Pitfalls of the Postcolonialist Rubric in the Study of Modern Chinese Fiction Featuring Cannibalism: From Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" to Mo Yan's *Boozeland*

Yenna Wu

ABSTRACT

Postcolonialism, the study of colonial discourse and representation, is merely a subfield within the much broader field of post-colonial studies. I argue for the need to be cautious in applying the postcolonialist conceptual framework in Chinese studies, in light of its many limitations. I suggest that scholars adopt nuanced and empirically grounded models, and remain mindful of regional, cultural, and historical contexts and specificities.

Using Lu Xun's "Diary of the Madman" and Mo Yan's *Boozeland* as examples, I demonstrate that it would be inappropriate to impose a reductive postcolonialist framework onto an interpretation of either of these two literary works. Although both works are fanciful at many levels, they are not simply assemblages of discourse that may be played with according to critical whim; responsible critics must take account of these works' mimetic capacities and historical contexts. Both works can be understood and fully appreciated only by means of more comprehensive critical approaches that take note of particularities and nuanced shades of meaning.

KEY WORDS

post-colonialism/postcolonialism
colonial discourse
external referents
inhumanity

colonialism
cannibalism
semi-colony
multiple colonialism
Maoist rhetoric
self-reflexivity
apathy
literal and metaphorical
hypocrisy
"Kuangren riji" 狂人日記
"Yao" 藥
Jiuguo 酒國

Academic "Postings" of Colonialism

Recently, I queried a colleague in modern Chinese studies about the *locus classicus* of the term "postcolonialism."[1] This colleague had often employed the term in both publications and conversations, and did not hesitate to tell me that the term probably originated with Gayatri Spivak's *Post-colonial Critic*. Yet I found this reply unconvincing, for the term seemed to have appeared much earlier than the publication of Spivak's book. Since the term "post-colonial" means "occurring or existing after the end of colonial rule,"[2] I assumed the term must have been used first by scholars in reference to the large number of countries that emerged from colonial rule after the Second World War. My speculation was confirmed when I came across Bill Ashcroft's definition of "post-colonialism/postcolonialism" (Ashcroft et al. 1998, 186). Ashcroft also indicated that beginning from the late 1970s, the term was used to refer to "cultural interactions within colonial societies in literary circles."[3]

In the late 1970s, the study of colonial discourse and representation is often said to have begun with a professor of English, Edward Said, who was followed in turn by two mavens of cultural studies, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. However, the term "postcolonial" was not used to designate this subfield until Spivak published her above-mentioned collection *The Post-colonial Critic* in 1990 (Ashcroft et al. 1998, 186). The term soon became so contested that many critics decided to use (a hyphenated) "post-colonial" to indicate "post-colonial studies *as a field*" that encompasses various ap-

proaches, in order to distinguish it from (unhyphenated) "postcolonial" studies that focus only on colonial discourse theory (Ashcroft 186-187). Although the term was primarily concerned with the varied historical experience of former European colonies, it has been applied to many other fields and subfields, as evidenced by such terms as "postcolonial feminism."[4] In recent years, it has also come into frequent use in academic studies of cannibalism.

Postcolonial Studies of Cannibalism

Earlier in the twentieth century, a number of anthropologists carried out research on cannibalism in regions that tended to be remote from technologically developed centers of civilization. Some of these scientists viewed cannibalistic practices as part of a ritual performance of some sort. William Arens' book, *The Man-Eating Myth, Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (1979), moved the study of cannibalism away from field studies and historical research—and towards an investigation of "colonial" discourse among the researchers themselves. Of course, early Western studies on cannibalism emphasized colonial encounters in early narratives—so-called primitive "savages" supposedly ate human flesh because of their appalling appetites or monstrous customs, and these "savages" were the colonizers' targets for reform, indoctrination, or punishment. The term "cannibal" could thus function as a derogatory label easily attached to one's enemy, or to a potentially threatening outsider on the other side of the hill from one's own "normal" village. There had always been doubts about the factual basis of reports about customary cannibalism, yet it was Arens who insistently claimed that customary cannibalism is nothing more than a myth conjured forth by ethnocentric Western anthropologists.

While Arens' skepticism about the nature of evidence for cannibalism in historical and ethnographic sources is useful, it is in agreement with basic scientific methodology known to us all, and by no means amounts to a fresh insight. Yet his suspicion of the motives of the ethnographers and anthropologists who wrote about cannibalism betrays a standpoint that is quite extreme. His assumptions tend to

cast a cloud of suspicion over all anthropologists who have studied or reported on cannibalistic practices. Arens' absolutist views on this subject would indict these scholars of having made false or at least unfounded accusations of innocents due to some sort of shady ulterior motive.

Following the lead of Said's error-ridden but surprisingly influential polemic *Orientalism* (1978) and Arens' book, Peter Hulme examines how a colonial discourse was formed in sixteenth-century America. According to Hulme, the word "cannibal" first appeared in Columbus' journal when Columbus coined this word in an attempt to record the term used by the local Arawaks to describe the supposedly man-eating people they feared.[5] Hulme argues that from the time of Columbus, "cannibalism" replaced "anthropophagy"—and began to connote a new threat from "savages" who had no scruples against devouring human flesh, including that of European newcomers. Hulme thus presents the term "cannibalism" as intertwined from the very beginning with European colonialism (1986).

Gananath Obeyesekere argues that James Cook and his men repeatedly asked Pacific islanders they met about cannibalism because they simply assumed a penchant for cannibalism among these native islanders. Their writings were thus biased, revealing more "about the relations between Europeans and Savages during early and late contact than . . . about the nature of Savage anthropophagy" (630-31). Obeyesekere even suggests that the British inquiry made the natives wonder if the British wanted to eat them; some of the islanders who either did or did not eat human flesh would feign or exaggerate a penchant for cannibalism in order to intimidate the terrified European newcomers (634, 646).

Although these postcolonial critics make some valid points, their studies tend to sidestep any sort of in-depth inquiry into the reality of cannibalistic practices. For these critics, cannibalism exists as little more than "a term within colonial discourse to describe the ferocious devouring of human flesh supposedly practiced by some savages"; the questions that interest them are— "Why were Europeans so desirous of finding confirmation of their suspicions of cannibalism?

And why does cannibalism feature so insistently as a contemporary trope in different forms of writing?" (Hulme, "Introduction" 4).

While these questions are certainly worth exploring, they nevertheless reflect a view that is far from global and comprehensive. For example, these critics' narrow focus—geographically, ideologically, and linguistically—almost always excludes leading non-Western civilizations such as China from their purview. These critics tend to issue blanket denials of the existence of cannibalism and dismiss written histories and ethnographies of cannibalistic practices en masse. Because they perceive cannibalism to be nothing more than a myth that expresses Western cultural biases and supremacist assumptions, they suspect that ethnographers and anthropologists who have written about cannibalism are accomplices of Western imperialism. Their harsh dismissal of cannibalism as a legitimate subject in social science research, along with their distrust for existing anthropological studies of cannibalism, are marred by subjectivity, extremism, and bias; yet they have scored some successes in discouraging serious and relatively objective research into the material aspect of cannibalism. Furthermore, these critics tend to adopt a reductive and simplistic binary paradigm of powerful, monolithic colonialists who oppress weak and colonized natives. Driven by such an ideology, they tend to ignore particularities in the historical and cultural contexts surrounding various colonies and other territories.

