

Chinese Cannibalism's Literary Portrayal: From Cultural Myth to Investigative Reportage

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ABSTRACT

As fewer and fewer Chinese recall or inquire into the violence and chaos of the Cultural Revolution, the hard and painful lessons learned about scapegoating and ideological zealotry may be slipping away. Because of the Chinese Communist Party's deep involvement in implementing the Cultural Revolution, it has discouraged searching investigations into this period, and ignored the pleas of esteemed writers like Ba Jin and Hsiao Ch'ien to establish a museum that would preserve and display the artifacts from this tumultuous period for coming generations. The renowned writer and former Red Guard, Zheng Yi (1947-), has countered this state inducement to cultural amnesia by meticulously documenting one of the worst atrocities of the Cultural Revolution: the rampant murder and cannibalizing of hundreds of innocent "class enemies" in Guangxi during the late 1960s. The literary investigation Zheng Yi smuggled out of the PRC and published in Taipei, *Scarlet Memorial*, is both a gripping documentary and a humanistic meditation on the origins and unfolding of this unsettling contemporary enactment of cannibalism, Lu Xun's favorite metaphor for inhumane social traditions.

KEY WORDS

avante-garde consumerism
cannibalism
critical paradigms
Cultural Revolution nostalgia
dialectical immaterialism
épater le bourgeois

Guangxi Zhuang nationality
inflammatory ideological campaign
Leninist anti-humanism
literary investigation
revenge rituals
scapegoating

Countering Amnesia and Nostalgia About the Cultural Revolution

More than any other work in recent years, the PRC writer-in-exile Zheng Yi's 鄭義 *Scarlet Memorial* 紅色紀念碑 (1993/1994) has brought China's Cultural Revolution under renewed international scrutiny.¹ His well-documented study reports on dozens of cases of cannibalism in various counties of Guangxi province in 1968, and suggests the depths of cruelty possible when the most basic restraints on human behavior are discarded in the course of particularly violent power struggles.

The Cultural Revolution has for some years been slipping away from the awareness of most educated Chinese for many reasons, one of which is the uneven quality of writings about it. The hyperbolic emotionalism and conceptual shallowness in most of the "wound literature" [*shanghen wenxue* 傷痕文學] during the initial cultural thaw after Mao's death certainly contributed to the PRC literary scene's dwindling of interest in the Cultural Revolution. Simplistic denunciations of the demonized "Gang of Four" and dubious assertions of absolute innocence on the part of so many victimized protagonists in Wound Literature have struck many readers as disingenuous, for even the urban survivors of that period who refrained from joining in mob violence could have seldom avoided sins of omission, such as stifling their ethical inclinations to openly defend others who were being hauled before kangaroo courts.² While Wound Literature was more honest about the Chinese socio-political landscape than the vast bulk of writings during the three previous decades under the strict Maoist

political control of art in general, most of the early Thaw's fiction left no successors and had been all but forgotten after a decade. China scholars still occasionally lament the lack of a truly great novel of international stature about the Cultural Revolution.³

PRC government authorities have encouraged the societal trend of forgetting about the Cultural Revolution with slogans like "let bygones be bygones" and "look to the future," and by continuing to exert more stringent political control on fiction with post-1949 settings than on fiction set in earlier historical periods.⁴ Moreover, the PRC authorities have turned a deaf ear to proposals by renowned literati elders like Hsiao Ch'ien 蕭乾 and Ba Jin 巴金, who have repeatedly urged the establishment of at least one museum commemorating the Cultural Revolution, lest the lessons of history be forgotten by future generations.⁵ In spite of these pleas for remembrance, the thirtieth anniversary of the Cultural Revolution's eruption in the spring of 1966 passed quietly in an atmosphere of embarrassed silence from Party leaders and the state media they control.

