

## Wang T'ao and His Literary Writings

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From the mid-nineteenth century on, a growing number of Chinese scholars found themselves enmeshed in a radically changing situation which resulted from the unprecedented intensification of Sino-Western contact. This situation often caused them to adopt ideas and borrow cultural features from abroad that they had hitherto debarred.<sup>1</sup> A most interesting figure of exemplification among these scholars was Wang T'ao 王韜 (1828-1897), a traditional literatus from Soochow area and gifted writer involving academic activities in both the East and the West.

Wang T'ao's education in his early years was conducted under the traditional principle which put the emphasis on Confucian classics and literature. At the age of twenty-one, he went to work with several British missionary sinologists in Shanghai. By this time, Shanghai had gained a peculiar status because of Western influence. It soon emerged as the center of literary activities, offered a broader horizon for economic development, and attracted to itself all the features of new life. With this sort of irresistible tide of cultural shift, Wang T'ao was carried away from the traditional world and gained exposure to Westerners and Western knowledge.

The great Taiping rebellion (*T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo* 太平天國) occurred during Wang T'ao's lifetime. Many Chinese believed that he had taken the civil service examination given by the Taiping rebels in Nanking, and obtained a degree of highest level as *T'ai-p'ing chuang-yüan* 太平狀元.<sup>2</sup> In 1862, the Ch'ing government authorities in Shanghai indicted him for collusion with the rebel leaders. However, his life was saved through the help of the British missionary William Muirhead (1822-1900) and the protection of the Acting British Consul Walter H. Medhurst Jr. (1823-1885) in Shanghai. While the Ch'ing government was exerting pressure for his extradition, the British rejected Prince Kung's 恭親王 request and sent Wang T'ao to Hong Kong, where he lived as an exile for twenty-three years.<sup>3</sup>

According to the records of his contemporaries, Wang T'ao was a leading figure among men of letters in late nineteenth century China and an admirer of Western civilization. Few people who had ever met him found it possible to free themselves from the spell of his humorous and fascinating conversation and refined repartee.<sup>4</sup> From what I have found in his works extant to this day, he was a pioneer journalist and the first traditional scholar delving into the institutional and scientific studies of the West. Despite his mastery of a wide range of knowledge, his talent and learning were not rightfully used for the benefit of Chinese society. On the other hand, his ability and erudition were appreciated by a number of British and Japanese scholars.<sup>5</sup> As soon as he settled down in Hong Kong in 1862, he found a position waiting for him with James Legge (1814-1897), a distinguished British missionary sinologist. His great potentiality in classical studies, little apparent when he worked in Shanghai, became manifest soon after he rendered his assistance to Legge in translating *The Chinese Classics* series. In 1867 he was invited to visit the United Kingdom. He spent over two years in the British Isles and Europe, gave a lecture at Oxford University, and paid a call to the French sinologist Stanislas Julien (1799-1873) in Paris. In 1879 he was invited to visit Japan, where he was enthusiastically received by Japanese who had read his writings.<sup>6</sup>

Wang T'ao's scholarship in Chinese traditional lore and Western learning has been studied by a number of scholars.<sup>7</sup> His literary works, however, are not covered in any studies published in English. An exploration in this field can help us reach a fuller understanding of the directions of his literary activities. With the focus attention on such an area, this article will evaluate the artistic merit of his poems, investigate the fruit of his effort in revitalizing Chinese fabulous stories, and examine his accomplishment in creating a new genre of journalistic literature.

## 1. Poems

Wang T'ao had cultivated from an early age a love for literature which remained with him all his life. Even while busy editing his newspaper<sup>8</sup> and writing editorials and essays on current affairs, he found time to write poems and stories, which constitute the most sizable portion in the corpus of his writings. He started to write poems when he was a youth. Encouraged

to compose them by his teacher Ku Hsing 顧惺 and his best friend, Yang Hsing-pu 楊醒逋, he kept those which he thought were worth being retained. By the age of twenty-one, he had already accumulated several hundred poems. These were not published, however, until 1880, in Hong Kong, under the title of *Heng-hua-kuan shih-lu* 蘅華館詩錄 (Poems of the Heng-hua Studio). This book comprised five *chüan* 卷 containing 543 poems. Ten years later, one more *chüan* containing 87 poems was added when it was reprinted in Shanghai. *Chüan* 5 and 6 are devoted almost exclusively to poems describing Japanese scenes, manners, and personal events.

According to Professor James J. Y. Liu's study of Chinese poetry,<sup>9</sup> a poet can be placed in one or more than one of four basic categories — didactic, individualist, technical, and intuitionist — in accordance with his primary interest or intention. The didactic poet provides moral instruction in his verse, which should also reflect the people's sufferings and expose government's malpractices and social evils. The individualistic poet is self-expressive; he voices his heart's feelings with sincerity and spontaneity. Technique, learning, and imitation, which are essentially impersonal or derivative, do not recommend themselves to his purposes. The technically oriented poet considers verse as primarily a literary exercise through which he displays his verbal ingenuity and eloquence. The intuitionist seeks to embody in poetry his vision of the world. With this scheme, we can go on to find out what perspectives are exposed in Wang T'ao's poems.