In championing colonial discourse theory, contemporary academic postcolonialists and other postists have typically drawn upon stubbornly persistent hypotheses and conjectures from poststructuralism, neo-Marxism, and neo-Freudianism—notwithstanding these three isms' deservedly marginal status within the fields of the philosophy of language, political economy, and psychology, respectively. Many problems arise in the postcolonialists' application of these hypotheses and conjectures to the study of cannibalism, as if they were empirically grounded theories. For example, Maggie Kilgour adopts some scientifically unfounded Freudian hypotheses in her attempt to find symbolic meaning in the case of the contemporary American cannibal Jeffrey Dahmer. According to Kilgour, Freud re-

gards cannibalism as the basis of civilization, believing that all pathology arises "from either the fixation in or regression to an earlier stage" (244). Kilgour goes on to claim that Freud viewed "the act of corporeal ingestion" as "the model for later . . . acts of psychic introjection, identification, and internalization, through which individual identity is formed," and the ego's development towards independence "produces a simultaneous desire to return to our original experience" (i.e., the death drive): "to relinquish the discontents of civilization for an original state of unity and oneness with the world, signified by the act of cannibalism" (244-45). Kilgour seems unaware of the many recent scholarly critiques (Grünbaum; Crews 1986, 1993) that have cogently exposed these Freudian ideas as severely flawed and scientifically baseless. She simply applies her personal twist on Freudian postulates to Dahmer's case without thinking how fanciful Freud's ideas are and how inappropriate the application is. Kilgour even finds Dahmer to err on the side of normality as "the epitome of the modern individual . . . detached from others"; Dahmer's spree of murder and cannibalism is but a ritual—"a grotesque attempt to heal that alienation through his own literalized form of communion" (258). In a typically postmodern manner, Kilgour argues by equating very different and almost contradictory issues. For example, "cannibalism both marks Dahmer's difference from us, and his attempt to transcend that difference" (257). She concludes that cannibalism was "Dahmer's grotesquely pathetic way of trying to transcend the isolation of his private subjectivity, to reestablish identification with others, by deconstructing, literally dismembering, difference" (258).

Kilgour's equation of cannibalism with the quest for unity is illogical, and her conclusions are similarly fanciful. She would have us perceive an odd but certainly pathological case as an emblematic modern tragedy of social isolation—and look upon a serial murderer and cannibal as a sort of tragic hero with high aspirations. By implication, society is to blame for Dahmer's acts of murder and cannibalism, while Dahmer is merely the participant in a set of rituals with some unfortunate consequences. Yet since a great many of us readers are also independent modern individuals detached from others and

feeling isolated in various ways, should we all take this as a justification to overcome our solitude through ritualistic murder and cannibalism? If the facts of a case can be so easily pushed aside and a ruthless serial killer can be portrayed as a victim with certain "unmet needs," does it follow that those individuals whom he killed and ate are somehow partly to blame for their own deaths? Such deconstructive postist interpretations as Kilgour's are simply erroneous.

Applying "Postcolonialism" to China

Postcolonialism has also been applied to China, though practically no serious historian believes that most or all of China was ever a European colony. Aside from a few relatively outlying regions such as the European colonies of Hong Kong and Macao and the Japanese colonies of Taiwan and part of Manchuria, modern China simply did not become a *bona fide* colony, much less a European colony. To be sure, the ambiguous term "semi-colony" (*ban zhimindi* 半殖民地) was adopted by Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong, and many Chinese scholars to make a rhetorical but misleading equation between a colony and a treaty port. Although the principle of extraterritoriality that holds in treaty ports is unfair by modern standards and was destined to expire—the West agreed to Chiang Kai-shek's demands to end extraterritoriality in China in 1943—extraterritoriality has an ancient history throughout the world, and did not formerly impart any status of inferiority to countries that practiced it, such as Tang China. Yet a PRC edition of the dictionary *Cihai* 辭海 defines the term "semi-colony" as a precise characterization of the "old China" from 1840-1949, when China "was politically and economically controlled by imperialist countries," though it "appeared to be independent" (90). This definition is vague, inaccurate, and especially self-serving in the way that it cavalierly dismisses all independent Chinese achievements in over a century of nation-building prior to the Communist takeover in 1949. Quite a few China scholars in the West also regularly employ the term "semicolonialism," often without reflecting on its inappropriateness. Postcolonialist China scholars especially enjoy using this

term to rhetorically allege that the relationship between the West and China is simply that of the colonizer versus the colonized.[6]

As an alternative to foggy and misleading terminology, Jürgen Osterhammel has attempted to offer a definition of colonialism that is as objective and accurate as possible:

> *Colonialism* is a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule. (16-17)

From the standpoint of this definition, one would be hard-pressed to characterize China as either a colony or a "semi-colony" of the West. Paul A. Cohen has used the less inaccurate term "multiple colonialism" to refer to the situation in which China was confronted with "encroachment and partial domination not by one but by a plurality of foreign nations" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (144). Although this term is also problematic, Cohen has adopted it to make a useful suggestion to historians who are debating the nature of imperialism in China: historians need to pay attention to the "partial, multiple, and layered character" of what has been loosely termed the "colonial experience" in China (145). Indeed, in examining colonialism, scholars should replace reductive paradigms with more nuanced and empirical models, and pay attention to specific regions and plural historical and cultural contexts. In their analysis, they should also adopt "objective models" that focus upon the characteristics of the phenomena being studied, and avoid "moral models" that remain preoccupied with the investigator's own subjective reactions to the phenomena under investigation.[7]

Representations of Chinese Cannibalism

Long before its encounters with the West, China had already produced many historical and anecdotal records of cannibalism. The familiar term "people eating other people" (*ren shi ren* 人食人 or *ren chi ren* 人吃人) by no means conveys the same imperialistic connotation as that of "cannibalism" (in the sense argued by Hulme and other postcolonial critics). The varieties of cannibalism in the Chinese sources also differ somewhat from the types known in the Western sources. We find survival, punitive, ritual or sacrificial, "gourmet," and medicinal cannibalism, as well as *gegu* 割股, the slicing of one's own flesh and stewing of it in broth to offer up as a medicinal tonic to a seriously ill parent.[8] One would be very hard-pressed indeed to make the Procrustean bed of the postcolonial critics' paradigm accommodate all these types of Chinese cannibalism.

Unlike Arens, we cannot completely deny the existence of cannibalism in China, since even the twentieth century has witnessed actual documented instances of cannibalism there. Nor can we dismiss all the written histories and records, or suspect all the writers of those sources as harboring imperialistic designs or some other ulterior motives. Even if we want to apply the paradigm of the powerful colonialists oppressing the colonized to China, there is no need to regard China metaphorically as experiencing "internal colonialism" in the past. The paradigm of the powerful oppressing the powerless is long known to various disciplines, and can surely be applied without using the postcolonialist rubric. Furthermore, while the paradigm can be drawn upon in the analysis of some types of cannibalism, it does not necessarily help in the analysis of *gegu*-related cannibalism, for example.