The rise of a new generation of Chinese writers too young to have witnessed or fathomed the excesses of the Cultural Revolution has also been a factor in the growing tendency to prefer fictional settings either in the contemporary Deng-Jiang 鄧江 era or in China prior to 1949.⁶ A growing consumerist fascination with novelty and sensation has prompted some youthful commentators to come up with catchy interpretations of the Cultural Revolution that ignore the experience of human suffering in that period. A certain young artist with "avant-garde painter" smugly emblazoned on his business cards exemplifies the contemporary homegrown variety of the PRC anti-intellectual intellectual who seems totally unfazed by the violence and injustice of the Cultural Revolution. According to an article with interviews by the distinguished dissident journalist and scholar Cao Changqing 曹長青, this self-styled avant-gardist insists that political murderers during the Cultural Revolution were "courageous"; he also "reverses the courage" of those political murderers who "killed the people whom they thought ought to be killed" during the Cultural Revolution (S4). In the same piece, a prominent young filmmaker

interviewee claims that “the Cultural Revolution was so fun . . . It was just like a huge rock concert—Chairman Mao was the singer onstage, and we were his adoring fans” (S4). The interviewer looked for a hint of irony in these callow tirades, but the speakers were serious about their apathy regarding the human toll of the Cultural Revolution and preference for metaphors of entertainment and admirable passionate intensity.

Among Western academics who claim to know something about Chinese culture and history, one can similarly find fervent supporters of what amounts to Cultural Revolutionary mob violence. The Duke neo-Marxist Fredric Jameson has criticized Mao Zedong for having dampened down rather than encourage violent conflict in the late 1960s and early 1970s, claiming that Mao’s shift towards a more moderate stance led to the eventual sully of China’s pristine socialism by pernicious capitalism under Deng (207-09).⁷ Even some Western specialists in Chinese studies who presumably are conversant with far more than Western Marxist academic theory *vis-à-vis* the Chinese Cultural Revolution still maintain that such internecine violence was not only proper but wholly necessary for spearheading China’s progress. A professorial apologist for the “essential” ingredient of extensive internecine violence in China named Heath B. Chamberlain had this to say: “Many of our (*sic*) past perceptions and interpretations were dead wrong, but surely not all of them. Chinese society of the 1950s was a long way from being civil. It was essential that the state intrude rudely and violently to liberate people from the constraints of traditional family and social bonds, precisely in order to prepare the soil for civil society’s future growth.”⁸ This agricultural metaphor implicitly justifies the violent destruction of inconvenient humans or “poisonous weeds,” as the CCP would later vilify so many of its perceived enemies, in order to “prepare the soil” for purer harvests of the “civil” socialist society of the future. In light of this easy complacency toward state-sanctioned violence in China, Zheng Yi’s *Red Memorial* is a timely reminder of its palpable human costs.

Zheng Yi and the Focus on Unintended Effects of State Policies

Zheng Yi's fiction and reportage forms quite a contrast with the recent tendency to bracket the Cultural Revolution away from contemporary social and artistic concerns, viewing it with nostalgia or forgetfulness. His early thaw-period story "*Feng*" 枫 [Maple] was a breakthrough in its public portrayal of the kind of pitched warfare and civil-war conditions that existed in the late 1960s between rival factions of naive young Red Guards under the cynical manipulation of an inflammatory ideology. Zheng Yi's mid-1980s works tend to portray rural China's social and economic neglect in the face of the government's absorption with political campaigns and ideological struggle; *Lao jing* 老井 [Old Well] focuses on an arid rural upland region so poverty-stricken that ideology was a luxury could hardly be indulged in, for rival villages would commonly clash over matters as basic to survival as access to a well.⁹ Since resurfacing in the West after living underground for years in the wake of the Tiananmen crackdown of 1989, Zheng Yi has continued his exploration of the unintended consequences of inflammatory ideological campaigns in his recently published reportage literature concerning widespread cannibalism in Guangxi during the most violent part of the Cultural Revolution in 1967 and 1968. The heavily footnoted material he assembled during informal research trips to Guangxi forms the bulk of his 1993 tome *Red Memorial*, which has thrown the penetrating light of investigatory reportage on an issue heretofore handled mostly through myth or metaphor in Chinese literature.

General Varieties of Cannibalism and Its Literary Portrayal

Cannibalism undoubtedly occurs less often in actuality than as a motif in world literature, and is frequently encountered in the realms of myth and folklore. In ancient mythology, the Roman god Saturn devoured his own children, while China's god-like human progenitor

Fuxi 伏羲 made the world safe for humanity by killing and eating the monstrous hominoid Chiyou 蚩尤 (Askenasy 178). Folklore of more recent vintage may often point in similar directions, for Yuan and Ming Chinese story cycles about the famous Tang Buddhist priest Tripitaka's pilgrimage to India brim with vignettes of his intrepid disciples saving him from being devoured by semi-divine humanoid foes.