In the late Ch'ing period, there was a strong tendency among the poets towards imitating the assertive, didactic style of Tu Fu 杜甫 (712-770), Han Yü 韓愈 (768-824), and Huang T'ing-chien 黃庭堅 (1045-1105).<sup>10</sup> Wang T'ao, however, seems to have been little affected by the trends current during his lifetime. The fact might be largely attributable to the style of his personal life which was marked by a disregard for conventional morality.<sup>11</sup> His unrestrained conduct undoubtedly disqualified him to be the author of didactic verse. Only a few poems describe the great rebellion with which he had some involvement; precisely because the Ch'ing government had indicted him for collusion with the Taiping rebels, he refrained from writing poetry in the vein of "satirizing and admonishing" government authorities. He did write a few poems to describe the difficult situations he had encountered in the time of civil war, but he failed to reflect the sufferings of the people in the great rebellion.

In the preface to his collection of poems, Wang T'ao admitted that he was a minor writer standing outside the mainstream, mindful only of expressing the interests and experiences of his own life. In his view, the importance of poetic language lies in its primary function of displaying one's nature and emotion. It rests mainly on spontaneous feelings rather than imitation. Wang T'ao's purpose, as he remarked, in preserving what he wrote was to memorialize the happiness of union and the agony of separation in events that happened from his youth to old age.<sup>12</sup>

A close scrutiny of the whole corpus of his poetry supports his assertion made in the preface. The most salient feature exhibited in the collection is self-expression. His thoughts and his life were the main sources of his poems. He wrote many of them in response to human relations or events. He seldom wrote poems which only describe wind, snow, moon, or herb; under his writing brush, the blushing flowers imply human analogues. In mourning the death of his wife and mother, he wrote several long poems to express his sorrow and grief, all of which appear to be natural and spontaneous. In communicating with his friends, he also possessed a tendency to describe the genuine state of his inner, personal feelings. He wrote very little verse while he was in England. It was in Japan that he found his poems being appreciated. The opening of this new vista elicited a considerable number of lively lines, many written to commemorate his happy meetings with Japanese friends, admirers and geisha girls.

While a large portion of Wang T'ao's self-expressive poems conform generally to Professor Liu's theory of the individualist view, a small number of his works in this category embody some different tenor which is not clearly differentiated by Professor Liu's definition of self-expressive verse. For purposes of further analysis, I would suggest a subdivision of self-expressive poems into two types. The first one includes those poems which are essentially the internal made external, operating under the impulse of emotion, and resulting in combined products of perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. The other type takes its primary source and subject from the external world; these are converted from fact to poetry as they filter through the poet's emotions and the operations of his mind.<sup>13</sup> By this scheme of subdivision, we may classify Wang T'ao's poems on mourning his wife, his mother and his daughter, and those which reflect his grievances and misfortunes during the time of civil disturbance into the first type, and label those poems he wrote after his visit to Japan as the second type. The key

point here is that the chief element generating the poems of the first type comes from within; the poet's emotion is expressed with full spontaneous ease, while that of the second type appears to be elicited from without. Though both of these types convey his genuine feelings, the poems of the second type are products characterized by external facts converted through operation of the poet's mind.

To illustrate the different generating elements manifested in these two types of poetry, I will give two specimens for comparison. The first type is a parting poem, an example of creation resulting from internal feeling. Wang T'ao wrote it at the age of eighteen or nineteen, and it seems to have been composed when he departed from his bride shortly after their wedding. The subject matter and its development move essentially from the internal to external; his own passion has absorbed nearly all of his attention, the scene is imbued with his internal feelings. The title is "Intended to Mail" (*yü chi* 欲寄); it reads:

Still remember distinctly,  
When we were grasping our hands last time,  
You inquired about the date of my return  
Before I took leave.  
Hard to go away while I held your red sleeves;  
You knitted your blue eye-brows for  
Murmurous against my reputed career.  
So swift was the sail  
As it flew with the wind under the moon,  
So sad was the withering willow  
As it fluttered its silky twigs in the mist.  
Do not seek divination repeatedly  
With golden coins in the lengthy night,  
There is an excellent verse  
From your young sweet-heart.<sup>14</sup>

尚憶前番握手時，未行先欲問歸期。  
最難離別牽紅袖，反怨功名鎖翠眉。  
乘月輕帆偏獵獵，和烟衰柳尚絲絲。  
金錢長夜休頻卜，爲有檀郎絕妙辭。

An example of the second type, also a parting poem, was written to a Japanese friend. But it is an occasional poem necessitated by social etiquette. The title is "Send-off for Consul Ando Senju on His Return to

Japan" (Sung Ando Senju ling-shih hui Jih-pen 送安籐潛壽領事回日本); it reads:

Mutual friendship and common ideals  
Have tied us up closely for years;  
With affinity it is an honor  
For my humble writings having your estimate.  
The hidden-cave of mine could not be a rarity  
Without equals;  
I have kept my promise,  
By staying in the fairy-mountains  
For a hundred days.  
It is simply easy for people to see the fowls  
Struggling for food and shelter;  
Who would care to concern a noble horse  
Hemmed in by wind and dust!  
Few congenial poets other than you could be found  
In this rustic place,  
No wonder we have repeatedly called upon each other  
In the past years.<sup>15</sup>

