CHAPTER ONE

HU SHIH, CHOU TSO-JEN, CH'EN TU-HSIU
AND THE BEGINNING
OF MODERN CHINESE LITERARY CRITICISM

Modern Chinese literary criticism dates from January 1917. It has its prehistory
reaching back to at least the year 1898 when Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1874–1929) wrote
I-yin cheng-chih hsiao-shuo hsiu (Preface to the Translated Political Novel). This was
a foreword written for the Chinese translation of the Japanese novel by Shiba Shiro
(1825–1922), Kajin no kigu (The Strange Adventures of the Beauty). Another
of Liang's significant articles from the year 1902 entitled Lun hsiao-shuo yü ch'in-chih
kuan-hsi (The Relation of Novel to Politics) was followed by critical and aesthetic
works by Wang Kuo-wei (1877–1927), in particular his well-known study Hong-
lou-meng p'ing-lun (Contribution to a Discussion on the Dream of the Red
Chamber) from the year 1904, and finally articles by young Lu Hsün (1881–1936),
especially his Mo-lo shih-li shuo (On Satanic Power of Poetry) from the year 1908.

1 See GÁLIK, M.: On the Influence of Foreign Ideas on Chinese Literary Criticism (1898–1904), AAS,
4 IL, 1966, p. 39. Also LEE, M.: Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1872–1928) and the Literary Revolution of Late Ch'ing.
In: Search for Identity, Modern Literature and the Creative Arts in Asia, p. 209.
2 See MARTIN, H.: A Transitional Concept of Chinese Literature 1897–1917. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao on
This is probably the best treatment of the "prehistory" of modern Chinese literary criticism in English as
far as Liang Ch'i-ch'ao is concerned. A very good bibliography of Japanese and Chinese works is on p. 209
of this article. Dr. Martin does not mention the pioneering work by Wu Wên-ch'ü entitled Chin-pi-nien
lai-tai Chung-kuo wen-i yü-ch'ao (Chinese Literary Mind in the Last Hundred Years). Hsien-ch'ien, 1,
November 1940, pp. 3–22 and 2, December 1940, pp. 153–159. On the theory of fiction of this period see
SEMÁNOV, V. I.: Teorija prorazy v Kitae na nachale XIX–XX vekov (The Theory of Fiction in China at the
End of the 19th and at the Beginning of the 20th Century). In: Problemy teorii literatury i estetiki
v stranakh Vostoka (The Problems of the Theory of Literature and Aesthetics in Oriental Countries).
and SMYTHE, E. J.: The Early Thought of Wang Kuo-wei: An Analysis of His Essays on German
Voluntaristic Philosophy (1903–1907). Papers on China, 18, 1964, where Wang Kuo-wei's exposition of
Schopenhauer's aesthetics is to be found on pp. 9–14, see also a very good treatment of the subject in
GÖLGYI, K.: Sajátos könyvek a kínai irodalomban (Selfish Novels in Chinese Literature). Moscow,
4 The best study on the young Lu Hsün as a literary critic, as far as we know, is an unpublished M. A.
thesis by A. CASTRO entitled Four Early Essays of Lu Hsün (school of Oriental and African Studies,
In January 1917, Hu Shih published, in the journal Hsin ch'ing-nien (New Youth), the famous article Wen-hsüeh kai-liang ch'i-ü (A Preliminary Discussion on Literary Reform) which became the "manifesto" of the modern Chinese literary revolution. In it professor Hu expressed 6 propositions and 2 commands which he later modified somewhat and named pa-pu chu-i (eight-don't-ism):

1. What you write should have a real substance
2. Do not imitate the writings of ancients
3. Follow literary grammar
4. Do not write that you are sick and sad when you are not
5. Discard time-worn literary phrases
6. Do not use classical allusions
7. Do not use parallel construction of sentences
8. Do not avoid using vernacular words and speech.  

Hu Shih's eight-don't-ism recalls one of the manifestos of the American imagists whose author was Ezra Pound. Attention to this fact was drawn by Liang Shih-ch'iūn 1927. As a matter of fact, the two manifestos resemble each other in many points. Of course, the Chinese one corresponded to the specific Chinese needs which had to be satisfied during the course of the literary revolution.

In the case of the American imagists and of Hu Shih, one may speak of the influence of foreign systemo-structural entity and Chinese response. Similarly, in the case of the imagists, the new Chinese literature Hu Shih endeavoured to bring to life was to represent the systemo-structural reality predominantly of an artistic and normal nature.

When asked "what is literature?", Hu Shih replied very simply, but also adequately:

"Language and writing are tools of mankind for expressing its thoughts and feelings. If it expresses the one well and the other beautifully, then it is literature." Or:

"Literature without emotion or thought is like a beautiful woman without mind or soul; despite a richly beautiful appearance, there is nothing really there."  