In literary and historical writings that embody more restraint on the writer's imagination and literary fancy, references to outsiders' cannibalism often function as a way to characterize a neighboring tribe or foreign country as less civilized and enlightened than the author's own homeland; colonial explorers and missionaries have often taken hearsay accounts of cannibalism at face value as a way of underlining the appropriateness of the outsider's intervention in a given culture or tribe. Writing in a similar vein a number of centuries ago about the "southern barbarians" of what later came to be called Guangdong and Guangxi, the Chinese authors of the *Han shu* 漢書 and the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 describe the southerners' cannibalism as a local oddity that would not have happened up north (Zheng Yi, *Hongse jinianbei* 187, 243).¹⁰ Commenting on this manner in an agnostic vein, the anthropologist William Arens cogently argues that the tendency to ethnocentrism and hyperbole in many such accounts of cannibalism should caution investigators to remain skeptical about the actuality of alleged cannibalism; unfortunately, Arens becomes dogmatically categorical in his skepticism and dismissive of even carefully documented relevant accounts.¹¹

Realistic accounts of cannibalism do not necessarily aim at a general or overall characterization of an entire society as partial or prone to cannibalism. Special circumstances such as wars, famines, revolts, natural disasters, or shipwrecks may have been required to catalyze episodes of cannibalism that would not have occurred under normal conditions; Zheng Yi's literary investigation suggests that murderous interfactional warfare in China's Cultural Revolution created the climate for the Guangxi incidents of 1968. One of the most understandable and acceptable special circumstances involves sur-

vival cannibalism, in which a minimal amount of cannibalism is the only alternative to the starvation of various stranded or isolated survivors of an accident; the fate of the 19th-century Donner-party pioneers marooned in the wintry Californian High Sierras is a famous American example. Among the least acceptable circumstances include aberrant individual behavior, such as cannibalism motivated by extreme vengefulness, sadism, a callous disregard for human life and dignity, or outlandish gormandizing—the latter three of which would all apply to the contemporary American serial murderer and cannibal Jeffrey Daumer. Closer to the middle of the spectrum of acceptability is the type of opportunistic cannibalism in which the cannibal plays no role in the victim's death and partakes of human flesh out of a belief in its magical or tonic properties, as was the case with several elderly bystanders during the Guangxi atrocities.¹²

Contexts of Cannibalism in Chinese Literature and Radicalism

Ancient accounts of cannibalism in China during periods of extreme famine or in sporadic incidents of revenge killing or special tonic supplementation through specific organs like the liver sometimes bear a plausible facticity; still, most literary portrayals of casual or “gourmet cannibalism” in sources like *Shui hu zhuan* 水滸傳 are fanciful metaphors for lawlessness or riotous excess, as literary scholars like Frederick Mote and anthropologists like Eugene Anderson have suggested.¹³ In the twentieth century, ever since Lu Xun's 魯迅 1918 story about a provincial madman who believed that he and the rest of the adult townsfolk were often partaking of human flesh (“Diary of a Madman”), cannibalism has functioned in the literary lexicon as an epithet of intense disapproval towards an ancient culture that to many disenchanting urbanites seemed to conceal a deeply entrenched inhumaneness behind an veneer of civility and moderation.¹⁴ As the epithet *chi ren* 吃人 became more widely adopted among Chinese intellectuals alienated from many facets of their cultural inheritance, it had grown so conventionalized in its usage by the 1930s as to be

commonly leveled at hard-nosed but not exactly satanic grain merchants who would raise their prices during the spring planting and lower them during the fall harvest.¹⁵ This process resembles Karl Marx's originally startling characterization of the nineteenth-century capitalist as a vampire-like culprit supposedly responsible for the chains that Rousseau had insisted were encircling everybody except for remote noble savages and infants everywhere who had not yet become corrupted by civilized society.¹⁶ As blood-sucking and parasitic epithets for the capitalist proliferated in various Marxist pamphleteers and proletarian writers, however, these motifs took on a clichéd quality as yet another instance of bohemian delight in *épater le bourgeois*.¹⁷ Moreover, the polemics alleging industrial capitalism's cannibalistic exploitation of workers originated from both the far right and the far left of the political spectrum: one of the most articulate apologists for antebellum slavery, the Virginian George Fitzhugh, "could snarl at 'this capitalist class' as bitterly as any socialist," and extensively cited many of the same early 19th-century British studies of grim factory working conditions that socialists had long been citing when indicting capitalism in his book *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters* (1857); Karl Marx drew extensively on Fitzhugh's polemic ten years later in the first volume of *Das Kapital* (Woodward xxv).¹⁸