數載逢君意氣親，屢知文字有前因。  
敢言遜駕無千古，曾許神山住十旬。  
雞鶩徒看爭食宿，驢騾誰惜困風塵。  
偏隅絕少吟詩侶，莫怪年來過從頻。

This poem is also self-expressive, but it is the external generating factor that elicits the internal thought. The difference from the former poem is discernible in a close comparison. In the poem of the first type, for example, the internal feeling, the sorrow of separation, exists first; it moves outward and generates the external facts, such as grasping hands, inquiring the date of return, holding red sleeves, and knitting blue eye-brows. The flying moon and withering willow are external facts of a sort, but they are not in themselves sad. It is the internal emotions that make the poet see them as a sad scene. In contrast, all the external facts in the poem of second type exist before the poetic thought generates within. The mutual friendship, common ideals, a man in hidden cave, staying in fairy-mountains, and Ando's ability of perceiving noble quality are established external facts. Only as they filter through the poet's emotions do they engender the poem.

Most of Wang T'ao's poems written during his early years are in the

category of first type. Those composed in his later life fall into the second category. The shift shows that in the course of time his natural emotion in poetic creation gradually lost its vital force, while his technique of manipulating poetic language advanced.

Wang T'ao did write a small number of the technical oriented poems with his Japanese and Chinese acquaintances at formal banquets and meetings. On these occasions, he and other poets composed verses on given subjects, and echoed each other's poems using the same metre and rhymes. It is obvious that practices such as these are hardly conducive to spontaneous creative writing. Although Wang T'ao did manifest, on a few occasions, his ingenuity in using metre and rhymes for given subjects, he displayed no pedantic exposition or erudition in such literary exercises.

Wang T'ao had no interest in *Ch'an* 禪 Buddhism. He was neither introverted, contemplative, nor quiet. His active participation in secular affairs and his strong desire for an official post made it impossible for him to cultivate a calm, contemplative state of mind. As a natural result of his disposition, no intuitionist oriented work is to be found in his poems.

Generally, Wang T'ao's poetry exhibits his close adherence to the traditional regulations governing the use of rhyme, metre, rhythm, and diction. The general trend of employing poetic language in China has tended to consolidate the old vocabulary, and linguistically, to evolve new areas of expression rather slowly and cautiously. Instead of swift variation, it has pushed very gradually beyond the frontier of language in order to avoid incomprehensibility. Under such circumstance, Wang T'ao made no attempt to coin new poetic expressions. Because he employed only familiar vocabulary selected from the existing repertory, his poetic language appears to be easily comprehensible and unambiguous. Abundant conventional phrases such as "sorrows of separation" (*pieh-hen* 別恨), "end of horizon" (*t'ien-ya* 天涯), "red sleeves" (*hung-hsiu* 紅袖), "blue eye-brows" (*ts'ui-mei* 翠眉), "withering-willow" (*shuai-liu* 衰柳), "wind and dust" (*feng-ch'en* 風塵) and the like, are found in his poetry. But, by ingenious wielding of functional words, these frequently recurring phrases were ably used to express his life experience in different ways and varying degrees of intensity, and became ingrained in his own nature.

Another aspect of Chinese poetry is the strong inclination to express ideas in an oblique manner by using of allusions; Wang T'ao employed this technique to a limited extent, but very often, he expressed his thoughts

and feelings in simple, direct language. Moreover, he also employed exaggerations in a proper way to enhance the psychological effect of his feelings. When he indicated his disastrous involvement with the Taiping rebels, he stated that his aspiration to loyal deeds had moved the deities and spirits (*wang i kung-ming tung kwei-shen* 妄冀功名動鬼神). When he described the unsuccessful love affair between young people, he overstated that it is less difficult to repair a crack in heaven than to repair unrequited love (*pu-tien jung-i pu-ch'ing nan* 補天容易補情難). Such lines may seem extravagant, but they can not be faulted.

As mentioned earlier, many of his poems were written in response to human relations or events. For this very reason, they often tend to either build up a coherent picture or to evoke resonance in the minds of readers. Nevertheless, he lacked Tu Fu's ability to move readers suddenly and profoundly through the poetic presentation of an experience or emotion entirely new to them (*yü pu ching-jen ssu pu hsiu* 語不驚人死不休). His poetic achievement stops at the level of describing for readers familiar words and therefore only confirming their own experience.

## 2. Semi-fictional Stories

The most popular works among Wang T'ao's writings are several collections of his semi-fictional stories, which have been reprinted frequently in past decades. In the entire body of his stories four different categories can be distinguished.

The first category consists of many accounts of the lives and manners of courtesans and actors. These are written in the form of literary jotting (*pi-chi hsiao-shuo* 筆記小說), and are contained in the *Hai-tsou yeh-yu lu* 海陬冶遊錄 (The Brothels of Sea Hook) (1878), the *Hua-kuo chu-t'an* 花國劇談 (An Account of Sing-song Courtesans) (1878), the *Weng-yu yü-t'an* 甕牖餘談 (Gossip from a Poor Man's Window) (1875), and the *Sung-pin so hua* 淞濱瑣話 (Miscellaneous Notes in Shanghai) (1887). Because these are true stories with no dramatic plot, the narratives are often repetitious and not ingenious. Though most pieces are interspersed with several lines of poetry describing the girls' beauty, the literary level is trivial. Since Wang T'ao had been a constant patron of the courtesan quarters,<sup>16</sup> it is probable that some of the sources of these accounts were his own obser-

vation. There is abundant information about the courtesans' family situations, educational level, and economic background, and the contents would seem to be good material for sociological research.