Real substance (wu), the first of the requirements of literature expressed above, was to consist of feelings (kan-ch'ing) and of thought (ssu-hsiang).

Hu Shih characterized feelings (or emotions) by a part of the definition of poetry from the "Great Preface" of the Mao Edition of the Book of Poetry (Mao shih: "Ta hsiù"):

"When one's emotions move within, they are expressed in words; when words are inadequate, one may use exclamations to express them; when exclamations are inadequate, one may express them in song by prolonging the sounds; when singing is inadequate, one may unconsciously express them in dance by gesturing with one's hand and beating with one's feet."  

According to Hu Shih, feelings are "the soul of literature". Literature without feelings is but "a walking corpse".

Hu Shih characterizes thought by its three components: insight (chien-ti), knowledge (shih-li) and ideals (li-hsiang).

"Thought does not necessarily depend on literature for transmission, but literature becomes more valuable if it contains thought and thought is more valuable if it possesses literary value."  

A pity though that Hu Shih failed to write more explicitly on what he understood by "literary value" or to characterize his concept of "thought" in more detail. As examples of "valuable literature" of this type he cited Chuang-tzu's works, then the poems by Tao Yuan-ming (365–427) and Tu Fu (712–770), the tz'u form of poetry by Hsin Chi-chi (1140–1207) and Shih Nai-an's (fl. 14th cent.) novel Shui hu chuan (Water Margin).

The emphasis which Hu Shih repeatedly lays on thought and feeling is in some way reminiscent of intellectual and emotional elements in literature about which C. T. Winchester wrote towards the end of the last century. Even though the principle:

5 Hu Shih: Shen-mo shih wen-hsüeh (What is Literature?), WHTH, 1, p. 214.
6 Hu Shih: A Preliminary Discussion of Literary Reform, WHTH, 1, p. 35.
8 Loc. cit.
9 Loc. cit.
10 Loc. cit.
11 Loc. cit.
12 Loc. cit.
13 Loc. cit.
14 Loc. cit.
15 Loc. cit.
16 Loc. cit.
nothing but feelings and thought, creates the base for all his reflections on literature, he also imparts the imaginative element to his literary conception. However, imagination according to him must derive from what he has termed "real substance".

Hu Shih laid also great emphasis on the formal element of literature, in particular on its linguistic expression. In his article Chien-shi-ti wen-hsiêh ko-ming lûn (Theory of Constructive Literary Revolution) he wrote:

"My purpose in the 'theory of construction of modern literature' is simply to suggest the creation of a literature in the national language suitable for literature. Our aim in the literary revolution is merely to create in China a literature in the national language."

From this it follows that the language used in a work of art is the principal criterion of the value of the literary work. Literature written in pai-hua is a living literature, literature written in wen-yen is dead. Hu Shih does not say that all the works written in pai-hua are valuable works of art, but he explicitly declares that "under no circumstances is it possible to create living and valuable literature by means of the dead wen-yen".

Hu Shih was led thus to condemn the major part of Chinese literary legacy not only by his stubborn fight against the ancient language, but also by his instrumental view of literature in which the role of the language was too much hyperbolized. This was the main reason why subsequent Chinese literary critics and historians rejected most assertions in Hu Shih's theory. They did not reject everything, as will be shown later.

Along with the linguistic aspect, Hu Shih followed also the other formal and thematic components of literature. He was aware of the fact that language alone is an insufficient instrument for the writer. In order to create a literary work, an author has to adhere to certain methods: he must collect the material, he needs to possess powers of observation and personal experience, imagination, as well as certain ways of description, "tailoring" and creating of the plot. Evidently, these simple principles (or practices) were not self-evident among Chinese men of letters at the beginning of the literary revolution.

Hu Shih was the first man among Chinese literary critics to call for a broader literary scene:

"The three sources of material, namely, officialdom, houses of prostitution, and dirty society are definitely not enough. At present, the poor man's society, male and female factory workers, riskshaw-pullers, peasants in the interior districts, small shop owners and peddlers everywhere, and all conditions of suffering have no place in literature."

To Hu Shih also belongs the primacy in the field of the study of genreology. The May 1918 issue of New Youth published the first short story of modern Chinese literature, i.e. Lu Hsun's Kuang-chen jih-chi (The Diary of a Madman) and simultaneously with it the first Chinese theoretical study from Hu Shih's pen entitled Lun t'iao-p'ien hcho-shuo (On Short Story).

In this study, originally presented as a lecture in the Belletrist Circle of the Department of Chinese Literature at Peking University on 15th March, 1918, Hu Shih gives a definition of short story. An interesting feature from the comparative aspect is that in it he very probably combined the definition according to Clayton Hamilton with the characteristic given by Brander Matthews.

