

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

**Liu Jianmei/Revolution Plus Love**

is published by University of Hawai'i Press and copyrighted, © 2003, by University of Hawai'i Press. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher, except for reading and browsing via the World Wide Web. Users are not permitted to mount this file on any network servers.

# Introduction

**“Revolution plus love”** (*geming jia lian'ai*) as a theme or formula was first popularized in the late 1920s. It was a specifically literary response to political events: the collaboration and breakup (1923–1927) of the Nationalist Party (Guomindang [GMD]) and the Chinese Communist party (CCP) and the subsequent urban and rural insurrections, as well as the Soviet revolution’s international influence, which played a crucial role in the emergence of this literary practice. Broadly speaking, this theme referred to a special set of issues related to the rising expectations of “revolution” in the cultural aftermath of the May Fourth movement (1919), such as the position of the self within a society in turmoil, the increasing clashes between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the conjunction of political and sexual identities. This extremely popular but understudied theme, which not only was favored by leftist writers during the early period of revolutionary literature but also continued to influence mainstream literature up to the 1970s, has been used to convey diverse meanings that allow us to reexamine the contingency and contestedness of modern Chinese literary history. Although this theme was overwhelmingly framed by political consciousness, the interactions between revolution and love in the works it produced remain highly disputed. There are still many neglected and disconcerting questions. What has it meant, for example, to be an individual and express that politically, to associate sexual drive with politics, in the turbulent history of twentieth-century China? Does the connection between revolution and love echo only the official version of modern Chinese history, or is it an essential component of all narratives of this history? What is the role of gender in the expression and representation of politics, with which it has been intimately intertwined? How do we look at eroticized representations of bodies, which have a multitude of political and cultural meanings? The polemical relationships between literature and politics, gender and power, modernity and tradition are revealed in a

network of changing and often conflicting representations of revolution and love. The complex interaction and mutual influence between these elements in different historical moments not only reveal the contradictions and paradoxes surrounding the Chinese project of modernity but also provide some insight into the history of modern Chinese literature, beyond linear and evolutionary historicity and established genres.

In recent years, literary studies have examined revolution and love as discrete and autonomous constructions; few have paid critical attention to the relationship between them. Among these, critics such as Meng Yue argue that revolutionary discourse delimited and repressed the private realm of desire, love, sexuality, self, and all emotions during the Mao years.<sup>1</sup> Declaring that such an understanding imposes a strict dichotomy between political repression and bodily energy, Wang Ban emphasizes sexually charged Communist culture, in which love and pleasure have gone beyond the heterosexual relationship: “private desire can take public, political, and apparently nonsexual guises.”<sup>2</sup> For the most part, however, neither of these interpretations—that the politics of revolution typically overwhelms and represses love, woman, and sexuality; that libidinal energy is the deep psychic root for both—takes into account that no single model can adequately explain the often overlapping and contradictory historical expressions of the relationship between revolution and love. The revolutionary discourse during the Mao years certainly influenced and shaped the construction of gender norms and sexual identity, but these codes of bodily and sexual behavior could, in turn, transform the sublime form of revolution.

In fact, as we have stepped into a new millennium and look back to examine the interactions between revolution and love in the twentieth century, we must be aware that the changes in their relationships and meanings refer to a performative and dynamic concept of literary history. Realizing that both revolution and love are culturally variable rather than fixed and timeless entities, I see the interplay between the two as a complex and constantly changing literary practice that is socially and historically constituted. In this book, I seek to confound prevailing academic paradigms that treat the interplay of revolution and love in only one model. Regarding this relationship as a volatile site for representing and displacing political and sexual identities, I examine the formulary writing of “revolution plus love” from the 1930s to the contemporary period as a case study of literary politics that structures the possibilities available to agents and their relationship to the literary field. By drawing a historical picture of the articulation and rearticulation of this theme, I note how the change of revolutionary discourse forces unpredictable representations of gender rules and power relations and how women’s bodies register multiple

and incommensurable differences haunting the hegemonic narratives in modern Chinese literature.