The second category is a group of quasi-historical stories consisting mainly of accounts and anecdotes about both distinguished personages and obscure characters who figured in the Taiping rebellion. When he jotted down these pieces in Hong Kong, the Taiping rebels had just been suppressed, so his impressions of this great event were still alive in his mind. He was able to record some true stories about the Taiping leaders, and about men and women of worth who died in tragic ways in defense of their virtue or for the sake of duty. Most of these accounts are found in the *Tun-k'u lan-yen* 遜窟譚言 (Random Talks of a Man in a Hidden Cave) (1875). Obviously, his approach is not historical in the strict sense; historical events are mingled with legend. The portion that contains reliable information conforms generally to the contents of Chang Te-chien's 張德堅 *Tsei-ch'ing hui-tsu'an* 賊情彙纂 (A Collection of Information about the Rebels) and Hsieh Chai-ho's 謝介鶴 *Chin-lin kuei-chia chi-shih-lüeh* 金陵癸甲紀事略 (An Account of What Happened in Nanking from 1853 to 1854), both works were printed in 1870's. Ch'ien Cheng 錢徵, Wang T'ao's son-in-law, also stated in a postscript to the *Tung-k'u lan-yen* that several stories therein had already appeared in the writings of other authors. The reason why Ch'ien Cheng did not omit them when he edited the book was that these same stories also contained some new and valuable information not found elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> I believe that Wang T'ao must have acquired that portion of his materials through Western missionaries, Western newspapers, and his own observation.

The third category is a group of supernatural tales of ghosts, spirits, and marvels. Most of these are contained in the *Sung-yin man-lu* 淞隱漫錄 (Random Notes of a Recluse in Wu-sung) (1884) and the *Sung-pin so-hua*. Both of these collections are works imitating P'u Sung-ling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715), whose *Liao-chai chih-i* 聊齋志異 (Strange Stories of the Liao-chai Studio) appeared in 1679. While supernatural elements abound in Wang T'ao's stories, these are presented as at the least believable in terms of their mundane settings, and tend to introduce realistic human materials reflecting social and family life of the time. The sources of the stories seem to have been folk tales current among the people, though some of them blend with his own imaginings.

The fourth category is a group of stories concerning alien cultures and Westerners. These pieces are mostly contained in the *Weng-yu yü-t'an*; a few appear in the *Sung-yin man-lu*. It is here that Wang T'ao exhibited his susceptibility to alien cultures and his talent for vitalizing the traditional literary pattern with new substance. I will discuss this group of writings in detail in the ensuing paragraphs.

In all, there are 182 entries in the *Hai-tsou yeh-yu lu* and the *Hua-kuo chu-t'an*, 37 in the *Yao-t'ai hsiao-lu* 瑤台小錄 (A Brief Account of Boy-actors), 133 in the *Tun-k'u lan-yen*, 113 in the *Weng-yu yü-t'an*, 119 in the *Sung-yin man-lu*, and 64 in the *Sung-pin so-hua*. In most cases, a story, or the relating of a brief incident or two, comprises an entry. The contents cover practically every phase of Chinese life and various aspects of Western and Japanese cultures. The range includes: quasi-historical accounts of princes, ministers, generals, Taiping rulers, distinguished leaders, faithful friends, filial sons, chaste girls, supernatural stories of marvels and prodigies, spirits and ghosts, Buddhist monks and nuns, Taoist immortals, romantic love stories between young people, realistic stories of scandals, ventuous exploits and brigands and thieves, murders, lawsuits, domestic tragedies and bloody revenge, social comedies and family reunions, the manners and behaviors of boy-actors, courtesans, go-betweens, and prostitutes, the unusual deeds of gentlemen, loyal servants, and villains, Western philosophers, scholars, scientists, talented women, patriotic heroines, and acrobats, plus anecdotes of Japanese geishas, dissolute women, and merchants. Mainly because of the entertainment value and the avoidance of allusive language, his *Tun-k'u lan-yen* was pirated in Kiangsi under the title of *Hsien-t'an hsiao-hsia lu* 閒談消夏錄 (An Account of Gossips for Diminishing Summer Heat), and his *Sung-yin man-lu* was reprinted under the title of *Hou Liao-chai chih-i* 後聊齋志異 (A Supplementary Collection of the Strange stories of the Liao-chai Studio).