The hyperbolic license in such formulations becomes clearer as the years recede and the metaphors' literary currency fades, relegating them mainly to the domain of the cultural historian. Contemporary academic Marxists, concentrated in literary studies and a few other areas of the humanities and social sciences in which little wide-ranging consensus exists about basic standards of logical argumentation and verification of evidence, have usually hastened to an ethereal realm of neologistic abstractions piled upon one another that has been aptly characterized by the UC Berkeley literary scholar Frederick Crews as "dialectical immaterialism."¹⁹ Within such a rarefied atmosphere, no entity quite so clearly outlined and palpable as Marx's capitalist vampire or Fitzhugh's industrial-baron cannibal would likely enter the picture. In China, by way of contrast, the concrete

effects of a more straightforward Marxist-Leninist program of heated internecine struggle and a dictatorship in the name of laborers but monopolized by the Party vanguard were in evidence all around; post-Mao PRC writers acquainted with the Cultural Revolution arguably had accumulated a much broader range of disturbing social observations than Lu Xun had amassed as grist for their fiction, but the vast majority seemed uninterested in picking up where Lu Xun had left off with the analogy of cannibalism. The often sardonic “roots-seeking” novelists occasionally dabbled with cannibalism, but primarily as an incidental motif; Han Shaogong’s 韓少功 mid-1980s allegorical novella *Pa Pa Pa* 爸爸爸爸 transformed cannibalism into just one more of the many amusingly benighted folk rituals of his apolitical, mythically portrayed rural Hunan uplanders.²⁰ The type of casual gourmet cannibalism practiced in Mo Yan’s 莫言 *Wine Country* 酒國 is also fanciful to the point of being of little resemblance to any recognizable socio-historical context.

Origins and Implementation of Zheng Yi's Literary Investigation

China's pre-eminent reportage writer from 1979 to 1987, Liu Binyan 劉賓雁, had learned over a decade ago of reliable and documented accounts of widespread cannibalism in parts of Guangxi during the Cultural Revolution. He suffered no shortage of “muckraking” topics from which to choose; however, since while still in China, he was constantly receiving stacks of letters from perfect strangers asking him to undertake a literary investigation and exposé of this dictatorial local Party boss or that regional influence-peddling racket. Liu Binyan recoiled from the topic of late-1960s cannibalism in Guangxi as too repulsive for public dissemination, though, and merely mentioned it in passing now and then to fellow writers and other friends in private conversation. As one of Liu's friends some two decades his junior, Zheng Yi felt conversely that the events of Guangxi deserved the kind of investigation and public exposure that China's state-controlled media could not provide.

As the renowned author of a well-crafted novel that has been made into a celebrated “fifth-generation” film, Zheng Yi had the stature and connections between 1986 and 1988 to arrange interviews with witnesses of the Guangxi debacle and receive access to some of the restricted-circulation Communist Party documentation on relevant matters. Fortunately, these investigations occurred prior to Zheng Yi’s leading role in the Spring 1989 Beijing protests, after which his inclusion in the Public Security Bureau’s most-wanted list forced him to go into hiding for over three years within China before escaping to Hong Kong with his wife in 1992 and subsequently moving to the U.S. to live in exile.

The finished product of Zheng Yi’s writings on the Guangxi revelations is much denser with footnoted citations to written and oral sources and much more specific about who said what than is the norm for Chinese reportage—and even for literary criticism in Chinese. Zheng Yi would regularly check one source against another for consistency, and in other cases frankly admit that his record-keeping procedures temporarily broke down at a certain juncture, either necessitating a tentative conclusion or preventing any conclusion whatsoever. Furthermore, from the very beginning of his various trips to Guangxi starting in 1986, he shrewdly consulted with a number of local scholars, editors, and officials so as to focus his efforts on the most revealing and reliable source materials and interviewees. He includes a photo, the name, and the occupation of quite a few witnesses, both among those who lost family members in the debacle, and even some of those who shared a hand in perpetrating the orgies of murder and cannibalism that occurred.²¹