According to Hamilton:

"The aim of a short story is to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis." 24

According to Matthews:

"A short story deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation ... Thus the short story has, what the novel cannot have, the unity of impression."

According to Hu Shih:

"A short story is a piece of literature (wen-chang) written with the greatest economy of means describing the most essential part or side (of the reality) with the aim to make people satisfied."

1929 (1st ed. 1899), pp. 62–116 and 146–181. The definition of literature by Stopford Brooke from this book is very similar to that of Hu Shih: "By literature we mean the written thoughts and feelings of intelligent men and women arranged in a way that shall give pleasure to the reader" (p. 36). The mention of Winchester here does not mean either that Hu followed him or that he was against the Chinese literary traditions. Already in The Analogy (Lun yi) by Confucius (551–479 B.C.) we read: "The Master said, 'In the Book of Poetry are three hundred pieces, but the design of them all may be embraced in one sentence – Having no depraved thoughts.'" (LEGOR, J.: The Chinese Classics. Vols 1 and 2, Taipei 1969, p. 146). The emotional element in the traditional theory was expressed, e.g. in the definition of poetry from "Great Preface" of the Mao edition of the Book of Poetry quoted above. For more details about "ching" see in Liu, J. J. Y.: The Art of Chinese Poetry. Chicago–London, The University of Chicago Press 1962, esp. pp. 66–76, 82–83. Cf. also T'ang Hsiien-tsu (1550–1616) who eulogized ch'ing in his drama Mu-chuang (The Peony Pavilion), see C. T. Hsia's article Time and the Human Condition in the Plays of T'ang Hsiien-tsu, in de Bary, Th. Wm. (Ed.): Self and Society in Ming Thought. New York–London, Columbia University Press 1970, p. 276.

18 Hu Shih: A Preliminary Discussion of Literary Reform, p. 35.
20 Ibid., p. 128.
21 Ibid., p. 129.
22 Ibid., pp. 135–140.
23 Ibid., p. 136. The translation is taken from de Bary, Th. Wm. (Ed.): Sources of Chinese Tradition, p. 828.
26 Hu Shih: On Short Story, WHTH, I, p. 272.
Similarly as Hamilton who, by the way, was a lecturer at Yale University when Hu Shih studied there under Professor John Dewey, Hu Shih also explains what he understands under the various components of this definition.

Hu Shih applies Hamilton’s and Mathew’s requirements to indigenous, Chinese tradition and to modern world literature. As outstanding examples in the domain of world short-story writing, he presents Daudet’s stories La dernière classe and Le siège de Berlin, Maupassant’s Mlle Fifi and Deux amis. He himself translated the first and the last named into Chinese.27

Hu Shih would not be an admirer either of Darwin or Spencer and modern evolutionism generally, had he not endeavoured to apply the principle of evolution to literature. Literature was to him one of the manifestations of world evolution:

“Literature changes in individual periods. In the era of the Chou and Ch’in dynasties, it was literature of Chou and Ch’in. Han and Wei periods had a literature of Han and Wei… This is not only my personal conviction, it is a principle of the evolution of civilization.”

In the name of literary evolution he called for a new contemporary literature as a new artistic manifestation of the present era.

“In the present world literature”, Hu Shih stated in the lecture under analysis, “there predominates a tendency, a trend from the long to the short, from the many-sided to the simple... As regards poetry, emphasis is laid on lyrical poetry. Long poems such as those of Homer, Milton, or Dante are practically not written any more (they were still written in the nineteenth century) and hardly anybody reads them. In the field of drama... ‘one-act’ plays come to the forefront of attention. With regard to fiction, the most frequent genre as of the mid-nineteenth century is the short story. Novels such as Tolstoy’s War and Peace are hardly ever written. It may then be said that lyrical poetry, one-act plays and short stories represent the principal developmental trend in modern world literature.”28

The criteria of “economy” and “effect”, specifically emphasized in the definition, are applied by Hu Shih to the entire evolution of Chinese literature insofar as it relates to what he considered the short-story genre. It should be observed that he manipulates the peculiar feature of the short story as a genealogical phenomenon in a very arbitrary way.