Wang T'ao drew on an extensive source for material, but he did not make the best possible use of it. His stories and tales were written in the traditional style of *wen-yen* 文言, and in the form of literary jotting, which is quite different from the more highly developed vernacular literature of the chapter-divided novel (*chang-hui hsiao-shuo* 章回小說). We may trace the origin of the literary jotting back to the *Po-wu chih* 博物志 (Records of Marvels) by Chang Hua 張華 (232-300), and the *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* 世說新語 (Anecdotes of the Personages of the Six Dynasties) by Liu I-ch'ing

劉義慶 (403-444). According to Chou Shu-jen 周樹人 (Lu Hsün 魯迅), the contents of the former are records of marvels and prodigies (*chih-kuai* 志怪), while those of the latter are records of personages (*chih-jen* 志人).<sup>18</sup> Neither is pure literature in the strict sense. Rather, both merely provide sketchy accounts of what the writer had heard or seen. In the course of time, a considerable body of works written in the form of literary jotting has been produced. By the late Ch'ing period, however, the style and form had become stereotyped, and it became difficult to either introduce variety or refresh the contents. Restricted by this narrow pattern, Wang T'ao was unable to take a new turn, and develop his source materials into panoramic or long stories.

The plots of most of Wang T'ao's tales and stories are monotonous. The typical pattern is to start with the name, native place, age, and family background of the main hero, go on to state the main body of the story, and end with the union of the hero and the heroine and retribution for the evil deeds committed by villains. This pattern can be applied to almost all of Wang T'ao's stories with little variety. Although Wang T'ao's descriptions of human feelings and events tend to be realistic, the story itself remains hackneyed. It was only in the area concerning alien cultures and foreigners that Wang T'ao successfully revived the trite form through the introduction of fresh elements. A fuller analysis of the contents of the stories in this area would have to deal with the Western subjects and techniques adopted in Wang T'ao's writings.

About thirty-five percent of the subject matter contained in the *Weng-yu yü-t'an* and five percent of the subject matter in the *Sung-yin man-lu* and the *T'ao-yüan wen-lu wai-pien* 菴園文錄外編 (A Supplementary Collection of Wang T'ao's Editorials and Essays) (1883) concern alien cultures and Westerners. This category may, in turn, be subdivided into three types on the basis of content. The first type includes the record of unusual events or incidents; the second type contains the record of distinguished personages; and the third type includes a small number of fictional stories which served to introduce the personal behavior and manners and social life of the West. In order to present subject matter appropriately, Wang T'ao adjusted the form of literary jotting slightly. All pieces recording incidents or events were written in the form of news reports or essays, while those recording personages took the form of biographical accounts. The sources of these two types were culled from newspapers or periodicals and

history; his role of re-creation was limited to the sphere of interpretation and comment on certain points which reflected his own view. The sources of the third type were apparently confined to Wang T'ao's own experience in the West, which he presented in fictional stories with various plots.

Those stories recording unusual incidents or events exhibit Wang T'ao's perception of selecting subjects. Although some of their significance had diminished in the course of historical development, it is still valuable to have a glance at some of the notable subjects which display the range of Wang T'ao's knowledge of foreign cultures. I have translated several typical subjects for reference: "the shortage of water in Melbourne," "the evil practices in Russian government," "the maritime defense of England," "the ancient vestiges in Egypt," "the emigrants to the United States," "the language of Japan," "the balloon in the West," "the origin of book-printing in the West," "the ancient calendar of the Jews," "the typhoon in Japan," and "the railroad in California."

The second type includes a number of biographies of distinguished personages, which Wang T'ao adapted from Western sources in the obvious hope of rendering some beneficial influence over the Chinese in his own day. Among outstanding figures, for example, are Joan of Arc, Francis Bacon, Christopher Columbus, Stanilas Julien, David Livingstone, and John Herschel. Wang T'ao's purpose in re-creating their life accounts is revealed here and there in the context. In the biography of Joan of Arc, he impressed his readers with the meritorious deeds of a patriotic heroine, not with the wonders of a hagiography (*Weng-yu yü-t'an, chüan* 2). He eulogized Christopher Columbus' unusual talent and contribution to the whole world (*Wan-kuo kung-pao* 萬國公報 [The Globe Magazine] , no. 42, July, 1892). He admired Stanilas Julien's great accomplishment in the translations of several Chinese works (*T'ao-yüan-wen-lu wai-pien, chüan* 11). In the account of David Livingstone's life, he emphasized his adventurous spirit of exploration in the Dark Continent (*Weng-yu yü-t'an, chüan* 4). He praised John Herschel's outstanding talent and untiring effort in astronomical knowledge and discovery (*Weng-yu yü-t'an, chüan* 2). As for Francis Bacon, Wang T'ao portrayed him as a man who possessed exceptional intelligence, and his theory of scientific method served as the basis on which many profound and long-lasting advances of natural science developed (*Weng-yu yü-t'an, chüan* 2). Above all, his treatment of any biography tends to be a work of art, not a bunch of documents.

Wang T'ao's creative works comprise the third type of fictional stories. This set is small in number, but important in that it demonstrates Wang T'ao's new approach and techniques in writing stories about foreigners. An excellent example is found in one entitled "Mei-li hsiao-chuan 媚梨小傳" (A Brief Account of Mary's Life) contained in the *Sung-pin man-lu*. I would like to summarize its contents in the ensuing pages as a specimen of the new direction of Wang T'ao's literary creativity.

The story concerns a beautiful English girl, Mei-li (Mary), daughter of a distinguished professor, who falls in love with her schoolfellow, Yüeh-han 約翰 (John), a goodlooking and intelligent boy. The unfolding and growth of their love is followed by its fulfillment in the deserted old residence of a nobleman, where they come to indulge their love in many a secret meeting without the knowledge of their parents.