On the other hand, as is typical of contemporary Chinese reportage, Zheng Yi intersperses the various accounts and descriptions he has assembled with his personal reactions to this material. These reactions and interpretations tend to be much more passionate than the ordinarily understated tone of Zheng Yi’s fiction, including a stronger density of rhetorical questions and apostrophes to the departed than one finds in a comparable work of reportage fiction like Hu Ping’s 胡平 *Zhongguo de mouzi* 中國的陣子, a 1989 work about two non-

violent Jiangxi working-class women dissidents whose corpses were gruesomely cut apart following their execution as thought criminals or “counterrevolutionaries” in 1977.²² Admittedly, Zheng Yi’s outrage is understandable, since he points out that over 90,000 Guangxi residents died from politically-motivated murder or suicide in the late 1960s—which is a conservative estimate, and only 25,000 fewer than the entire number killed or missing in Guangxi during the bitter fighting of the eight-year War of Resistance against Japan—yet only ten of the hundreds of murderous ringleaders have been brought to justice and executed for their crimes (*Hongse jinianbei* 6). This situation bespeaks a double standard of strictness in executing non-violent counterrevolutionary thought criminals and laxness in punishing the murderers of accused thought criminals.

At the same time, Zheng Yi’s often emotional asides suggest an impatience that the reader react with similar intensity, and reveals a widespread problem among contemporary Chinese writers dealing with disturbing but important topics—an absorption with one’s own impressions to the exclusion of sufficient consideration of the reader’s likely range of responses.²³ For example, one finds a jarring contrast in tone between Zheng Yi’s emotional comments about the hypocrisy of former murderers now holding political office who punish small fry who had eaten humans but not killed them, on the one hand, and the blander type of material evidence, such as the long catalogue of former Party members whose salaries were lowered or Party memberships taken away in 1984 for having eaten human flesh in a Guangxi locale during 1968, on the other (*Hongse jinianbei* 99-100).

Fortunately, this shortcoming in tone is more than outweighed by the work’s strengths. Aside from the meticulousness of Zheng Yi’s scholarly approach in collecting and presenting a mountain of evidence for his case, as mentioned above, he patiently traveled from town to town in the Wuxuan 武宣 region, exploring the local variations on the common regional themes of the ascendant majority rebel faction killing and cannibalizing many members and families of the minority rebel faction; the consequences of the belief that eating the

human heart and especially liver builds up one's health and courage, which sometimes led to cutting open the chest and ripping these organs out of a targeted person who had been beaten badly but not yet lost consciousness; and the utter lack of shame or repentance in many of the worst offenders Zheng Yi interviewed, who seemed to see no difference between butchering a politically stigmatized human and killing a barnyard animal. Perhaps most importantly, Zheng Yi offers some reasonable if incomplete interpretations that help account for the extreme cruelty of these actions when no war was ravaging the country and no foreign occupation could be claimed to have stirred up unrest among the citizenry.

Zheng Yi claims that the basic factors leading to the Guangxi debacle were the Maoist variety of Marxist-Leninist antihumanism combined with various inhumane and irrational features of the Han Chinese cultural legacy, along with the Guangxi Zhuang 廣西壯 nationality's stunted absorption of the sounder moral practices of Han Chinese culture (*Hongse jinianbei* 240). Zheng Yi is on very shaky ground with his theory about the Zhuang culture as a factor; the Zhuang nationality is probably the most sinicized of all the major non-Han ethnic groups in China, nor is there detailed evidence linking the Zhuang to cannibalistic behavior; the bloody sacrifices of oxen sometimes performed by the Zhuang do not imply a propensity for ritualized human sacrifice, as some of the Wuxuan killings could be aptly characterized. Moreover, those who cannibalized corpses in and around Wuxuan in 1968 could not be specifically identified as Zhuang.

However, the author may have indirectly hit upon a truth involved with the Wuxuan incidents of cannibalism if we take a concept like general characteristics of the locale in place of the concept of ethnicity. For decades, Wuxuan had enjoyed a reputation for violence and vendetta killings at least as far back as the Taiping Rebellion, when numerous local recruits formed part of the core of a rebellion that eventually cost over 20 million lives. And as Zheng Yi rightly notes, longstanding Guangxi provincial leaders like Wei Guoqing 魏國清 encouraged rather than restrained the widening of violent con-

flict in the Wuxuan area.