Well-supplied with written sources on cannibalism from traditional China, modern Chinese writers have not had to depend upon colonial encounters with the West in order to know and write about cannibalism. Lu Xun's 魯迅 (1881-1936) famous story "The Diary of a Madman" ("Kuangren riji" 狂人日記, 1918) was probably inspired by both traditional sources and some remnant contemporary

practices such as the eating of an executed prisoner's heart, liver, and blood. The story contains references to survival, punitive, "gourmet," medicinal, and *gegu*-related cannibalism in China.[9] Lu Xun encountered the issue of cannibalism in a university lecture, and may have decided to feature cannibalism in his stories as a metaphor for social exploitation (Hanan 65-66). The budding fiction writer may have been inspired by Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" as well.[10] Yue Gang argues that Lu Xun used cannibalism to express "his grand repudiation of traditional culture" because of influence from *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 and George Grey's (1812-92) report on Polynesian cannibalism; according to Yue, "the lens with which Lu Xun views the cannibalistic 'natives' is literally filtered through the colonialist mapping of the world" (64-65).

It is certain that Lu Xun was, in one way or another, influenced by some Western writings when composing the story. Yet the greatest impetus for him to use cannibalism as a metaphor for an exploitative society probably came from indigenous sources. Lu Xun could have become fascinated with cannibalism from reading about it in numerous premodern Chinese sources. He may have become inspired by the many literary works that employ cannibalism metaphorically to signify corruption and exploitation in society. Contemporary cannibalistic practices may have also been a source of inspiration. While Lu Xun certainly employed Social Darwinist arguments in this story (Pusey 110), it is doubtful that he viewed the Chinese people through some sort of "colonialist" lens; despite his great revulsion for "cannibalistic" society, his intention seems to have been to pressure Chinese society into evolving to a level that is truly civilized and humane. Just as the Madman feels guilty from the realization that he may have inadvertently eaten human flesh and has had "four thousand years' history of man-eating" (19), so Lu Xun seems to feel somewhat complicit with his fellow citizens' cannibalistic acts.

One may wish to argue that Lu Xun refers to the "real people" who will exterminate the cannibalistic Chinese people, and is thus looking through a "colonialist" lens. However, while the term "real people" refers to those who have abandoned the savage practice of

cannibalism, it is not clear whether this term refers to foreigners or the reformed Chinese. Lu Xun does not specify "real people" as foreigners or Westerners. He may very well have in mind the reformed Chinese, the revolutionaries, the non-cannibalistic young people whom he calls upon to revolt (see his "Random Notes Jotted Under the Lamp" discussed below), or even the children yet to be born.

It may also be farfetched to see the story as an anti-colonial or anti-imperialistic piece. If Lu Xun had denounced the imperialists as "beasts" in 1908, he was accusing his fellow citizens, not the imperialists, of "eating people" in 1918 (Pusey 85). Instead of blaming Westerners for victimizing the Chinese, Lu Xun now sees the Chinese as victimizers of themselves (especially the rich "cannibalizing" the poor), and thereby placing themselves in danger of being exterminated by the "real people." In any case, Lu Xun's focus here is "national," not "colonial" or "anti-colonial." In his essay "Random Notes Jotted Under the Lamp" ("Dengxia manbi" 燈下漫筆, 1925), Lu Xun even claims that he would sincerely thank the foreigner who "detests China," because this foreigner "must be someone who is unwilling to eat the flesh of Chinese people" (196). According to this logic, a Westerner who is revolted at the sight of exploitation (including "cannibalism") in China would not be an imperialist, but is rather a true helper.

Since Lu Xun was writing fiction, not history or ethnography, he did not need to provide evidence for cannibalism. He refers to cannibalism metaphorically, and is extrapolating hyperbolically from well-established notions about flesh-eating, characterizing all of traditional Chinese society as one in which "men eat other men." Later in his "Random Notes Jotted Under the Lamp," he would more explicitly claim, "The so-called 'Chinese civilization' is in fact a banquet of human flesh (*renrou de yanyan* 人肉的筵宴) arranged for the wealthy people to enjoy. The so-called 'China' is in fact the kitchen where the human-flesh banquet is prepared" (199).

Yet rather than being entirely fanciful, there is some literal truth in Lu Xun's story of cannibalism. The Madman mentions some examples that supposedly occur in his contemporary time and society:

> Yi Ya 易牙 steamed his son for King Jie 桀 and King Zhou 紂 to eat. This was what happened in the past. Who would have realized that ever since Pan Gu 盤古 created the universe, people have been eating [other people], from Yi Ya's son to Xu Xilin 徐錫麟, and from Xu Xilin down to the man caught in Wolf Cub Village. Last year when a prisoner was executed in the city, there was also a consumptive who dipped a piece of steamed bread in the prisoner's blood and licked it. ("Yao"16)[11]

Admittedly, no one can verify whether or not Yi Ya's son of the Zhou 周 dynasty or the man recently caught in Wolf Cub Village were cannibalized. However, Xu Xilin was a historical figure, a revolutionary who was executed in 1907, and whose heart and liver were subsequently cut out and eaten in the presence of witnesses (Lu Xun 1956, 17n). One simply cannot deny the reality of the occasional Chinese practice of eating a tonic of steamed bread soaked in the blood of an executed prisoner, for it was often observed by a large number of eyewitnesses who had no apparent motive for deception or exaggeration. Lu Xun later developed the practice into a full-blown story, "Medicine" ("Yao" 藥, 1919), in which the sick boy Hua 華 eats steamed bread soaked with the blood of an executed revolutionary named Xia Yu 夏瑜, a name that suggests another historical figure—the female revolutionary Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (Lyell, 1976: 252).

The attraction of "The Diary of a Madman" lies in the tension in the complex interplay between the literal and the figural, between normalcy and madness, and between blindness and insight. When reading an old Chinese historical text, the Madman at first encounters the repeated mouthing of high-sounding words such as "benevolence, righteousness, and morality." But when he eventually reads between the lines, he discovers that the whole volume is filled with two words: "Eat people" (Lu Xun 1973, 10). In literal terms, this description signals the man has gone mad. On the metaphorical level, this episode satirizes hypocrisy within Chinese culture, suggesting that beneath the civilized cloak of virtue and polite manners, the Chinese people actu-

ally behave like cruel cannibals. Some of the educated elite employ high-sounding words and rhetoric to camouflage their cruelty, while ordinary people are unaware of their own cruelty. The Madman alone has the clairvoyance and insight to perceive the truth.

At the same time, this episode is an exaggerated version of accounts of cannibalism on the literal level. Cannibalism indeed existed in China, and one could indeed find numerous records of cannibalism in China's twenty-five dynastic histories and such well-known historical treatises as Sima Guang's 司馬光 (1019-86) *Zizhi tongjian*. Of course, these treatises are not nearly as replete with the words, "Eat people," as Lu Xun's Madman claims! The diary thus contains a mixture of various levels of cannibalism—literal, partially truthful, figural, fanciful, objective, and hyperbolic.

The Madman is viewed by the other characters in the story as mad, but is seen by the reader as more insightful and humane than the "normal" people he encounters. Supposedly suffering from a persecution complex, the Madman fears being murdered and eaten by the people around him, especially by his elder brother. He fantasizes that his elder brother has eaten his little sister, who died at the age of five. Imagining that he may have inadvertently eaten some of his little sister's flesh, the Madman feels guilty and remorseful. Scholars generally view the Madman as a rebel against society, who "sees traditional China as a cannibalistic arena in which the strong devour the weak," and wishes to convert people "from cannibalism to a higher level of humanity" (Lyell 1976, 247). Yet the narrator or the implied author announces in the prologue to the diary that the Madman finally recovered, and later departed to take up an official appointment (Lyell 1976, 248; Lee 71). Scholars generally agree with C.T. Hsia about the story's irony in the Madman's later recovery and appointment as a government official: "The price of sanity, then, is collaboration in the old game of cannibalism" (33). In a sense, the Madman has "rejoined society," "awaiting an opportunity to eat people" (Pusey 88). One critic goes so far as to claim that the preface nullifies the validity of everything in the diary, including its final plea to "save the children": "Since the introduction which frames the diary already annuls the true

meaning of its content, even this last sentence loses its intended didactic validity" (Lee 57, 71).