Several years later, by her parents' persistent persuasion, Mary becomes married to another young man named Li Hsi-meng 栗西蒙 (Lee Simon). John, however, discloses their former secrecy to Simon, who feels humiliated, frustrated and infuriated, and he commits suicide. Under such circumstance, Mary can no longer go on living in her home town. She decides to take a journey to China in an effort to forget her troubles. Eventually, she marries a young Chinese official named Feng Yü-t'ien 鄧玉田 who had earlier been in England for some time.

When John hears that Mary has gone to the Orient, he sets out to follow her. Having undergone some difficulties, he finds Mary and Feng in Shanghai. Since Mary has absolutely no intention of continuing her love affair with John, the latter also feels frustrated. In a burst of fury, he kills her.<sup>19</sup>

The story is an ordinary piece by itself. It was, however, significant because it showed the presence in China by 1875 of a varied form which departed from the traditional pattern. As I mentioned earlier, the artistic merit of the Chinese old fiction written in the style of *wen-yen* and in the form of literary jotting grew disappointingly narrow, hackneyed, and rigid in the late Ch'ing period. In an effort to extend the scope and complexity of this story, Wang T'ao broke off from the hero versus villain or main-minor character pattern, and portrayed four good figures with equal importance, only with different characterization. His depictions were invariably realistic accounts of human feelings, void of supernatural or stereotypical elements.

In the Confucian scheme of basic human relationships, there was no place for the unmarried lover in old China. A heroine engaged in an extra-marital relationship could hardly be portrayed as a good woman without exceptional sanction. Although the main setting and the heroine were confined to a foreign land and a Westerner in the story, it is still surprising that no didactic comment on the alien social standard follows the main presentation.

Wang T'ao's presentation of plot and techniques of description in this story have also overstepped the traditional bound. What he employed may be termed as multiform description, not mono-depiction of one main hero alone. The story tells us what happens to Mary and Feng in China, as well as what happens to John in England. On the occasion of John's arrival at Shanghai, it tells us that Mary happens to see in a foreign newspaper John's name among the list of passengers who have just come to China from Europe. She is alarmed at the approaching trouble.<sup>20</sup> This presages the changing of subject. Apparently, this new method of meticulous depiction was the combined result of his bicultural experience and adoption from vernacular literature of the chapter-divided novels.

Finally, this story ends in tragedy with no appendage of retribution on John, and no word about Feng's consequence at the end of the story.

From the above analysis, it is clear that there are two distinctive features by which Wang T'ao demonstrated his literary ability. The first is the presence of great clarity and exactitude in the language as he presented biographical accounts of foreigners and different aspects of foreign cultures. In a variation of the traditional pattern, he expressed commonly shared human feelings clearly, concisely, and vividly. It is the successful union of clearness of observations and vigor of language that gives his writing its vitality.

The second is that, while the general tenor of his supernatural tales and fictional stories manifests the limitations of plot quality, Wang T'ao has nevertheless broken out of the traditional pattern and revived this hackneyed genre. Through the extension of its scope and complexity and the refining of its narrative techniques, he built a significant bridge between traditional fiction and the new novels. Thus, he helped precipitate growth of a new literature translated from Western novels and produced by Western-oriented writers.

### 3. Journalistic Literature

Wang T'ao's literary potential developed much more fully in his prose than in other genres. A forceful style of prose is fitting vehicle for presenting the convincing opinions that are so essential for journalistic reports. It would be useful at this point to mention briefly Wang T'ao's career of being a pioneer journalist in China.

Since he returned to Hong Kong from England in 1870, Wang T'ao showed a strong interest in journalism. By 1873, he became the editor of the *Chin-shih hui-pien* 近事彙編 (The Hongkong News), a daily newspaper printed at Hong Kong. He and Huang Sheng 黃勝 soon established a printing enterprise, and by 1874, they founded in Hong Kong the *Tsun Wan Yat Pao* (*Hsun-huan jih-pao* 循環日報) (The Circulation News), a newspaper lasted into the 1940's. Associated with this enterprise was the future diplomat, Wu T'ing-fang 伍廷芳 (1842-1922). For the next eleven years Wang T'ao's life was that of a successful publisher and commentator on current affairs. His editorials were enthusiastically read in both China and Japan. The written style captured the flowing elegance of literary Chinese that reached a wider audience than the scholar-gentry. He exercised a pioneer influence that has won a permanent place in the history of modern Chinese journalism.<sup>21</sup>

Wang T'ao's works of journalism and essays were originally compiled into two collections. All those written on the themes of metaphysical and academic studies were contained in the collection entitled *T'ao-yüan wen-lu nei-pien* 澗園文錄內編 (A Collection of Wang T'ao's Academic Essays). Unfortunately, the manuscript of this collection was lost in water (sic).<sup>22</sup> Another collection is the *T'ao-yüan wen-lu wai-pien*. Its contents are mostly written on the issues of current affairs. It is divided into 12 *chüan* and contains one hundred and eighty-six editorials and essays. In addition, there is another set of fourteen editorials published in Shanghai by the *Wan-kuo kung-pao*, a Chinese magazine edited by the American missionary Young J. Allen (Lin Lo-chih 林樂知, 1836-1907).