As the first example of a “short story” he quotes the famous story Yu-kung i shan (The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains) from Lieh-tzu;29 as a second one he reproduces the “short story” from Chuang-tzu:

31 Hu Shih: On Short Story, p. 276.
32 A. Waley’s translation from A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems. New York, Alfred A. Knopf 1919, p. 54 is as follows:
She came down the mountain to pluck wild herbs;
She came down the mountain and met her former husband.
She knelt down and asked her former husband
“What do you find your new wife like?”
“My new wife, although her talk is clever,
Cannot charm me as my old wife could;
In beauty of face there is not much to choose,
But in usefulness they are not all alike.
My new wife comes in from the road to meet me;
My old wife always came down from her tower.
My new wife is clever at embroidery silk;
My old wife was good at plain sewing.
Of silk embroidery one can do an inch a day;
Of plain sewing, more than five feet.
Putting her silks by the side of your sewing,
I see that the new will not compare with the old.
or side”. Literally he writes: “He who understands the priorities of this poem may speak of priorities of the story.”

From the period of the T'ang dynasty, Hu Shih considers Tu Fu’s poem Shih-hao li (Pressgang), and some poems from Po Chü-i’s (772–846) Hsin yüeh-fu (New yachel-Fu), but particularly Hsin-feng che-pi weng (The Old Man with the Broken Arm), as the outstanding works of the period, along with the famous long poems Pi-p’u hsing (Song of the Lute) and Ch'ang heng ko (Song of the Everlasting Sorrow).

In Hu Shih’s view, of the numerous ch’uan-ch’i (romantic tales) from the T’ang period, only one may be considered to be a satisfactory short story: Ch’iu-hsii k’o chuan (The Curly-Bearded Guest), while none of the short forms of fiction from the Sung period meets his criterion for a good short story. From the Ming and Ch’ing periods, there are several good short stories to be found in the collection Chin-ku ch’i-kuan (Strange Tales Old and New) and in Pu Sung-ling’s (1640–1715) Liao-chai chih-i (Strange Tales of Liao-chai).

From what has been said, it follows that Hu Shih took contact with Western traditions in the field of literary criticism from the period before World War I, taking over also its weaker aspects. An exaggerated admiration for the short story as the epitome of the development of fiction is one of the outcomes of this uncritical take-over. The same also applies to his disrespect towards all norms excepting the ones he explicitly mentioned but which, nevertheless, must hold if the literary genre is to exist as a genre category.

Paradoxically enough, it was precisely this lecture, very questionable on many points, that came to exert a certain influence on the subsequent theory of the short story in China. In January 1945, some 27 years later, Mao Tun, writing why modern Chinese short stories are not short, explained the essence of the short story and the novel in the same manner as Hu Shih. Allegedly a novel describes the longitudinal cross-section (tsung-p’ou mien) of human life, the short story its transversal one (heng-tuan mien). This was one of the fundamental concepts embodied in Hu Shih’s lecture. For Wu Tiao-kung also, the author of the treatise Wen-hsieh fen-lei ti chih shih (Basic Knowledge of Literary Genology), similarly as far as Hu Shih, Daudet’s short story La derniere classe proved to be the principal instrument of argumentation insofar as Western literature was concerned.

Another priority of Hu Shih in modern Chinese literary criticism is in the domain of drama. “The broadest conception of the dramatic art has been outlined by Hu

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33 Hu Shih: On Short Story, p. 276.
36 Wu-han 1959, p. 102.
of those who did exert some influence in the field of literary criticism in China, had studied at universities abroad.

Chou Tso-jen was one of the first among the returned students who helped during the time of the May Fourth Movement to set up modern Chinese literary criticism. It should be said that his insight into literary problems was deeper than Hu Shih's. Literature was to him some sort of Erzats for philosophy or religion. He expressed this very clearly in his lecture Hsia wen-hsüeh-ti yao-ch'ü (The Demands of New Literature), delivered on 6th January 1920 at a meeting of the Shao-nien Chung-kuo hsüeh-hui (Young China's Association). The last sentence of the lecture qualifies the new men of letters in these terms: "These men of letters of the new era are 'idol destroyers' but they have their religion: humanitarism ideals and their faith, the will of mankind is their god."

Chou Tso-jen no doubt considered himself to be one of the 'idol destroyers', a Chinese iconoclast, and he may be said to have been such at the beginning of his literary activity. The idols he helped to destroy were represented by the old religion in all its forms, especially the so-called li-chiao (the Confucian ethics in its Neo-Confucian interpretation), ancestor worship and filial piety (hsiao) in its traditional meaning.

His most influential teacher had been the eminent English psychologist, physician and literary critic Havelock Ellis (1859-1939). Ellis' magnum opus Studies in the Psychology of Sex "was the first of his books that I (i.e. Chou Tso-jen, M. G.) bought and... it immediately impressed him with its scientific and yet human and sympathetic treatment of the subject..." That happened at the time when Chou Tso-jen was still a student in Tokyo.

One notion, in our view, became the leading idea of Chou Tso-jen's entire work with its clear, but also darker aspects, and, of course, of his literary and critical work, too. Ellis had formulated it as follows:

"The main task before us must be to ascertain what best expresses, and what best satisfies, the totality of the impulses and ideas of civilized men and women. So that while we must constantly bear in mind medical, legal and moral demands all of which correspond in some respects to some individual or social need -- the main thing is to satisfy the demands of the whole human person."