### Modernity and Revolution

Revolution and love are two of the most powerful discourses shaping Chinese modern identity. Love contains irreducible components of the individual's sexual identity and bodily experiences, relationships between man and woman, and a sense of self-fulfillment; revolution is related to the trajectory of progress, freedom, equality, and emancipation. Since these two categories constitute, clash with, or otherwise influence each other in the mainstream narrative of modern Chinese literature, recent scholarship has usually considered them as the two major tropes of modernity. As Tang Xiaobing aptly puts it, "Both terms of the antinomy—'revolution' as experience of collective power, and 'love' as successful socialization through personal freedom—are central ideological constructs in the legitimizing discourse of modernity."<sup>3</sup> Such metaphoric treatment assumes, however, that both terms are transhistorical or immutable, thereby wiping out their separate historical identities as well as the intellectual genealogy of their marriage. Moreover, it sets up the term "modernity" as a panacea, making it an empty term, one that has lost contact with the dynamic and contradictory historical realities that revolution and love struggle to define.

Much of the recent study of modern Chinese literature in the United States can be seen as an effort to question the association of modernity with the ideas of progress, newness, revolution, enlightenment, and national salvation. Its significance lies in its interrogation of the literary canon set originally by the May Fourth writers and their works. However, as Alexander Des Forges claims, the scholarship on modernity in modern Chinese literature already has an "essentially fetishistic character" that too often presumes a monolithic Chinese tradition in opposition to modern literature and ignores Chinese texts by valorizing European theoretical constructions.<sup>4</sup> Those inquiries into the definition of "modernity" usually rely on adding a word or two in front of this key word, such as "belated," "semicolonial," "translated," "repressed," "alternative," and "Chinese." Although he sees those approaches as productive, Des Forges has raised the following questions: "[The fetish of modernity] leads one to wonder: is this scholarly emphasis on a modernity that is subjective, spectral, limited, failed, problematic, or once removed—a modernity that can't show itself without a prefix—appropriate only in the study of Chinese literature? Or is it possible that literary modernity as such is fundamentally contradictory and problematic?"<sup>5</sup>

It is true that heavy reliance on Western theories of modernity may obscure the complexity and paradoxes of Chinese history, within which the heterogeneity of texts has diffused and problematized the master narrative of Chinese modernity. Furthermore, those inquiries on modernity have ignored that they are inventions and interventions by scholars who tried to find certain ways to interpret Chinese modern reality.<sup>6</sup> Des Forges' rethinking of this fetishization is significant because although modernity and its associated theories have brought to light some "repressed" modernities,<sup>7</sup> they also may have buried complex social conditions that they cannot fully explain. For instance, the modernities much in fashion are largely incompatible with revolution (represented by leftist literature around the 1930s), for they are in tune with capitalist modernity, which leftist literature rejects. As consumerism has overwhelmed socialism in contemporary mainland China, it is easy to forget that Chinese leftists originally tried to challenge the myth of capitalist modernity—"the belief that the industrial reshaping of the world is capable of bringing about the good society by providing material happiness for the masses."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the catastrophe of the Cultural Revolution has had the deleterious effect of stopping many of us from remembering that revolution arose as a pursuit of a better future. But during the specific historical time when Chinese intellectuals embraced revolution (an embrace that was often expressed in a passionate and violent form), it was because revolution gave them hope, transferring their anxiety about national salvation and modern crisis into the utopian vision of a perfect future. Carrying the legitimate human desire for both personal and collective happiness, revolution has much to do with concepts of the classes and motifs that constitute modern society; revolution does not abandon technology, science, and modernization but criticizes the social conditions of capitalist production. What the fetish of modernity ignores is precisely such a utopian vision of a modern society as well as Chinese intellectuals' aspirations, anxieties, and despair involved in it.

The trauma of the Cultural Revolution engendered widespread disenchantment with revolutionary ideology, the Communist Party, and the grand narrative of history. As a discursive term, "modernity" started to be drawn into literary criticism in mainland China along with "cultural heat" in the 1980s; however, a critical call for resistance to modernity (Western modernization) was not heard until 1988.<sup>9</sup> There is no doubt that the discourses of modernity and antimodernity have successfully "defamiliarized" the literary critical field, occupied as it is with terms such as "class struggle." By bringing in many Western theories of modernism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism, the fetish of modernity has largely dominated academic interest in the field of modern Chinese literature both in the United States and in mainland China. Some literary

critics celebrated modernity's current discursive hegemony without any reflections on or critiques of the internal contradictions of Western modernization;<sup>10</sup> others welcomed the use of this term but with great concern, and wondered if Chinese modernization is entirely a reprint or a copy of Western modernization.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the global economy has fostered the spread of modernity as a hegemonic discourse, under the new name of globalization. As a result, what is at stake here is not whether to stop questioning modernity, but how to find more specific tools of literary analysis with which to criticize it and how to be more self-reflexive in dealing with the Chinese version.