At times, Wang T'ao showed his ability to write essays in good euphuistically antithetical style (*p'ien-wen* 駢文). This style, however, tends to be impractical for presenting arguments and discussions. In order to present a wide range of ideas and concepts of modern Western thought, he divested his prose writing of literary embellishments and trappings, and developed

a vigorous style for the expression of the common tongue. Pruning off superfluities, he wasted no words in hammering home his points. An editorial to be quoted, in part, on the ensuing pages may serve as a specimen of this category.

In handling state affairs, one must start from the affairs of the people. Since the people are fundamental to the nation, the tranquility of the state depends primarily upon uniting the people, and success in binding their hearts to the national cause. But winning over the hearts of the people depends upon finding ways to unite them and to make them prosper. . . . If the ruler shared his benefits with the people, the people would certainly share his misfortunes. If the ruler shared his happiness with the people, the people would certainly share his sorrows. . . .

Whenever there are important innovations and significant political activities in the country, the government should inform the people and ask for their consent beforehand. This was the very way of united governance of ruler and the people by which our country was administered in the Three Dynasties.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that Wang T'ao showed more concern for the reality of his theme, greater precision, and suggestiveness than for the surface attractiveness or flowery language. For readers of journalese in general, concrete and straightforward words are likely to make a more forceful and immediate impact than abstract and superfluously elevated expressions. This tendency manifested much evidently in the following passage.

Presently almost everyone is assumed to understand foreign affairs. The persons who administer foreign affairs are given the best positions, and having been selected for high official ranks, they are regarded with reverence by their superiors and honored by their colleagues, and are noisily pleased with themselves . . . . One who knows the English language used to look down his nose at everything and to esteem oneself as being a superior talent in statecraft, and of being the best minister for saving the state from the pressing dangers of the time. It seems to me that they have not thoroughly understood the affairs which they are handling. In fact, the present situation is peaceful between us and the foreigners for the time being because China complied with whatever the foreigners demand, and looked timidly at their haughty mien. They seem to be satisfied with the fact that steamships are being built, guns and bullets are being manufactured, mines are being opened with Western machinery, etc. . . . They still even think that they are controlling the pivot on which

the national wealth and military strength are based . . . These are merely self-flattering delusions. In fact, no more than twenty or thirty percent of these plans had been substantially achieved . . .<sup>24</sup>

Apparently Wang T'ao tended to employ most direct and most natural way to express his feeling and observation; he used old words freshly, and elucidated profundity with simplicity. Substantial in content, broad in scope, and of permanent value, his editorials always distinguished his opinions impressively on whatever he discussed or criticized. It was due to these elements that he was highly esteemed in China and Japan,<sup>25</sup> and had an unfading literary influence on contemporary journalists. Even up to the present time, his journalistic writing has been able to illuminate his readers' minds through his broad perspective and great depth of perception. In fact, he was the first person who had developed the traditional style of *wen-yen* into the new genre of journalistic literature in nineteenth century China.

## Notes

1. Paul A. Cohen, "Wang T'ao's Perspective on a Changing World," in Albert Feuerwerker, Phoads Murphey, and Mary C. Wright, eds., *Approaches to Modern Chinese History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 133.
2. In 1913, Lo Tun-yung 羅惇勳 published his book entitled *T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo chan-chi* 太平天國戰紀 (An Account of Military Affairs of the Taiping Celestial Kingdom), in which he asserted that there were more than twenty thousand people took the civil service examination instituted by the Taiping regime; among the successful candidates Wang T'ao scored highest and therefore acquired the title *Chuang-yüan*. In 1929, Ch'en Shao-pai 陳少白 (1869-1934) printed his *Hsing-Chung-hui shih-yao* 興中會史要 (A General Account of the Origin of the Hsing-Chung Association), in which he stated that Wang T'ao was a *Chuang-yüan* of the Taiping Kingdom. In 1934, Hung Shen 洪深 published an article in the *Wen-hsieh* 文學 (Literature) magazine, and in 1937, Chien Yu-wen 簡又文 published a letter written by a well-known newspaper correspondent, Hung Hsiao-ch'ung 洪孝充, in the 33rd issue of *I Ching* 逸經 fortnightly; similarly, they asserted that Wang T'ao passed the Taiping civil service examination and obtained his title of the third degree with supreme honors.
3. Wang T'ao, "Yü Ying-kuo Li-ya-ko hsüeh-shih 與英國理雅各學士," (A Letter to James Legge, the British Scholar) in Wang T'ao, *T'ao-yüan ch'ih-tu* 攷園尺牘 (Letters of Wang T'ao) (Shanghai: Sung-yin-lu, 1893), *chüan* 6, p. 15a-b; Wang