In the area of ideological catalysts of the Wuxuan incidents, Liu Binyan disagrees with Zheng Yi about the culpability of Marxism, but the two men seem to be discussing two very different types of Marxism. Like many Marxist dissidents within the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, Liu Binyan stresses the humanistic ideals of the early Marx that "many Marxists have died for," while Zheng Yi tends to identify Marxism with the later Marx's antihumanist model of social development and emphasis on dictatorship, violent class warfare, and the concept of the human individual as a passive vehicle for robust social forces of an abstract nature.²⁴ As with the *New Testament*, the writings of Marx are sufficiently voluminous and rife with contradiction and ambiguity to allow diametrically opposed interpretations of a given passage, but if one looks at the practices and theory of Mao's variety of Marxist-Leninism, the tough-talking later Marx is much more in evidence than the milder and more philosophical early Marx. This is not to cast aspersions on the Chinese government in particular, since no communist regime upon the face of the earth seems to have favored the relatively idealistic early Marx of the *Philosophical Manuscripts* over the hard-nosed later Marx of *Das Kapital* and the *Communist Manifesto*. Even among the dialectical immaterialists of Western academic Marxism who seldom need recourse to unrefined concepts like proletarian dictatorship or class struggle, late Marxist antihumanism has all but monopolized the floor; Althusser favored Mao above all his contemporaries and viewed Marx as the epitome of gloriously anti-humanist thinkers, while Fredric Jameson, currently lionized by a circle of graduate students and young literature professors from the PRC, can criticize Mao only for not having prolonged the Cultural Revolution for enough extra years to result in new "supreme" heights of achievement.²⁵

Turning back to the negative side of the Han Chinese cultural legacy, the ascendant majority rebel faction's desire to annihilate the minority rebel faction in Guangxi is a modern example of the lack of a solid basis for a loyal opposition to thrive in the Chinese cultural orbit. Furthermore, the ago-old tendency to punish even innocent

family members of individuals supposedly guilty of heinous crimes like treason can be seen in the documented instance of some rebels beating an infant to death with farm implements after his mother had the temerity to wail over the body of her murdered husband.

Yet Zheng Yi is too much in control of his critical faculties to follow mechanically in Lu Xun's footsteps and set cannibalism up as some sort of Chinese cultural essence, or mimic Lu Xun's comparison of the Han Chinese cultural legacy with a huge boil on one's neck. Without absolutizing anything, Zheng Yi affirms the value of commonsensical Han Chinese Confucian virtues that promote a certain level of tolerance, harmony, and courtesy in social life, and cogently takes the Maoist regime to task for having often striven to replace these laudable traditional aspirations with a twisted ethic of intolerance, contention, and callousness. It is the Chinese Communist Party-state's repressively authoritarian character that has enabled and impelled it to meddle so ruinously in the daily lives of its citizens, and Zheng Yi emphasizes authoritarianism as the fundamental problem with the Han Chinese cultural inheritance—the counterpart of later Marxism's fatal antihumanist downgrading of the human individual as an infinitely malleable pawn of robust social forces.²⁶

While Zheng Yi's interpretations are controversial enough to cause even a trusted old friend in exile like Liu Binyan to take strong issue with him in the preface to the younger man's book, the reader of *Red Memorial* cannot help but note the signs of an unusually critical and independent intelligence at work. With some careful editing in the areas of tone and rhetorical figures, Zheng Yi could well emerge as an internationally recognized writer and social critic.²⁷ His investigation has rekindled flagging interest in the still sketchily understood but vitally important period of the Cultural Revolution, and has shown that even a great civilization can revert back to horrible ancient rituals of revenge and scapegoating when the social climate turns stormy—and that one need not go back very far in time to find such an incident.

NOTES

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¹ One of the most in-depth anthropological analyses of *Scarlet Memorial, or Hongse Jinianbei*, occurred in a lecture by Donald S. Sutton of Carnegie Mellon University at the Modern China Seminar of Columbia University on 13 October 1994. The talk was entitled, "Consuming Counterrevolution: The Ritual and Culture of Cannibalism in Wuxuan, Guangxi (May to July, 1968)." See also Ross Terrill's preface to the 1996 English translation of *Scarlet Memorial* (xi-xvii).

² According to a noted Australian China scholar, "In 1977-1978, it became fashionable to flaunt 'scars' left on one's body or mind by the Cultural Revolution. The mood of the time did not permit a closer scrutiny of these 'scars' to see if they were as hideous as the writers claimed" (Louie 94).