While criticizing Marshall Berman's persuasive theory that conjoins the notions of revolution and modernity, Perry Anderson gives us a clear definition of "revolution":

"Revolution" is a term with a precise meaning: the political overthrow from below of one state order and its replacement by another. Nothing is to be gained by diluting it across time or extending it over every department of social space. . . . It is necessary to insist that revolution is a *punctual* and not a permanent process; that is, revolution is an episode of convulsive political transformation, compressed in time and concentrated in target, with a determinate beginning—when the old state apparatus is still intact—and a finite end—when that apparatus is decisively broken and a new one erected in its stead.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to this specific definition, "modernism" for Perry Anderson is "the emptiest of all cultural categories," because its only referent is "the blank passage of time itself."<sup>13</sup> According to him, modernism should also be treated in a way that takes into account more differential concepts of historical time, geography, and the force field that defines the range of aesthetic practices. He disagrees with Berman, who puts both revolution and modernity under "the fundamentally planar development—a continuous-flow process in which there is no real differentiation of one conjuncture of epoch from another, save in terms of the mere chronological succession of old and new, earlier and later."<sup>14</sup>

Anderson's argument seems a little out of fashion, representing as it does a classical version of Marxism. However, his criticism of the "fundamentally planar development" that links the notions of revolution and modernity can also be applied to the recent field of modern Chinese literature, which is in danger of extending the notion of modernity to every corner, even if sometimes such extension has efficiently challenged conventions. It is impossible to sever revolution from the context of modernity, but we must be aware that the way revolution was introduced into China and then became deeply rooted in Chinese daily life as well as social projects has its own history. Under what

circumstance Chinese intellectuals accepted revolution, how they adopted it in a way that fit the Chinese context, why they were so fascinated with it, how Chinese history was written by their revolutionary desire and then rewritten by their disillusionment—all of these should be viewed as historical phases rather than within the metaphoric framework of modernity.

During the “cultural heat” of the 1980s, a time of reflection on the Cultural Revolution and welcoming of Western enlightenment thought, the philosopher Li Zehou first used the terms “enlightenment” (*qimeng*) and “national salvation” (*jiuwang*) to describe modern Chinese history. As he points out, the whole tradition of enlightenment, which includes modern freedom, independence, human rights, and democracy imported from Western capitalist industrialization, was not being sufficiently researched and developed after the May Fourth movement; instead, it was negated as capitalist trash in the wave of national salvation—revolution. As a consequence of a revolutionary war mainly led by peasants, Chinese intellectuals did not absorb concepts such as enlightenment and democracy but rather peasants’ consciousness, traditional cultural structure, and some Marxist thought.<sup>15</sup> Li Zehou’s theory remained popular during the 1980s and was not challenged until the emergence of the discourse of modernity and antimodernity in the 1990s. In his article “Ding Ling Is Not Simple,” Li Tuo criticizes Li Zehou’s dichotomy of “enlightenment/national salvation” by deciphering “enlightenment” as a pursuit of modernity and “national salvation” as a refusal of modernity in a metaphoric way. According to Li Tuo, this dichotomy neglects another line of Western tradition (including the arguments of Max Weber, Martin Heidegger, the Frankfurt school, feminism, and postcolonialism) that has insistently criticized Western modernization. This negligence shows that Chinese intellectuals have not developed the ability to criticize the “craze” of modernization, which inevitably involves complicated power struggles between the West and the East, the first world and the third world, modernity and antimodernity.<sup>16</sup>

Although Li Zehou has pointed out the deficiency of the Chinese revolution, which lost its early aspiration toward human rights and personal freedom after 1949, his reflection on the May Fourth discourse of enlightenment is not enough. His dichotomy of enlightenment versus national salvation essentializes both terms without recognizing that they intimately permeate and are deeply rooted in each other, especially against the background of national crisis and anti-imperialism. Intended as a critique of modernity, Li Tuo’s argument has certainly brought the revolutionary discourse (in his terms, the Maoist discourse) into a more complicated historical context in which Chinese intellectuals’ longing to surpass the world’s most advanced level of science and technology and their doubt about the cultural value of capitalism or imperial-

ism conjoin and argue with each other. However, his criticism, which attempts to put both “enlightenment” and “national salvation” in the discourse of modernity, has generalized the process of Chinese modernization influenced by the imperialist hegemonic power. More significantly, his emphasis on the relationship between Maoist discourse and the discourse of Chinese modernity has uncritically interpreted the former as an omnipotent paradigm whose historical transformation is of less concern.