- T'ao, "T'ao-yüan lao-min tzu-chuan 張園老民自傳," (An Autobiographical Account of Wang T'ao) in *T'ao-yüan wen-lu wai-pien*, *op. cit.*, *chüan* 11, p. 18a-b.
4. Ch'iu Yu-lin 裘毓麟, *Ch'ing-tai i-wen* 清代軼聞 (A Collection of Anecdotes of the Ch'ing Period) (Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chu, 1915), *chüan* 5, pp. 8-9.
  5. James Legge, transl., *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong: University Press, 1960), vol. III, preface, p. viii; Oka Senjin 岡千仞, *Kanko Kiyu* 觀光紀遊 (Journal of Travels), in Wang Hsi-ch'i 王錫祺, *Hsiao-fang-hu-chai yu-ti ts'ung-ch'ao* 小方壺齋輿地叢鈔 (A Comprehensive Collection of Global Traveling Journals) (Shanghai: Chu-i-t'ang, 1890-1891), series 5, p. 167a.
  6. Wang T'ao, "T'ao-yüan lao-min tzu-chuan," *op. cit.*, *chüan* 11, p. 18b; Wang T'ao, *Man-yu sui-lu* 漫遊隨錄 (Random Notes of Travels), in Wang Hsi-ch'i, *op. cit.*, series 11, p. 543; Wang T'ao, "Yü Fa-kuo Ju-lien hsüeh-shih 與法國儒蓮學士," (A Letter to Stanislas Julien, the French Scholar) in *T'ao-yüan ch'ih-tu*, *op. cit.*, *chüan* 7, pp. 17a-19b; Wang T'ao, *Fu-sang yu-chi* 扶桑遊記 (An Account of a Trip to Japan), in Wang Hsi-ch'i, *op. cit.*, series 10, p. 332b.
  7. A number of articles and critical studies of Wang T'ao's writings have been published in the United States and England; the main purpose of these articles seems to be studying the aspect of nationalism of Wang T'ao's thought embodied in his programs of reform. See Paul A. Cohen, "Wang T'ao's Perspective on a Changing World," *op. cit.*, pp. 133-62, Paul A. Cohen, "Wang T'ao and Incipient Chinese Nationalism," in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 4 (August, 1967), pp. 559-74, Leong Sow-theng, "Wang T'ao and the Movement for Self-strengthening and Reform in the Late Ch'ing Period," in *Papers on China* (Cambridge, East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1963), vol. XVII, pp. 101-30, H. McAleavy, *The Life and Writings of a Displaced Person* (London: The China Society, 1953), 39p, and Roswell S. Britton, "Wang T'ao," in Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), vol. II, pp. 836-38.
  8. The newspaper Wang T'ao founded in Hong Kong by 1874 was the *Circulation News* (*Tsun Wan Yat Pao*), which lasted into the 1940's. See page 21, and Ko Kung-chen 戈公振, *Chung-kuo pao-hsüeh shih* 中國報學史 (A History of Modern Chinese Journalism) (Peking, San-lien shu-tien, 1955), pp. 119-20.
  9. James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 65-87.
  10. Kuo Shao-yü 郭紹虞, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing shih* 中國文學批評史 (History of Chinese Literary Criticism) (Kowloon: Hung-chih shu-chu, n. d.), pp. 597-610.
  11. According to his memoirs and diary, Wang T'ao was a man remarkable for his liking of wine and women. After the death of his first wife when he was twenty-four years old, he plunged into the debauchery of the courtesans' quarters of Shanghai. From then on, he was known among his friends for patronizing courtesans.
  12. Wang T'ao, *Heng-hua-kuan shih-lu* (Shanghai: Sung-yin-lu, 1890), preface 1, p.

- 1a-b; preface 2, p. 1a-b.
13. My suggestion of subdivision here is adapted from Professor Meyer Howard Abrams' theory in his book entitled *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York: Norton Library, 1958), p. 22.
  14. Wang T'ao, "Yü chi," in *Heng-hua-kuan shih-lu*, *op. cit.*, *chüan* 1, p. 8b.
  15. *Ibid.*, *chüan* 6, p. 2a.
  16. See note 11 above.
  17. Ch'ien Cheng, "Pa 跋," (postscript) in *Tung-k'ü lan-yen*, *pa*, p. 1b.
  18. Chou Shu-jen, *Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo te li-shih pien-chien* 中國小說的歷史變遷 (The Development of Chinese Fiction) (Hong Kong: Chin-tai t'u-shu kung-ssu, 1964), pp. 7-12.
  19. Wang T'ao, "Mei-li hsiao-chuan," in *Sung-pin man-lu*, *chüan* 7, pp. 3a-4b.
  20. *Ibid.*, *chüan* 7, p. 4a.
  21. Ko Kung-chen, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.
  22. Wang T'ao, *T'ao-yüan chu-shu tsung-mu* 弢園著述總目 (A Comprehensive Bibliography of Wang T'ao's Writings) (Shanghai: Mei-hua Book Company, 1889), p. 1b.
  23. Wang T'ao, "Chung-min chung 重民中," (The Importance of the People, 2), in Wang T'ao, *T'ao-yüan wen-lu wai-pien*, *op. cit.*, *chüan* 1, pp. 19a-b; 21a.
  24. Wang T'ao, "Yang-wu shang 洋務上," (On Foreign Affairs, 1) in Wang T'ao, *T'ao-yüan wen-lu wai-pien*, *op. cit.*, *chüan* 2, p. 2a-b.
  25. Chang Ming-san 張銘三, "Wang T'ao te tu Jih yü Jih-pen wen-jen 王韜的渡日與日本文人," (Wang T'ao's Visit to Japan and Japan's Men of Letters) in *Jih-pen yen-chiu* 日本研究 (The Studies of Japan), vol. III, no. 6 (1944), pp. 27-39.