While irony certainly figures importantly in the story, I would argue that the story's "didactic validity" is by no means lost because of the prologue. Even if the Madman indeed rejoined his society, this would only reveal the difficulty of saving China, but not nullify the plea to "save the children." Of course, the reader would be disappointed by the Madman's supposed "return to normalcy," and would trust him a little less from then on, but the diary remains valid in its insight. The reader would realize how powerful and tenacious negative traditions can be, how hard it is for an enlightened individual to awaken or reform other people, and how easy it is for the enlightened person to be co-opted and become an accomplice in the feast of human flesh. The reader still feels persuaded by the diary's plea, while at the same time obtaining an additional insight into human weakness.

When reading the prologue in a different light, we would be even more careful about claims of the story's loss of validity. In the prologue, the Madman's "return to normalcy" and his official appointment are in fact only *suggested*; it is not *stated* in a clear-cut manner by a reliable narrator. Somewhat similar to the prologue section of *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 [*A Dream of Red Mansions*], the prologue of this story partially functions as an excuse—to explain the background of an "absurd" tale (*huangtang* 荒唐, a term used in both *Honglou meng* and "Diary of the Madman"), and to soften the abruptness of the transition to the "shocking" diary itself. While succeeding in sketching the relatively "realistic" origins of the diary, the prologue is confusing when read in isolation.

It should be emphasized that the story's prologue establishes a scenario in which the older brother, not the narrator, announces that the Madman has finally recovered and later left to take up an official appointment. The narrator in the prologue should not be equated with the Madman's older brother. The story implies fraternal difference, rivalry, and even fratricide, especially with respect to the Madman's comments about his older brother. If we see the Madman as in fact more insightful and humane than the others, we should perhaps see

the older brother as a satirized figure, and not take his words entirely at face value. In the prologue, the older brother "laughed out loud" when he "brought out two volumes of his younger brother's diary" to show the visitor (i.e., the narrator). The prologue does not reveal the true motivations of the older brother for laughing and displaying the diary (in which he is condemned by the Madman) for the narrator's perusal. The older brother may have been indifferent enough about the Madman's illness to laugh about it and feel no shame about being harshly criticized in the diary. The narrator merely reports what the older brother says; he neither comments on the older brother's remarks, nor indicates that he believes everything the older brother has said. It is thus not at all certain whether the Madman has indeed "recovered" and "gone somewhere to await an official appointment." The reader is simply not given any credible evidence that would support such a conclusion.

Seen in this light, the prologue not only does not undermine the diary's insight, but even enhances the author's urgent appeal. The prologue reveals that the diary we are reading is not complete. According to the narrator, the original uncut version of the diary is so incoherent that he has had to patch together some selected portions of the original. He claims that he has copied out these selected diary excerpts "so that they may serve as material for medical research" (Lu Xun 1973, 7).[12] This is clearly an excuse, since the narrator would have left the diary's incoherence stand unchanged if he had indeed wanted it to serve as material for medical research. The narrator's report implies that the diary we are reading has been edited in a special way. In fact, it seems that the narrator has actually not edited the diary for the purpose of medical research, as he disingenuously claims; instead, he has deliberately chosen to include those entries that highlight the Madman's (as well as the implied author's) anxiety about China's fate. The narrator's mode of selection thus indirectly conveys the author's preoccupation with the worrisome condition of Chinese society to the reader.

While Lu Xun adopts the familiar paradigm of the powerful and rich oppressing the weak in this story, he avoids an overly simplistic

and rigidly ideological presentation. The targets of Lu Xun's satire include not only upper-class landowners such as the Madman's brother and Venerable Old Zhao and well-educated professionals like the doctor, but also the lower-class farm tenants and other commoners. What Lu Xun is attacking is not only cruelty and exploitation, but also ignorance, apathy, inertia, and cowardice. In Lu Xun's presentation, lower-class persons appear to imitate their masters' savage behavior, and tend to be ignorant and superstitious as well. The tenants from Wolf Cub Village kill a "very wicked man" and eat his heart and liver, believing that this would "increase their courage." Just as a hierarchy exists to differentiate the higher and lower classes, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, there is a hierarchy that differentiates the physically stronger people from the weaker ones, and a group of people from a single individual. As a group, the lower-classed tenants are stronger than the "very wicked man," and are thereby capable of victimizing him. There is also a pronounced hierarchy among the lower-class residents. Therefore, the lower classes are not only victims of the upper classes, but can also play the role of victimizers of others in their class, or else of those of an inferior status.

In addition, Lu Xun makes the paradigm of persecution in this story fluid enough to go beyond the usual hierarchical relationships. In his presentation, lower-class people have become so accustomed to oppression from their familiar masters that they would not even contemplate rebellion. Regardless of their class, the Chinese people appear reluctant to change their ways, preferring to blindly follow tradition from one generation to the next. They tend to obey authority, and would thus suspect and resent anyone who tried to enlighten or transform them—not to mention encourage the commoners to rebel. They are ignorant enough not to make a distinction between a real criminal, such as the one caught in Wolf Cub Village, and an innocent revolutionary executed by the oppressive government. The Madman thus senses hostility toward him from almost all the people in his midst. Ostensibly, this type of paranoid reaction merely underlines the demented contours of the Madman's fantasies and hallucinations, Yet

on a deeper level, the reader realizes that the Madman is alienated and marginalized precisely because he has tried to preach to the people around him. The Madman also wonders why those people who have been bullied and exploited by the magistrate, local gentry, bailiffs, and creditors seem more frightened and fierce when seeing him than when they were bullied (9). The paradigm of persecution now shifts to that of unenlightened Chinese persons victimizing their relatively enlightened counterparts. The prophet trying to wake up the unenlightened people risks being cannibalized by the very people whom he is trying to save.

The story portrays the general apathy of people toward cruelty and exploitation as a result of inertia. The older brother, the tenants, and the young man whom the Madman asks about cannibalism all seem to take the phenomenon for granted. In his "Random Notes Jotted Under the Lamp," Lu Xun continues the human-flesh feasting metaphor to remark ironically:

> This civilization not only makes foreigners intoxicated, but also has long made all people in China intoxicated and even smiling. Because people have been separated from one another as a result of the many differences that were handed down from antiquity and are still in existence, they can no longer feel other people's pain. And because each of them has the hope of enslaving or eating other people, they forget that they themselves share the future of being enslaved and eaten. So numerous banquets of human flesh, large or small, have been prepared from the beginning of civilization until today. People have been eating people and being eaten in this hall. The foolish and wildly arrogant cheers of the ferocious people drown out the cries of the miserable weaklings, not to mention [the cries of] women and children. (200)

In "The Diary of a Madman" and "Medicine," Lu Xun reveals that ordinary people are so accustomed to inhumanity that they can

look on with amused indifference as an innocent revolutionary is executed and cannibalized—or even go on to participate in the cannibalistic act itself. Strongly affected by the case of Xu Xilin, the Madman fears that as an enlightened person, he may also be eaten up. The glances, mouths, and appearances of the people around him thus seem fierce to him and oppress him psychologically. In "Medicine," Lu Xun graphically depicts how apathetic and superstitious commoners would even try to obtain bread dipped in a revolutionary's blood for their own self-centered designs. Ordinary people's apathy toward the basic well-being of reformers and revolutionaries can thus translate into intimidation and cruelty toward enlightened activists.