Human being, an individual human being was the basis of Chou's literary and critical system and his socio-political views.

Chou Tso-jen's humanitarianism is above all individualistic, although he endeavours to present it within the framework of a universal, all-human platform. He does not believe in the possibility of any other humanism, e.g. class humanism. New literature, Chinese as well as foreign national literatures, have to be, according to Chou Tso-jen, human (jen-hsing-ti). True, jen-hsing does not mean in Chou Tso-jen human nature, but he, probably as one of the few Chinese students of J. G. Frazer and his Golden Bough or of E. B. Taylor and his Primitive Culture, looked upon human literature in a different manner from that of Liang Shih-ch'i, one of Babitt's pupils. According to Chou Tso-jen, that jen-hsing in literature becomes manifest simply as a literature that is human (jen-ti wen-hsüeh) and the latter stands in contrast to what he called non-human literature (fei-jen-ti wen-hsüeh).

But, let us first take up the question what human literature is, or at least, what it should be.

In the lecture referred to above, Chou Tso-jen places human literature in between two boundaries. Originally, man developed from animal, he has certain common traits with the animal world, but literature cannot be shou-hsing-ti (animalistic), or perhaps morally depraving. Everything that in man is such as to be above him, above his powers, belongs to the category of the supernatural (shen-hsing-ti). This, too, has no place in literature because literature ought to have a unit of measure in man (jen-chien pen-wei). Animalistic literature, which unfortunately, Chou Tso-jen does not explain any further, though he seems to consider it as a part of non-human literature, consists of such works as are an obstacle to human progress upwards. The same holds also for supernatural literature.

Looking at literature from a position of evolutionism, Chou considered both of them as having passed through a "natural selection" and been surpassed.

During the initial years of the forming of modern Chinese literary criticism, Chou Tso-jen was an ahistorical evolutionist. He took up a very utilitarian and insensitive stand towards the values created by preceding periods; much of the old was bad because it did not suit his "human ideals" of the day.

What were those ideals? They were embodied in his concept of humanitarianism (jen-tao chu-i) and Chou Tso-jen explained them as follows:

... what I call humanitarianism is not charity as referred to in such common...
sayings as 'have pity and commiserate the people' or 'wide generosity and relief of distress among the masses'. It is rather an individualistic humanitarianism (ko-jen chu-i-ti jen-chien pen-wei chu-i)."

According to Chou, man is a part of society as the tree is a part of the forest. He loves mankind solely because he belongs to it. As an argument for this view of his, he has recourse to the statement by the philosopher Mo-tzu (470–391 B.C.), which in Chinese reads: "chi i tsai jen chung." It probably ought to be "chi i tsai so ai-chih chung" which means approximately "love towards others does not rule out my own person." In contrast to Mo-Tzu's view with which he identifies himself, he does not agree with Jesus Christ and his command "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". In Jesus Christ Chou Tso-jen notices precisely a lack of regard for the individuality of the one who has to love. Chou feels convinced that "man sacrifices himself for the person he loves, or the ideas he believes in, but deeds like cutting off a piece of your flesh to feed an eagle, or perhaps giving your body to a hungry tiger to devour, would constitute ultra-human morality, something that human being cannot do".

To Chou Tso-jen, idealist literature is all-human (jen-lei-ti). Chou makes no mention at all of a class platform and condemns every other type: racial (chung-tsui), national (kuo-chia-ti), local or clannish (hsiang-t'u chi chia-tsu-ti). Human literature is then one that applies the principles of this individualist humanism to literature. It may be divided into two kinds: one, describing ideal life or something that is achievable in life; the other, the ordinary life or "non-human life". Evidently, he had in mind the romantic and realist tendencies in the literature of his time or the recent past. Given his humanitarian conviction, he recognized only "literature for life's sake", but not "literature for art's sake", and was against aestheticism and hedonism (perhaps the mood of the "fin de siècle").