Compared to other scholars who uncritically pursue modernity, Li Tuo is much more keenly aware of the pitfall of “modernity” itself. In his article “Resistance to Modernity,” he addresses the difficulty of drawing “modernity” into literary criticism:

“Modernity” is a term that encompasses almost everything that has developed and accumulated with the process of modernization in the West over the past two or three hundred years. Although many commentators follow Max Weber’s formulation, identifying the emergence and spread of modernity with the process of social rationalization, analyses and descriptions of this process are quite complicated. As for what modernity is, commentators all have their own versions based on their own positions and linguistic environments; a unified definition would be impossible. Under these circumstances, how Chinese critics deal with this great discourse and what position they adopt in relation to it become matters of considerable difficulty. Moreover, when Chinese critics consider how to handle their relationship with the Western discourse of modernity, they must face the question of modernity in their own country.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the difficulty of applying modernity to Chinese texts can still be seen in Li Tuo’s interpretation of Maoist discourse. Even if he explains Maoist discourse as China’s own discourse of modernity, he refuses to see that the cultural destruction brought by revolution is not based on “social rationalization” but on libido-charged revolutionary passion. In addition, he does not take into account how revolution in the early stage, which expresses legitimate human desires and aspirations (love, romanticism, intimacy, fulfillment, the common good), became an unfinished project interrupted by the Maoist discourse. For instance, Chinese intellectuals in the late 1920s and early 1930s did not lack an urgent sense of the profound crisis brought by Western modernization as they tried to enlighten the masses; but meanwhile, their revolutionary consciousness was derived from and driven by concepts of democracy and enlightenment. All of these factors require more detailed historical investigation in conjunction with cultural and literary analysis.

Thus the study of revolution ought to include more than metaphoric reading

in the framework of modernity; its scope must be broadened to include other narratives. For instance, following Lydia H. Liu's theory of translingual practice, Chen Jianhua demonstrates how late-Qing intellectuals came to an understanding of the concept of revolution that differed from its European connotation through the process of translation, introduction, domestication, and proliferation, and how the shift from one culture to the other generated a multilayered historical understanding of this concept.<sup>18</sup> Chen's meticulous study of Liang Qichao's (1871–1929) and Sun Yat-sen's (1866–1925) different adoptions of revolution tells us how Chinese intellectuals imagined revolution in contradictory fashion.<sup>19</sup> Arif Dirlik argues that although Marxism presupposed global and universal liberation and was Eurocentric in origin, Chinese Marxism invented a localized version, making Marxism Chinese.<sup>20</sup> These studies remind us that the concept of revolution is socially conditioned by its production, circulation, and consumption.

Therefore, as we discuss the relationship between revolution and love represented in modern Chinese literary history, we must realize that neither category is transhistorical, transnational, and stable. If the connotations of each term vary in any given historical moment, then their interaction should be far more complicated in objective historical accounts and social relations. It is not exaggerating to say that the marriage of revolution and love is similar to “dancing with wolves”; it is constantly defined and shaped by differences. We cannot understand revolution only as the homogenizing power that corresponds to a perpetual development such as modernization, nor can we understand gender relations as timeless and immutable, able to stably carry political messages or be easily channeled into sublime form.