The Madman's concluding plea, "Save the children," refers to those children who have not yet eaten human flesh. Though the Madman questions whether there still are innocent children, he nonetheless calls for the reader's attention to this issue. In "Random Notes Jotted Under the Lamp," Lu Xun explicitly urges young people to kill "cannibals" or exploiters and overthrow the practices of traditional civilization, which he deems inhuman:

> The human-flesh banquets are still being prepared, and many people still wish to keep them in operation. Smash these cannibals, overturn their banquet tables, and destroy the kitchen! —such is the mission of youth today. (200)

Lu Xun's Madman only hints at people eating one another up, yet a macabre fantasy of autophagy appears in "The Epitaph" (1925), one of the many prose poems he published in the volume entitled *Wild Grass*. The narrator dreams that he is reading the inscription on a tombstone. He sees the grave in ruins, and the corpse disembowelled, "its heart and liver gone." The narrator reads the inscription on the back of the tablet: ". . . I tore out my heart to eat it, wanting to know its true taste. But the pain was so agonizing, how could I tell its taste? . . . When the pain subsided I savored the heart slowly. But since it was already stale by then, how could I know its true taste? . . ." (1974b, 44-45). The corpse sits up and talks to the narrator,

but the narrator flees in fear. Recalling practices of medicinal ("the heart and liver gone") and gourmet ("taste") cannibalism inherited from traditional China, this poem metaphorically depicts a nation in ruins after people have eaten one another up. The habit of eating human parts has supposedly become so ingrained that the speaker (the corpse) literally eats himself to death. While the Madman in Lu Xun's story probably becomes mad and fearful when shocked by the news about Xu Xilin, the narrator in this poem flees in fear. Yet Lu Xun's story still offers some hope for the reader, whereas this poem expresses the writer's own pessimism at that time.

Along with premodern China's rich historical and literary sources on cannibalism, Lu Xun's writings on this subject have greatly influenced a number of modern writers. Wang Jingzhi's 汪靜之 (b. 1902/03) short story "Human Flesh" ("Renrou" 人肉, 1925?), and Yu Hua's 余華 (b. 1960) "Classical Love" ("Gudian aiqing" 古典愛情, 1988) employ cannibalism largely as a metaphor, focusing on the harsh treatment meted out to many women in pre-modern China.

A number of Chinese writers have touched upon actual instances of cannibalism during the Great Famine in 1959-62.[13] The June 1989 massacres in Beijing have obviously prompted some writers to explore cannibalism either as a practice that indeed existed or as a theme full of literary potential. Zheng Yi's 鄭義 (b. 1947) *Scarlet Memorial* (*Hongse jinianbei* 紅色紀念碑, 1993) provides documented and detailed accounts of cannibalism in some counties in Guangxi 廣西 during the Cultural Revolution.[14] Zheng Yi has interviewed and even photographed a number of former cannibals, the relatives of cannibalized victims, and eyewitnesses. He has also checked into secret government files, along with various unofficial sources. His reportage reveals that punitive cannibalism, medicinal cannibalism, and gourmet cannibalism were practiced in Guangxi during that time.

Liu Zhenyun's 劉震雲 (1958-) "Reminiscing 1942" ("Wengu yijiu sier" 溫故一九四二, 1993) recounts the severe famine that led to cannibalism in He'nan 河南 in 1942.[15] Liu relates how Theodore H. White, a former correspondent of *Time* magazine, joined other

Westerners to help many Chinese famine victims. The narrator remarks ironically, "When later on we loudly shouted, 'Overthrow American Imperialism!', I don't think we should have ignored history—at least we shouldn't have overthrown American Imperialism during the two years from 1942 to 1943" (486). Liu even depicts the Japanese militarist invaders in relatively favorable terms. In 1943, the Japanese saved many starving people in He'nan, and these people later helped the Japanese military fight against the Chinese army. The narrator even argues that these people were justified in betraying their own country during China's long and bitter war with Japan from 1937 to 1945.

Instead of denying the existence of cannibalism and roundly dismissing the written sources on cannibalistic practices, such writers as Zheng Yi and Liu Zhenyun have investigated and verified these practices. These two writers have also described cannibalism as cruel and repulsive, and have concluded that various Chinese governments were much to blame for the cannibalistic acts that took place in He'nan and Guangxi. Zheng Yi reveals that some people during the Cultural Revolution still held traditional beliefs about the supposed tonic effects of ingesting human flesh. He also reveals many onlookers' apathy toward the cannibalistic acts they witnessed. Neither Zheng Yi nor Liu Zhenyun writes about cannibalism as merely a discourse without external referents in historical reality, or as a discourse charged with the ideology touted by postcolonialist critics. Liu Zhenyun makes it quite plain that being colonized by Western or Japanese imperialists would be better than starving to death. By praising the foreigners whom the Communist government repetitiously condemns, Liu indirectly criticizes the Communist Party-state.

Unlike *Scarlet Memorial*, Mo Yan's 莫言 *Boozeland* (*Jiuguo* 酒國, "land of liquor," "wine country," 1992) appears to be a completely fictive and fanciful account of cannibalism. Boozeland (Jiuguo), the main setting of the novel, is a city known for its good liquor and gourmet food, tourist industry, and consumer culture. The most treasured dish that makes Boozeland well-known is "braised baby." The dish epitomizes the highest quality of Chinese cuisine, being

supreme in its appearance (*se* 色), fragrance (*xiang* 香), and taste (*wei* 味): the selected baby is cooked and served whole together with other delicate spices, and the plump baby looks so alive and beautiful as to be aesthetically appealing. Beloved by high-ranking cadres and wealthy gourmets, this dish also earns much foreign exchange for Boozeland from foreign tourists, who enjoy eating it. As in the case of Lu Xun, Mo Yan's focus is "national," not "colonial." Foreign tourists are not depicted as having imperialist designs on China. They stay at Boozeland only briefly, and they participate in baby-eating only because that is a dish offered and consumed by the natives; it is part of their tourist package. While the foreign tourists are not the type of foreigners praised as true helpers by Lu Xun, they do not plan to eat up the people in Boozeland or destroy it, either.

While the description of a human flesh market is not new,[16] Mo Yan's description is unique for its elaboration on the processes of supply, purchase, preparation, and consumption. In various stories, Mo Yan describes in detail how the parents raise a "flesh child" (*rouhai* 肉孩) purely as meat for consumption, and how they prepare the child for sale. Later, the author recounts how the clerks purchase the children and raise them in a special nursery (*rouhai siyang shi* 肉孩飼養室, "Feeding Room for Flesh Children") so that they will be plump and tasty. The author finally describes how a child is numbed by liquor, bled, and prepared into a dish, and how he is served and eaten by consumers.