It is of course quite possible to make the human individual into the alpha and omega of literary and critical efforts. Chou Tso-jen, however, understood this human individual in a relatively modern way, as a product of Ellis', Westermarck's, or William Blake's thought. When he tried to apply this train of thought to Chinese

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53 Loc. cit. For translation see WOLFF, E.: op. cit., p. 100.
54 CHOU TSO-JEN: Human Literature, p. 195. We could not find the characters "chi i tsai jen chung" in Mo-tzu yin-te (A Concordance to Mo Tzu).
55 We have found the following characters in Mo-tzu yin-te: "chi tsai suo ai eh chung". See Tokyo edition (The Toyo Bunko, 1901) of the book, p. 75. In the Demands of New Literature, p. 143, we find the same characters as in Mo-tzu yin-te. A. Forke translates these characters and the following ones as follows: "Die Liebe zu den Menschen schliesst die eigene Person nicht aus, denn diese ist unter denen, die geliebt werden, und da dies der Fall ist, so erstreckt sie auch die Liebe auf die eigene Person" (Geschichte der alien chinesischen Philosophie, Hamburg 1927, p. 403).
56 ST. MATTHEW, 22, 39.
58 CHOU TSO-JEN: The Demands of New Literature, p. 141–142.
59 Quoted by him in Human Literature, pp. 194–195. Chou wrote an essay entitled Po-lai-k'o-ti shih literature (to the old one, for the new Chinese literature did not as yet exist) he found that "there has been extremely little human literature" in Chinese literature. Apparently, hardly any of the works based on Confucianism or Taoism could be assigned into this category. Of the well-known works of Chinese literature he considered as examples of "non-human literature" such novels as Hsi yu chi (The Journey to the West) by Wu Ch'eng-en (ca 1506–ca 1582), Water Margin and short stories by P'u Sun-lung.

These conclusions were the result of an application of his strange axiological criteria, his inadequate knowledge of Chinese literature especially in pai-hua, but also his insistent use of ethical relativism. A certain hotbed for such a mood was also formed by the so-called "i-ku" (doubting on antiquity) movement which was coming into vogue at that time.

Occasionally, he uses his criteria correctly, for instance, when he places the novel Ch'iu wei kui (The Nine-Tailed Tortoise) by Chang Ch'unfan side by side with Kupin's Yama (The Pit). He condemns the former while praising the latter as an example of true human literature. But he does not do this everywhere. He makes a superficial criticism of the novel Water Margin assigning it among "brigand novels".

In the initial stage of his literary and critical activity during the period of the May Fourth Movement, Chou Tso-jen forgot the aesthetic aspect of literary works. There was Truth in his concept represented by the humanitarian approach. Goodness by ethical relativism and the author's ethical commitment in the solution of even the less moral issues. Beauty stood outside his theoretical endeavours. This fact had its justification. It was due to the overall atmosphere prevailing in Chinese literary criticism of the times. Even according to Chou Tso-jen himself, literature is "work and very important work at that, for human life", a work comparable to that of the peasant and the worker creating new values. At that time, Chou Tso-jen did not reflect on these values as being an aesthetic or artistic domain, but rather as a means destined to alter the non-human life, to implement ideals of Ellis or his own: the satisfying of the demand of the whole person. Hence, he wanted works to be created that would promote a real love between sexes, equal status for both sides,
marriages based on mutual love, correct, or at least not stupid moralistic relations between parents and children. Consequently, among the excellent pieces of human literature, he ranges Ibsen's A Doll's House, The Lady from the Sea and Ghosts, Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Hardy's novel Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Sudermann's Heimat and Turgenev's Fathers and Sons.65

In dealing with the relation between art and morale, Chou Tso-jen took contact from the very beginning with Ellis, his views in his book Affirmations from the year 1897 and the first volume of his book Impressions and Comments from the year 1914. Chou had read both these books very attentively and even translated from them.66 Although he probably never had the opportunity of reading Ellis' comprehensive review of Hardy's novel Jude the Obscure, he would no doubt have agreed with the message it contains:

"Take away morals, and the novelist is left in vacuo, in the region of fairy land. The more subtly and firmly he can weave these elements together the more impressive becomes the stuff of his art. The great poet may be in love with passion, but it is by heightening and strengthening the dignity of traditional moral law that he gives passion the fullest play."67

Chou Tso-jen began to be interested in the problem of literature as an aesthetic phenomenon only later, after he had become familiar with the impressionist theory by A. France and when the reflections on chü-wei (taste, interest, Geschmack) began to appear more and more frequently in his own works.68

Similarly as Ch'en Tu-hsiu a little bit earlier, Chou Tso-jen too, gave some thought to the so-called p'ing-min wen-hsiêh (popular literature). The term "popular literature" renders very inadequately the sense he endeavoured to impart to this concept. Even a superficial comparison of his two essays Popular Literature and Human Literature reveals their contents to be similar and the scope of human literature is the same as that of popular literature. The so-called kui-tzu wen-hsiêh (aristocratic literature), a term originating, like that of popular literature, from Ch'en Tu-hsiu, is the lightning rod for much of the evil that non-human literature represented in the essay Human Literature. Aristocratic literature describes things out of the ordinary, heroes, knight-errants (yin-hsiung hao-chich), talented gentlemen and beautiful ladies (t's'ai-tzu chia-jen). This is the so-called embellished literature, serving for entertainment and distraction.69

On certain issues, Chou Tso-jen agreed also with Hu Shih. For instance, in characterizing the origin of literature, he made use of the same quotation from the "Great Preface" of the Mao Edition of the Book of Poetry.70 Similarly as Hu Shih, he criticized Chinese literature for its lack of the "tragic concept" — conceding only the Dream of the Red Chamber to be an exception to this.71 Wang Kuo-wei pointed out this exception, as we know, even before Hu Shih.72 It may further be stated that about the year 1919, besides this novel, Chou Tso-jen did not acknowledge any other work from old Chinese literature (at least, not from the domain of fiction) as being of any great value. He altered his views only later.