### The Genealogy of Revolution and Love

The Chinese term “*geming*,” whose indigenous root can be traced to the Confucian classical text *The Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), refers to the dethronements of kings Xia and Shang by kings Tang and Wu as “the will of heaven,” “the wishes of men,” and “the motion of the seasons.”<sup>21</sup> According to Chen Jianhua's study, the Tang Wu *geming*, which later on generally means a change of a dynasty by violent means, was incorporated into a diverse syntax of modern revolution. For instance, influenced by the Japanese *kanji* translation of the European concept “revolution” as well as the Darwinian notion of evolution, the prominent Chinese intellectual Liang Qichao accepted the theory of revolution as changes in all societal affairs rather than a radical political solution; Sun Yat-sen's republican ideas, on the other hand, coalesced around the Tang

Wu *geming*, taking on the meaning of violent overthrow.<sup>22</sup> In other words, Liang's revolution is more inclined to what he defined as "a broad sense of *geming*," which refers to every kind of change in society; Sun's concept of revolution is exactly what Liang called "a narrow sense of *geming*" —overthrowing the central government through military actions.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that the meaning of *geming* had been heterogeneous in the early stage of translation; however, those diverse meanings — whether Sun Yat-sen's call for a violent overthrow of the Qing government or Liang Qichao's proposal for moderate social reform — should be understood in the context of the nation building in the late Qing. According to Prasenjit Duara, social Darwinism provided the rationale for the spread (and defense) of imperialism and nationalism in the late nineteenth century. "When this global discourse of the nation-state system took root in China at the turn of the century, it became the most important constitutive discourse of Chinese intellectuals for the next twenty years or so, after which the rhetoric and ethics of anti-imperialism displaced its status of preeminence." Social Darwinism, as Duara says, made both revolution and reform urgent for national or racial, instead of individual or family, survival.<sup>24</sup>

By linking the notion of revolution to social Darwinism and modern historical consciousness, Liang Qichao promoted a "revolution in fiction" as a prerequisite for building a new nation and its new citizens. "To rejuvenate a nation's citizens, a nation's fiction must be first rejuvenated."<sup>25</sup> The notion of revolution, or *geming*, thus played a crucial role in mythicizing fiction's social function, as if fiction could maneuver China's fate. Fiction was lifted from personal expression to the higher, ideological level of nation building. For late-Qing scholars Yan Fu and Xia Zengyou, fiction was worthy of promotion because of its "public nature" (*gong xingqing*), namely valor (*yingxiong*) and romantic love (*ernü*). In their words, "Without the nature of a hero, one cannot fight for survival; without the nature of a lover, one cannot reproduce."<sup>26</sup> Beneath the surface of heroism and romantic love lies the core spirit of social Darwinism, the utopian idea of transforming China into a civilized society. What was being celebrated was not the personal feeling between men and women — the private nature of romance — but its public function that helps build national identity and propels the evolution of humanity.

Therefore, revolution meeting up with love in the genre of "new fiction" or the political novel signified that the politics of nationalism at this stage had subsumed other and different politics, such as "the woman question," free marriage, and personal fulfillment. Romance was not a central theme in the political novel; if it existed, it was employed analogically in political theory to support the "imagined community" of nationalism. Many scholars have

traced the historical root of the revolutionary heroism integral to romance back to *xia* and *qing*, or *yingxiong* and *ernü*, as demonstrated in Wen Kang's *Tale of Heroes and Lovers* (*Ermü yingxiong zhuan*).<sup>27</sup> The unification of *yingxiong* (heroics) and *ernü* (love), *xia* (knight-errancy) and *qing* (emotion), which was the basic narrative format in classical Chinese chivalric novels, experienced modern transmission in late-Qing new fiction. Reformists and revolutionaries who fought for a national cause became modern valorous knights, heroic, altruistic, and willing to sacrifice themselves for justice. The female knights-errant, *nüxia*, underwent role changes and became female reformists, revolutionaries, and assassins, sharing the same courage and pursuits as male heroes. Those modern *nüxia* were usually depicted as independent, Western-trained, and patriotic, stepping out of the chamber and taking on the public role related to national issues; at the same time, their conventional femininity was well preserved. That is to say, the image of female revolutionaries was cast as a combination of modern mind and traditional body: they accepted various kinds of revolutionary ideologies but remained virtuous in the traditional moral sense. Love was either endowed with traditionally virtuous attributes that excluded sexual characteristics, or constrained to take on a nationalist expression, merely as a decoration for heroic deeds.