The novel is highly self-reflexive, consisting of the correspondence between a famous author named "Mo Yan" and his admirer, Li Yidou 李一斗, a Ph.D. candidate in martini preparation and an aspiring young writer residing in Boozeland.[17] "Mo Yan" is writing a novel entitled *Boozetown* (*Jiucheng* 酒城), in which a detective, Ding Gou'er 丁鉤兒, journeys to Boozeland to investigate the rumored cases of baby eating. Li Yidou has been sending one story after another to "Mo Yan," requesting that the latter submit it to *National Literature* (*Guomin wenxue* 國民文學) for him, but is frustrated again and again due to the editors' rejection. The satire on the Communist Party-state's control of literature and censorship is unmistak-

able in the exchange of their letters.

While the "Diary of a Madman" has a prologue framing the diary, *Boozeland* is structured even more complexly and playfully. Like a Chinese box, it has stories embedded within a story. From chapters 1-9, each chapter contains a chapter about the detective written by "Mo Yan," a letter and a story written by Li Yidou, and usually also a letter by "Mo Yan." In these chapters, Ding Gou'er has failed in his mission, having gotten ensnared in liquor and sex in Boozeland. He participates in a banquet given by officials, and is forced to drink so much that he becomes intoxicated and confused. Then he is shocked to see a baby boy served on the table. At first he points his pistol at his prime suspect, an important official named Jin Gangzuan 金剛鑽 ("Diamond"), while solemnly proclaiming, "I announce my withdrawal from your man-eating banquet" (*chiren de yanxi* 吃人的宴席, 94). The term recalls Lu Xun's "banquet of human flesh" (*renrou de yanyan* 人肉的筵席) as well as its seriousness, and restores Ding's reason and dignity briefly.

However, Ding is thereupon led into an epistemological puzzle when Jin Gangzuan uses deceptive rhetoric to assure him that it is not a human baby, but rather a specially prepared delicacy. Jin explains that the baby boy is not a real boy, but is only an imitation made by special craft, and each part of the body is made of natural ingredients. The arm, for example, is made of lotus root and other ingredients. When Ding Gou'er becomes confused and is eventually persuaded into tasting a piece of the boy's arm, he cannot help but admit that it is extremely delicious. Jin Gangzuan then jokes about Ding's "wallowing in the mire" (*tongliu hewu* 同流合污) with them, having eaten a human arm (97-100). Like Lu Xun's Madman, Ding is unsure whether he has participated in eating a baby or not. When Ding later becomes involved in a sexual affair with a woman driver, he is caught *in flagrante delicto* by her husband, none other than Jin Gangzuan. Upon discovering that the woman driver is one of the mistresses of Yu Yichi 余一尺 ("Yu One Foot"), the dwarf entrepreneur who owns a fancy hotel known for its delicious braised babies, Ding is so jealous that he shoots both the woman driver and Yu Yichi dead, and

eventually drowns ignominiously in a latrine pit. In chapter 10, "Mo Yan" journeys to Boozeland. Accompanied by Li Yidou, he participates in a banquet held by cadres, meets with Jin Gangzuan and Yu Yichi (who is still alive in Mo Yan's fiction, though already dead from a gunshot wound in "Mo Yan's" fiction). Like his own character Ding Gou'er, "Mo Yan" becomes intoxicated, loses his rational judgment and dignity, behaves obsequiously towards Jin Gangzuan, and is finally so dead drunk that he collapses to the ground and passes out.

The novel ends with a stream-of-consciousness epilogue which mimics the confused consciousness or subconsciousness of "Mo Yan." It refers to Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" as well as some examples from premodern historical and literary sources (413): Yi Ya cooks his son and offers the flesh to Duke Huan of Qi; Liu Bei 劉備 eats the flesh of a hunter's wife (from *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義, or *Three Kingdoms*); and Li Kui 李逵 broils and eats the flesh of a bandit's leg (from *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳, or *Water Margin*). The epilogue reveals some of "Mo Yan's" motivations in writing, as well as his intention to "depict cadres as human beings, not to caricature them" (413). At the end of the epilogue, Ding Gou'er, whom "Mo Yan" regards as his own "shadow," emerges from the latrine pit, and pulls out his pistol to shoot his last bullet at the overlapping shadows of both Ding and "Mo Yan," calling it "a man-eating beast." Then Ding and "Mo Yan" face each other and fall down, "with smiling faces as if we were blood brothers who reunited after a long separation" (417).

In addition to the epilogue, the edition of *Boozeland* that was published in Taiwan in 1992 is prefaced by Ding Gou'er's epitaph and ends with an essay "Desultory Chats after Drinking" ("Jiuhou xuyu" 酒後絮語) written by Mo Yan. Ding's epitaph runs as follows: "Brothers, do not judge your own blood brother in times of confusion and corruption" (*hunluan he fubai* 混亂與腐敗). The epitaph is clearly echoed by the last sentence in the epilogue. In "Desultory Chats after Drinking," Mo Yan talks about his experience in drinking liquor from childhood to the present, mentioning episodes of intense

hunger in the past, as well as excessive wining and dining among officials in more recent times. According to Mo Yan, he started writing *Boozeland* in September 1989; although he originally meant to avoid writing about politics and only focus on the relationship between liquor and human life, he gradually discovered that he could not help writing in a satiric vein (424). Yet he also expresses "understanding and tolerance" for the several minor officials who appear in *Boozeland*.

In the 1993 edition of *Boozeland* published in the P.R.C., both the epilogue and the essay are deleted. A critic argues that "this deletion has restored the open structure of the work" (Ng 146). However, I believe the deletion has muffled the author's satiric voice, and reduced the novel's serious import. The essay, in particular, indirectly discloses the author's serious intentions. The mention of the date when Mo Yan began composing this novel is important. The essay signals to the reader that though seemingly fanciful, Mo Yan's novel about eating children indirectly condemns the communist leaders who ruthlessly killed unarmed young students and their supporters in the vicinity of Tian'anmen Square in 1989. The 1993 PRC edition has also bowdlerized Ding Gou'er's epitaph to read as follows: "Brothers, do not judge your own blood brother in times of romance and affection" (*langman duoqing* 浪漫多情). The change obviously has the effect of "softening" the novel's satire, by describing the present age as romantic rather than depraved, and making the novel merely fanciful rather than poignantly critical of official corruption.

The modern critic Zhou Yingxiong 周英雄 points out that *Boozeland* is partly allegorical and partly realistic (3). This is also a characteristic of the "Diary of the Madman," which greatly influenced Mo Yan. Lu Xun's Madman wants to save the children from regressing to savagery, since he believes that "real people" would one day rid the world of man-eating people. Yet Lu Xun's story also reveals the concern for children who are easy targets for cannibals, as evidenced in the Madman's fear that he may have eaten his little sister. Mo Yan develops this motif of "eating the children" fully, combining it with gourmet and medicinal cannibalism and placing it in a con-

temporary consumerist context. Unlike Lu Xun, Mo Yan does not refer to punitive, survival, sacrificial, and *gegu*-related cannibalism. Yet he does allude to something that Lu Xun does not cover: the eating of fetuses and placentas for medicinal and tonic purposes. The novel's reference to the eating of placentas is probably based on verifiable information.[18] However, Mo Yan's depiction of routine baby-eating is obviously allegorical.