Chou was even more thrilled by world literature than Hu Shih had been, particularly by that of the so-called "small and oppressed nations", principally those of Central and Eastern Europe.73 Nonetheless, he preserved a totally negative attitude towards literature that was being produced in China during the time of the May Fourth Movement. He only hoped that foreign works (translated literature) would help to produce "a few valuable literary works from life".74

After 1921, Chou Tso-jen continued in literary criticism, influenced by Ellis' ideas although these had much more restricted scope in him, but simultaneously, he began to incline considerably towards impressionist views and convictions. In all probability, Chou came to know France after being well prepared by the study of the old Chinese literary and critical tradition of which Pollard has remarked — and as it seems, quite correctly — that it was impressionistic — formulating verbal equivalents for aesthetic effects — rather than analytic.75 Chou's concept of chü-wei to which he so frequently referred in the twenties and thirties, had a very strong indigenous colour.76 In the course of time, his literary thought gradually changed, sometimes beyond recognition. For example, he began by being opposed to utilitarianism in

65 CHOU TSO-JEN: Humane Literature, pp. 197 and 199.
70 Cf. CHOU TSO-JEN: The Demand of New Literature, pp. 142-143 and Hu Shih: A Preliminary Discussion of Literary Reform, p. 35.
71 Cf. CHOU TSO-JEN: Popular Literature, p. 212 and No. 41.
75 POLLARD, D. E.: A Chinese Look at Literature, p. 79.
76 Cf. the text under the note 69.
literature. He therefore took up a position similar to that propounded later by members of the Creation Society with the difference that "ohne Zweck" in Creationists was invariably connected with "Zweckmässigkeit" and with some missions, as will be seen later. He changed his attitude later. In an essay written in the form of a letter and called K'ü yü (Bitter Rain) he stated that in his works, whether essays or critical, "he is only talking about personal matters of no benefit to the public, saying that that was precisely his intention". In 1926 he wrote that following 1923, his works contain less of what he termed a "dreamer's or a propagandist's flavour", that he was not an "utopian" any more, believing, for instance, in ideals of human literature. He did not, however, renounce his individualistic attitudes but confined these to express personal and subjective feelings and opinions; they were no longer part of that "all-human" of which he liked to speak times and again. Questions of public order and morals became literary taboos to him. 

During the twenties and later, Chou Tso-jen admitted the existence of classes in Chinese society, but saw no essential differences among them. In his view, the proletarians and capitalists in China live in concord because they have a common way of thought and common ideals. The ideal of the poor man is to become rich, and in this, his Weltanschauung does not differ from that of the rich gentry. Chou Tso-jen compares the Chinese proletariat to Liu Pang (died B.C.), and Chinese bourgeoisie to Hsiang Yü (died 201 B.C.). Both had for their aim to gain the throne after Ch'in Shih huang-ti (260-210 B.C.). According to him there cannot be "class literature", although literature can portray a certain class or the spirit of the times. Barring certain linguistic and stylistic variations, proletarian literature under Chinese conditions does not practically differ from bourgeois literature. 

Many of the above views, quite cynical or clearly erroneous, need not be dealt with any more today. But his last critical remark, just referred to, had something in it: Chinese proletarian literature, particularly in its beginnings (1927-1928) was indeed considerably influenced by petty bourgeois moods and ways of thinking. Thus, Chou's words were not unsubstantiated. His unduly negative attitude towards revolutionary literature of that period had, however, also a positive effect. Chou Tso-jen was not quite consistent in his statements and when he exhorted proletarian intelligentsia "at least to free itself of the quagmire of capitalist thought" — whether he meant it seriously or not — he did thereby help towards the subsequent ideological victory of the proletarian-oriented literary criticism.

3

Ch'en Tu-hsü (1879-1942), in contrast to Hu Shih and Chou Tso-jen, was neither a writer, nor a literary theoretician or historian. As one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party and its Secretary General for the period 1921-1927, Ch'en Tu-hsü was interested in literature as a politician and cultural personality. He considered it to be an important part of a great cultural complex. He was for a literature socially and politically involved, even though not class-committed.

