lucrative that most well-known writers needed no other source of income” (Hockx 63), the 1930s also saw what Yue Daiyun has called the “third great shockwave” to Chinese national culture: “[...] the dissemination of Marxism throughout China.”⁵⁰

48 Zola might make for a better comparison. See Bourdieu 129. This is not to say there are not exceptions. The Creation Society’s “art for art’s sake” would be one important example.

49 Henriot describes this as an aspect of the Confucian tradition (269).

50 See Yue Daiyun, 79-81, where she discusses the “three shockwaves (*chongji*)” and subsequent assimilation within Chinese culture of

Indian Bhuddism during the Wei-Jin period, of bourgeois scientific and democratic thought during the May Fourth period, and Marxism in the 1930s. Despite the generalizing and possible contemporary political ramifications of Yue's argument, the importance of Marxist discourse to this period and after occupy an historical position which no amount of revisionism can erase.

The “third type of person” is an example of an assertion of autonomy which had, for various reasons, lost all legitimacy, but which may have much to speak to the present, precisely because of the way the debate offers a unique self-image of certain writers of the period, despite its subsequent illegitimacy.⁵¹ What Lydia Liu has called the discourse of legitimation was also the legitimation of discourse, but as the discourse legitimizes the canon and the canon legitimizes the discourse, both still need to be grounded in social institutions including those cultural producers and consumers such as publishers, editors, distributors, readers, educators, theorists, and of course we cannot forget our old friends the “official critics.”⁵² Legitimation is a process, and Bourdieu’s contention is quite applicable here: “It is not enough to say that the history of the field is the history of the struggle for a monopoly of the imposition of legitimate categories of perception and appreciation; it is in the very *struggle* that the history of the field is made; it is through struggles that it is temporized” (157). In the end, it could be said that legitimation is simply an historical process, and autonomy is a loophole in that process.

Although it was an attempt to depoliticize literature, Su Wen’s “third type of person” ended up further politicizing certain writers and modes of writing. If anything, the “third type of person” debate has remained merely a tainted trace in the literary field that may have contributed to the long critical silence that surrounded the “New Sensation School.” I suggest implications of autonomy may have played a part in the relatively recent reappearance of the term “modernism” in modern Chinese literature.

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51 The fate of Su Wen’s “third type of person” in the PRC is probably attributable to the author’s work for the Guominzhengfu controlled *Central Daily*; as well as his final decision to leave for Taiwan in 1948.

52 See Liu 183-238. Liu’s contention that the compilation of a May Fourth “canon” represented a type of “self-colonization” is interesting. However, as she notes, a great deal of effort on the part of leftist writers of the time went into this compendium. Furthermore, as Qian Liqun has noted, May Fourth literary figures like Zhu Ziqing (1898-1948) and Wen Yiduo (1899-1946) would not only become part of the literary canon, they would be (to use a loaded word) canonized, by a “revolutionary and nationalistic discourse.” See Qian Liqun, “Changchang de beijing” ([A Long, Long Shadow]). For my general references to social institutions, see Jusdanis 122-59.

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