³ The medium-length works about the Cultural Revolution that were far above average in terms of in-depth inquiry into the texture of life during the Cultural Revolution include: Yang Jiang 楊絳 (1982), Liu Binyan 劉賓雁 (1983), and Gu Hua 古華 (1983). All of these works transcended the shortcoming of Wound Literature, for they emphasized the disruption of entire social units and communities rather than merely individual and familial tragedies, and avoided the overtone of self-pity found in much of the Wound Literature.

⁴ The difficulties that an accused thought criminal would have "letting bygones by bygones" is explored in Zhang Xianliang's 張賢亮 "Body and Soul."

⁵ Hsiao Ch'ien recently described his initiative: "In 1984, I wrote an article recommending the establishment of a hall of remembrance for the national tragedy of the Cultural Revolution and its concentration camps. Subsequently, my friend Ba Jin recommended the

founding of a museum of the Cultural Revolution. We say these things, but we realize that at present the creation of such institutions is still out of the question" (269).

⁶ Yu Hua 余華 and Su Tong 蘇童 are but two examples of the many young PRC writers who seem largely oblivious to the Cultural Revolution's historical and literary significance in China. Yu Hua has also publicly denied that contemporary PRC writers face severe political constraints in their choice of subject matter: "In China, a writer can write whatever he wants" (Yang Lian 2).

⁷ For a rebuttal of Jameson and his disciples in Chinese studies, see Link, Duke, and Williams (1995).

⁸ The quote from Chamberlain may be consulted in the special *Modern China* issue on the civil society controversy—19:2(1993), esp. 210.

⁹ See Zheng Yi, *Old Well*. *Old Well* was made into a well-received fifth-generation PRC movie, and may still stand as Zheng Yi's most famous work.

¹⁰ Ban Gu 班固 wrote the *Han shu* 漢書 several centuries before Fan Ye 范曄 wrote the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, though both prose works deal with the Han dynasty.

¹¹ Though it is an important corrective for some uncritical compilations of accounts of cannibalism, Arens' study has been criticized by a number of leading anthropologists and archaeologists. For an accessible late-1990s account of the academic controversy over cannibalism, see Osborne 28-38.

¹² Opportunistic cannibalism of the magical or tonic variety is described in Zheng Yi, *Hongse jinianbei* 69, 72, 91. The liver, heart, and brain tended to be the most in demand in Guangxi; if only one organ were to be taken from a fresh corpse, it was most likely to be the liver, supreme in tonic value and often thought to provide courage to those partaking of it.

¹³ Frederick W. Mote cogently notes the fanciful qualities of what he calls "gourmet cannibalism" in premodern literary and historical sources in his chapter on food in Chinese Culture during the Yuan and Ming (Chang 242-243). Mote adds that even the relatively

plausible accounts of cannibalism during famines at times functioned as a sort of figurative shorthand to emphasize the severity of a given famine. In an earlier chapter, Edward Schafer cites a quite reliable example of revenge cannibalism during the Tang dynasty, as recorded by Sima Guang's 司馬光 *Zi zhi tong jian* 資治通鑑 214: 7A (Chang 135). Eugene N. Anderson enlarges upon the metaphorical uses of cannibalism in his interesting argument that the fanciful portrayal of cannibalism as a casual social practice in *Shui hu zhuan* tells us far more about literary justifications for the harshly authoritarian rule of the Yuan and Ming than about Chinese society of that day (Anderson 226). In contrast, Key Ray Chong claims that there must be a certain amount of overlap between reports of cannibalism and actual incidents, and tabulates hundreds of references to cannibalism in pre-modern Chinese historical and literary sources. His claims deserved to be taken very cautiously, however, for the mere "detail" in many Chinese accounts of cannibalism does not amount to sufficient proof of their facticity, for many myths and legends are extremely detailed (Chong 130).

¹⁴ For the *locus classicus* of the 20th-century Chinese literary preoccupation with the idea of cannibalism, see Lu Xun, *Kuangren riji* 7-19 and *Diary of a Madman* 29-41.

¹⁵ The story character Gouzi condemns a group of price-fixing merchants as "cannibals all" in Wu Zuxiang's 吳組緝 "Fan jia pu" 樊家舖 [Fan Hamlet], in Tang Yuan 146. The episode in English translation may be consulted in Lau 403. For further analysis, see Williams, *Village Echoes* 80-87.