The most significant of Ch'en Tu-hsü's articles, called Wen-hsüeh ko-ming lun (On Literary Revolution) originated as a reaction to Hu Shih's A Preliminary Discussion of Literary Reform. Right in the very title of Ch'en's paper, reform (k'ai-liang) became altered into revolution (ko-ming). And in fact, in the events which we term as the May Fourth Movement, there was question not of literary reform but of revolution. Hu Shih's approach, very formal, especially on the linguistic and stylistic side, immediately provoked defiance in Ch'en Tu-hsü, although the latter recognized and appreciated the value of Hu Shih's outstanding contribution to the contemporary cultural history of China. As regards this article, Ch'en Tu-hsü followed in it Hu Shih's utilitarianism. He says that it is necessary to "create a simple and expressive popular literature". Presenting his reasons, he writes that Chinese 'aristocratic literature is bejewelled and dependent on old authors, it has lost the spirit of independence and self-honour'.

What are these reasons? According to Ch'en 'classical literature exaggerates and piles word after word and has lost the fundamental objective of expressing emotions and realistic descriptions: "... forest (shan-lin) literature is difficult and obscure and is claimed to be lofty reading but is actually of no benefit to the masses. The form of such works is continuous repetition of previous models. They have flesh but no bones, body but no spirit. They are ornaments and of no actual use. With respect to their contents, their horizon does not go beyond kings and gentry, spiritual beings and ghosts, and personal fortunes and misfortunes. The universe, life and society are all beyond their conception."

Together with Chou Tso-jen, although before him, Ch'en Tu-hsü came up with the idea of creating "simple popular literature" or "clear and popular social

83 Originally published in HCN, 2, 6, February 1917, pp. 1-4 and reprinted in WHTH, 1, pp. 44-47.
84 WHTH, 1, p. 44.
85 Ibid., p. 46.
literature”. What was this literature to be like? What were to be its principles? This unfortunately, we fail to learn from a perusal of Ch’en’s article. In the first period of the literary revolution, Ch’en Tu-hsiu played the role of a strategist. He left tactical questions, i.e. various issues concerning the character of literature, its relations to the other elements representing social consciousness, to be resolved by others. However, while that old “aristocratic” literature was subjected to a relatively thorough critical analysis, nothing at all was said of the new “popular” and “social” in Ch’en Tu-hsiu’s article which confined itself to indirectly expressing the wish that it ought to be a literature with whose help it should be possible to overcome Meng Pen, that big and strong man of old times who was not afraid of the dragon in water, nor of the tiger and rhinoceros on land, i.e. to overcome old China with all that is reactionary in it, that hampers its development, prevents its advance forward.

Typical of Ch’en Tu-hsiu of these years was a hyperbolic, even mystical faith in revolution. Of course, at that time, he did not as yet envisage nor apprehend revolution in the Marxist sense. Chinese intelligentsia became familiar with Marxism at a later date. According to Ch’en Tu-hsiu, revolution as implied in the very word itself, was “evolution of evolution”, meaning a “renewal” (violent?) of the evolutionary process. “Where does Europe’s contemporary imposing bloom come from?” Ch’en asked rather rhetorically, but also paradoxically, at the beginning of 1917, when Europe writhed in the horrors of World War I. The answer was very concise but cogent: “It is a gift of revolution”.

Under “revolutions” Ch’en had in mind all the violent and fundamental changes of a social or cultural character since the times of the Renaissance. According to Ch’en, the history of modern European civilization (wen-ming) “may be called the history of revolutions”. Revolution is then an instrument of civilization, social and cultural progress, it makes possible an over-all development. A similar, though not quite the same faith, understood in a different way, was typical also for other men of letters in China of the twenties, as will be shown later.

Ch’en Tu-hsiu entered the field of modern Chinese literary criticism with an analysis of literary -isms. Similarly as in the case of revolution, here, too, his approach was transcendental. Realism and naturalism allegedly are transformations of the spirit of modern Europe and modern world in the sphere of art and literature.

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90 Ibid., p. 44.
91 Ibid., p. 46.
93 Ch’en Tu-hsiu: On Literary Revolution, p. 74.
94 Loc. cit.
95 Ch’en Tu-hsiu: Ch‘in-jih-chih chiao-yu fang-chen (The Tendency of Contemporary Education). HCN, 1, 2, 15th October, 1915, pp. 3-4.
96 HCN, 1, 4, 15th December, 1915, p. 2.
97 Ch’en Tu-hsiu’s reply to the letter by Tseang I reprinted in WHTH, 2, p. 8.
99 Ch’en Tu-hsiu’s reply to the letter by Tseang I reprinted in WHTH, 2, p. 8.