Although Mo Yan's novel is playful and sensational, and designed to shock and amuse the reader, it is not merely a hash of playful discourse that is wholly lacking in mimetic referents and a historical context. Like Lu Xun, Mo Yan is employing the motif of cannibalism to criticize contemporary Chinese society. Lu Xun focuses on the inhumane aspects of China's cultural inheritance, while Mo Yan's targets of attack are multiple. He criticizes some of the values and practices in traditional Chinese culture, such as gluttony, the overemphasis on gourmet eating in disregard of cruelty to animals, and the belief in the medicinal value of human parts. Mo Yan seems to imply that instead of saving the Chinese people from traditional "feudalism" and making the Chinese progress to the stage of "real people," the communist revolution and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) have made people inured to cruelty and inhumanity. Furthermore, Mo Yan seems to be criticizing China in the period after Deng Xiaoping's policy of "capitalism with socialist characteristics" had been implemented. In contemporary China's consumer culture, such "feudal" traditions as gourmet eating have been revived to an excessive degree. Boozeland is the epitome of rampant consumerism and the pursuit of wealth and sex, official corruption, and excessive wining and dining. Even the trafficking and commodification of children for food appear to be allowed or even legalized. Corrupt entrepreneurs and cadres collude with one another to enhance their wealth and power through inhumane means, while employing various rhetorical and deceptive strategies to conceal their corruption. Although the name Jiuguo ("wine country") suggests a country, in the novel it is the name of a small city, and is definitely not Beijing (307). It appears to refer to a part of China that has an overdeveloped consumerist

mentality. Metaphorically, Boozeland can also allude to the whole of contemporary China to a certain extent.

The novel by "Mo Yan" interacts in intricate ways with Li Yidou's nine stories. For example, two of Li's stories, "Flesh Children" ("Rouhai" 肉孩) and "A Culinary Lesson" ("Pengren ke" 烹飪課), supply background information about the selling and cooking of babies, the focus in the novel by "Mo Yan." Both stories are narrated in a matter-of-fact yet also ironical fashion, recalling Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal." "Flesh Children" recounts how an impoverished couple has raised a baby boy Xiaobao 小寶 (Little Precious) for sale to the College of Culinary Art (*Pengren Xueyuan* 烹飪學院). On the day of sale, the parents take special care to clean and prepare the boy so that he can be assessed for a better price. At the College's Special Purchase Department, the clerk asks the father Jin Yuanbao 金元寶 (Gold Ingot), "Was the child specially sired for Special Purchase Department?" After Yuanbao confirms this, the clerk says, "So the child is not human, is it?" Yuanbao answers, "No, he's not." The clerk asks, "So you are selling a kind of special commodity, not a child, right?" Yuanbao confirms it. The clerk then asks the last question, "You give us the merchandise, and we pay you money. You are willing to sell it, and we are willing to buy it. This is a fair trade. After the transaction is completed, there will be no more haggling. Is this correct?" Yuanbao affirms it. Another clerk takes off the child's clothes, examines his body, and rates him "best grade" (*tedeng* 特等). After the boy is weighed, Yuanbao receives RMB$2,140 (88-90). The series of questions used to legitimate the purchase amount to hypocritical and deceptive rhetoric.

While the "Diary of a Madman" criticizes hypocritical folkways in Chinese society and culture, *Boozeland* goes even further, parodying Maoist rhetoric while exposing its emptiness and hypocrisy at the same time. The pattern of a character's employing Maoist rhetoric as a deceptive strategy to hide his inhumanity can be seen in Jin Gangzuan's various speeches. This pattern recurs in "A Culinary Lesson." Mrs. Yuan, the mother-in-law of Li Yidou, is teaching a class how to prepare braised baby. Her lecture and demonstration are being video-

taped by a TV station. Mrs. Yuan informs the students that cooking is a profound art, and that they need to work hard to search for new dishes to satisfy the gourmets—this concerns the prosperity of Boozeland and the students' future prospects (266). As if in imitation of Maoist rhetoric about class struggle, Mrs. Yuan stresses that a cook "is not allowed to use emotions indiscriminately," and the babies to be butchered and cooked "are in fact not human"—"they are merely little animals of human shape that are produced according to strict, mutually agreed-upon contracts, and for the purpose of satisfying the special needs of a developing economy and making Boozeland prosper" (268). Mrs. Yuan's rhetoric about satisfying both the gourmets and the needs of a developing economy parodies the rhetoric of the Communist Party-state. Her claim about the nonhuman quality of the "flesh children" corresponds with that of the clerk in the Special Purchase Department, and recalls Jin Gangzuan's assertion that the baby they are eating is not a human baby. Yet the following ironic scene exposes the deception of rhetoric: Mrs. Yuan is jabbing the body of the sleeping baby (dosed by liquor), saying, "He is not human. No."; yet "the little fellow seemed to be protesting her words," and farted loudly. The students looked at one another for a dozen seconds and then burst out laughing (270). The high-sounding, patriotic Maoist rhetoric is capped by the sound of a loud fart and laughter. The sound of the natural if base physical function of a baby reveals that he is human; the Maoist rhetoric to the contrary is thus exposed as being utterly hypocritical and lacking in substance.

The qualities of inhumanity, apathy, and hypocrisy that Lu Xun criticized are also revealed in *Boozeland*, though within a different context. In "Flesh Children," the parents have no affection for their child, regarding him as mere merchandise; they take care of him only so that he can fetch a good price. The father's name Jin Yuanbao suggests he seeks only profit. On his way to the Special Purchase Department, Yuanbao is worried about being late and missing the sale. He competes with other sellers to make sure that his boy would be rated a higher rank. He breaks into tears not because he is sad to part with his child, but because he is excited about his child being rated

"best grade." Neither the buyers nor the sellers (who are often the parents of the boys being sold) have any compassion for the boys. In "A Culinary Lesson," the students at one point feel affection for the flesh child, who looks lovely while snoring in his sleep. Yet when Mrs. Yuan reminds the students that if they know how to cook flesh children, they can go abroad and "conquer Westerners," these students rid themselves of emotions and concentrate on learning the lesson (270-271). The desire for going abroad and striking it rich is so strong that the students become apathetic to cruelty and listen to the authority's rhetoric. The novel reveals that the raising, purchase, and consumption of meaty babies for braising is an established practice legitimized, supported, and even institutionalized by the state. It also dramatizes how the authorities have used deceptive rhetoric to manipulate people and indoctrinate them into having no affection.

Kenny Ng has rightly pointed out Mo Yan's concern with "the peasantry's plight and their grievance against uneven economic developments of rural and urban sectors in the post-Mao reform period" (135). In this novel, Mo Yan has indeed described how the "flesh children" are supplied by impoverished rural residents and consumed by wealthy and powerful urbanites. However, some city-dwellers have also supplied human flesh to consumers of food and tonics. The woman driver, for example, admits that her husband Jin Gangzuan has forced her to undergo abortions five times because he wants to eat the five-month-old fetus (235). The cadres and entrepreneurs consuming the babies certainly exhibit cruelty and apathy, yet many other people are also implicated and apathetic about the whole business: for example, the providers of "flesh children," the clerks who purchase the children and raise them, and the cooks who butcher and prepare them for consumption. In Boozeland many people know about baby-eating, yet they take it for granted and do not raise any protest. The wealthy and powerful are not the only baby-eaters. Many old and poor city-dwellers who constantly scavenge in the rubbish heaps outside the College of Culinary Art have also eaten leftovers from dishes of braised baby.

In Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman," cannibalism is evil and the

condemnation of cannibals is clear. However, in Mo Yan's treatment of this motif in *Boozeland*, he tries to combine opposites, revealing that there are more than purely positive or negative sides to one thing. Liquor, the original focus of Mo Yan, is shown to have great beneficial effect and bring much enjoyment to life. Yet at the same time, intoxication can also lead to confusion, depravity, and corruption. Gourmet foods are described in detail, yet also juxtaposed with their end product, human feces. Baby eating is supposed to be cruel, yet the author elaborates on the beauty, fragrance, and tastiness of the dish. Various comments from the characters also affirm the tonic value of eating babies, fetuses, and placentas. One parallel to baby eating featured in the novel is the procurement and eating of swallow's nests. While criticizing the custom of eating swallow's nests, Li Yidou also affirms that his mother-in-law has benefitted greatly from this dish; already at an advanced age, she is still the very picture of good health and youthful beauty.

Lu Xun's Madman is fairly respectable, and the narrator of the prologue has much authority. By way of contrast, *Boozeland*'s Ding Gou'er becomes morally depraved, while the author "Mo Yan" succeeds in garnering little respect from the reader as an authority figure. "Mo Yan" has difficulty writing about Ding, may have borrowed a number of his ideas and materials from Li Yidou, and becomes as drunk and depraved as his own butt of satire in the end.

In *Boozeland*, Mo Yan avoids a black-and-white dichotomy in characterization, as he has intended. Jin Gangzuan and Yu Yichi first become known to the reader from Ding Gou'er's initial view of them as cannibalistic villains. Yet Ding later finds Jin and Yu competent, impressive, and deserving of respect. Sometimes, Jin and Yu even come across as elegant, dignified, charming, and likeable. Mo Yan informs us that they have suffered hardships in their childhood, thereby making them worthy of the reader's sympathy. In fact, almost all of this novel's characters are presented as having both positive and negative features. Ding Gou'er, an upright investigator who is supposed to see that justice is done, becomes an accomplice in baby-eating, an adulterer, and a hunted criminal in the end. The Little Mon-

ster (Xiaoyaojing 小妖精) at first appears to be a hero when he leads the other children to rebel against the guards and escape from the "Feeding Room for Flesh Children," yet he soon becomes a tyrant, and is extremely cruel to both the guards and the other children. Even the old, upright Communist Party member tending the cemetery of the martyrs is imperfect. A rare character in the novel who still recalls the original communist ideal, this man at first commands respect from Ding Gou'er and the reader. Mo Yan appears to have much sympathy for this character, possibly employing this man to express his own nostalgia for a utopian ideal and a more ascetic but unified period in the early years of the communist government. Yet this old CCP member is also held up to ridicule, for he is bigoted and ignorant of the changes taking place in the outside world. Mo Yan portrays him in a manner reminiscent of Lu Xun's call to arms: this man still believes he can easily eradicate the man-eating beasts with his gun; he is totally unaware how widespread his society's corruption has become. This old man dies a grotesque death, paralleling Ding Gou'er's undignified final descent below the surface of a deep latrine pit.

Conclusion

I have argued in this paper for the need to be careful in applying the postcolonialist rubric in Chinese studies, in light of the limitations of postcolonial studies as a subfield that focuses on colonial discourse theory and adopts ideological paradigms that tend to be reductive. I suggest that scholars adopt nuanced and empirically grounded models, and remain mindful of regional, cultural, and historical contexts and specificities. I point out some of the pitfalls of postcolonial studies of cannibalism in the West, and demonstrate that such studies are often not applicable to the study of cannibalism in China. Modern Chinese writers can draw upon rich historical and literary sources on cannibalism, and need not depend upon colonial encounters with the West in order to write about cannibalism. These writers either write about actual instances of cannibalism or employ cannibalism as a metaphor for critiquing the government or society. They do not write about

cannibalism as merely a discourse without external referents in historical reality. Their concern is more local and "national" than "colonial," and they hardly share the postcolonial theorists' narrow ideology and repetitious condemnation of "colonizers" and "imperialists." A detailed analysis of Lu Xun's "Diary of the Madman" and Mo Yan's *Boozeland* reveals that it would be inappropriate and even awkward to impose a postcolonialist paradigm onto these two literary works. These works are more complex than can be easily contained within certain simplistic ideological paradigms. They can be analyzed, understood, and appreciated fully only through more comprehensive critical approaches that take note of particularities and nuanced differences.

NOTES

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[1] For a study that uncovers a much earlier *locus classicus* for the related academic postism of "postmodernism" than that given by conventional academic commentators such as Fredric Jameson, see Philip F. Williams's article, "The Rage for Postism" (1998-99).

[2] *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* 2304.

[3] Ashcroft et al. 1998, 186. For example, Ashcroft et al., 1977.

[4] See, for example, Suleri 246.

[5] *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (328) gives the etymology of "cannibalism" as follows: Spanish *Canibales* (pl.), a form (recorded by Columbus) of the name *Caribes*, a people of the W. Indies.

[6] See Philip F. Williams' discussion of the term and its use by some postcolonial critics in Chinese studies (1996, 65).

[7] The terms "moral models" and "objective models" are from Roy D'Andrade. Quoted and discussed in Williams 1996, 66.

[8] See also my discussion in "Morality and Cannibalism" and "From History to Allegory."

[9] Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" was inspired by Gogol's "Di-

ary of a Madman" and Andreev's "Red Laugh" (Hanan 65-66).

[10] According to Hanan, Zhou Zuoren 周作人 pointed out that the irony in Lu Xun's "The True Story of A Q" ("A Q zhengzhuan" 阿Q正傳, 1921-22) resembled the satire of Swift; Zhou Zuoren also translated Swift's "A Modest Proposal" (Hanan 57).

[11] My translation differs from that in Lu Xun 1956, 17-18. Lu Xun deliberately arranges for the Madman to make a mistake in recounting the anecdote about Yi Ya in order to point to confusion in the Madman's train of thought. According to historical records, Yi Ya steamed his son and offered him to Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685-643 B.C.), not to King Jie of the Xia 夏 dynasty or King Zhou of the Shang 商 dynasty, who were from a much earlier period. Yet this confusion is not entirely arbitrary. Since Kings Jie and Zhou are notorious tyrants, it seems plausible that the Madman should associate them with cannibalistic acts.

[12] William Lyell's translation of the "Diary of a Madman" omits this portion of the story. See Lyell, *Lu Xun* 29.

[13] For example, Wumingshi 無名氏, Fang Zhiyuan 房志遠, Zhang Xianliang 張賢亮, and Hong Ying 虹影 have all written about instances of cannibalism during the Great Famine of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

[14] See also Williams 1997; Gittings 192-209.

[15] I analyzed this story in detail in "Rethinking Postcolonialist Assumptions."

[16] See, for example, my discussion in "Her Hide for Barter."

[17] I follow Kenny Ng (128n7) in using "Mo Yan" (with quotation marks) to refer to the character "Mo Yan"—the author of a novel—in *Boozeland*, while using Mo Yan (without quotation marks) to refer to the real-life novelist.

[18] Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518-1593) has pointed out the beneficial effects of consuming human flesh and other human body parts such as the gall-bladder, the penis, blood, the placenta, bone, and the skull. See his *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (The Compendium of Materia Medica) 52.2955-67. Both Mo Yan's *Tiantang suantai zhi ge* 天堂蒜薹之歌 and Hong Ying's *Ji'e de nü'er* 飢餓的女兒 refer to eating of the placenta.

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