¹⁶ Rousseau's view of humanity in its supposedly idyllic prelapsarian state is embodied by his effusive declaration, "Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains." Corliss Lamont has noted that Rousseau was a key figure in establishing the Romantic tendencies of idealizing nature in overstated terms and overemphasizing the positive behavioral consequences of closeness to nature (180). See also the eighth chapter of *Babbitt* 209-235. Karl Marx' many borrowings from Rousseau include the former's poorly supported notion of a benign "primitive communism" at the dawn of human history, along

with the claim that industrial workers in their fallen state are poised for violent revolution because they have “nothing to lose but their chains” (Tucker 500).

¹⁷ In the late 20th century, “flabbergasting the bourgeois” has become *de rigueur* to the extent that many literary intellectuals place more value on a new interpretation’s boldness and shock value than on its truth value, or ability to stand up to careful outside scrutiny for coherence and plausibility, i. e., correspondence to extra-linguistic reality. The general pattern involves staking out an extreme and implausible position with a great deal of fanfare and publicity, and subsequently creeping quietly away from the position once too many critics have uncovered its numerous flaws. Stanley Fish is a prime example of the publicity-hungry literature professor who garnered some fame for his far-fetched theory that literary meaning and intention reside completely within the reader rather than in the text or the author; he later admitted that he had cast aside that theory, as well as several other implausible interpretations that had once sounded brash and clever. Fish concedes that his previous claim about literature being entirely “in the reader” was “flawed” and involved “the substitution of one reified entity for another” (22).

¹⁸ An example of Fitzhugh’s rhetoric of cannibalistic exploitation may be found near the conclusion of this book’s eleventh chapter, “Decay of English Liberty, and Growth of Poor Laws”: “. . . The capitalist class, who pays no taxes, . . . are the mere conduits that pass them from the laborers to the government. This vampire capitalist class imposes all the taxes, and pays none!” (118).

¹⁹ The Berkeley literary theorist Frederick Crews’ chapter on “dialectical immaterialism” is found in Crews 137-58. For a critical review of several applications of Althusserian and Jamesonian Marxist poststructuralist theory to contemporary Chinese literature and art, see Williams’s review article on *Politics, Ideology and Modern Chinese Literary Discourse*.

²⁰ Han Shaogong’s novella is collected in Wu Liang 1988: 1-40.

²¹ Zheng Yi pauses at one point to wonder aloud: after all the documentation, interviews, internal-circulation classified government

reports, and photographs of witnesses and perpetrators are all assembled, "Will people believe all this?" (*Hongse jinianbei* 94).

²² For an analysis of this work, see Williams, "Some Provincial Precursors" 1-9, esp. 3-6.

²³ Publishing house editors have in this case been too passive in refraining from guiding an author towards a more suggestive and low-key style, at least in the original Chinese edition (1993). The abridged English translation succeeds in editing out many of these emotional asides (1996).

²⁴ Liu Binyan advanced this argument on the third and final unnumbered page of his preface to Zheng Yi 1993.

²⁵ This somewhat baffling enthusiasm of many young U.S. literary academics from the PRC for an old neo-Marxist like Jameson is something addressed in the aforementioned articles by Link and Duke.

²⁶ Zheng Yi is one of a tiny minority of PRC intellectuals to have argued that the standard PRC manner of criticizing burdensome aspects of China's cultural inheritance as "feudal" [*fengjian*] 封建 is grossly inaccurate in historical terms; the decentralized *fengjian* stage was eclipsed over two millennia ago by the centralized and authoritarian *junxian* 郡縣 system, which has served as the most basic template for China's authoritarian regimes up through the present century. Since most high-frequency modern Chinese socio-political terms such as *fengjian* became infused with Japanese connotations during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the original referent of this Chinese term to pre-Qin society was inundated by an avalanche of translations from Japanese into Chinese. For more information on the crucial role of Japanese translations of scholarly terms into Chinese, see Lydia Liu.

²⁷ Some commentators have published articles in Chinese-language journals and newspapers accusing Zheng Yi of sensationalism or exaggeration, but as Wang Ruowang 王若望 and others have pointed out, no critic has been able to mount a credible challenge to his evidence or the cogency of his central arguments. Nor is it clear that the Chinese people's ordeal with the Cultural Revolution has yet

been widely understood or appreciated, even after so much has been written about it.

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