The theme of revolution and love can be found in the novel *Heroines of Eastern Europe* (*Dong'ou nühaojie*), written by Lingnan yuyi nüshi (pseudonym of Luo Pu) in 1902. It was the late-Qing imagination of anarchist Sophia Perovskaya, notorious for her assassination of Tsar Alexander II. As one of the most prominent imported cultural icons, the image of Sophia enlightened numerous Chinese female revolutionaries, including the famous revolutionary martyr Qiu Jin. There was a popular saying among late Qing revolutionaries: "To marry, one should marry someone like Sophia."<sup>28</sup> An unfinished project, the novel covers only part of Sophia's revolutionary story, in which she participates in nihilist activities, working for her Land and Liberty Party, planning a strike at a factory, being arrested and put in jail. The love story opens in the middle of the narrative when her former schoolmate and fellow Party member Andrei Zhelyabov (Yu Baoquan) comes to rescue her. David Der-wei Wang provides an interesting analysis of their love relationship:

Luo Pu assures us over and over again that their love relationship is platonic, as would befit the stereotype of an unmarried romantic couple in the tradition of a scholar-beauty novel—despite the fact that the historical Zhelyabov was married when he met Sophia and that they flagrantly lived together out of wedlock. More important, in a way reminiscent of the thesis of *A Tale of Heroes and Lovers*, Sophia and Andrei are treated both as great lovers, because they can tran-

scend personal passion to attain humanist compassion, and as great heroes, because they can transform individual valor into altruistic strength. Although Luo Pu was writing about a group of radicals whose ultimate goal was to smash all human institutions, his Sophia and Andrei are more like paragons of Confucian virtues radically refashioned in the late Qing style.<sup>29</sup>

Although she represents women's role in public, Sophia's private life is still confined by a moral code, or more precisely, is sinicized and placed in a familiar system of sex roles. Discussing how the foreign figure of Sophia was transformed into the Chinese Su Feiya, Hu Ying points out, "Through this process of transformation, Sophia emerges as a figure constructed from a delicate balance between the authentically foreign and the familiarly domestic: she is often emphatically Sinicized as a cultural icon, both in her name and in her moral attributes."<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Sophia's nihilist activities are authentically foreign, but her sexuality is still controlled by Chinese traditional virtues. The control of female sexuality under the name of "tradition" might make the figure of Sophia more legitimate in the Chinese context, but it also reveals that the associations between revolution and love, nationalism and the woman question had been problematic in the genre of new fiction. The whole host of related notions of individualism, romanticism, and libidinal drive was absent in such sinicized depictions of love between men and women.

With the name of "the mother of the nation" or "female citizens," Chinese women, who had always been in the abject position in traditional society, gained a supreme power and a responsibility for the nation-state. The late-Qing scholar Jin Tianhe wrote, "Woman is the mother of the nation. If we want to rejuvenate China, we need to first rejuvenate women; if we want to fortify China, we need to first fortify women; if we want to civilize China, we need to first civilize women; if we want to save China, we need to first save women."<sup>31</sup>

The myth of woman as the mother of the nation no doubt reflects many late-Qing reformists' and revolutionaries' nationalist and racial thoughts: the mother has an ability to engender new citizens who can build a new China. Such promotion of women encouraged some of them to step out of the feudal family space and join the public space of an imagined national community. This was the first time in Chinese history that the woman question was carried over to the metanarrative ground, where only some big men's issues, such as liberation, democracy, revolution, and nation-state, were articulated. However, those mothers of the nation were to be reproductive machines only; their autonomy—regarding private lives, emotions, subjectivity, and sexuality—was seriously neglected. As the politics of nationalism overwhelmed the politics of the woman question, women's emotions and sexuality were oversimplified.

For instance, in *The Stone of Goddess Nüwa* (*Nüwashi*, 1904), female revolutionaries are requested to abstain from romantic entanglements with men because, as the female leader Madame Qin Ainong says, “Human genitals are a sticky place where feelings emerge and easily trap the patriotic body inside them, cooling down the idea of saving the country.”<sup>32</sup> Even if equipped with modern power—advanced technologies and progressive ideas—these women revolutionaries forfeit their sexual identity in exchange for nationalist discourse, turning into pure political and scientific instruments.

There was a certain lack of subjective sentiment in the manner in which personal love had to be sublimated into love for country. Even if free marriage was pursued, it was for the sake of the whole nation, as represented in novels such as *Free Marriage* (*Ziyou jiehun*, 1903) and *Women’s Rights* (*Nüzi quan*, 1907). However, the narrative of revolution and love had variations in the genre of the courtesan novel. Based on the legend of Sai Jinhua, whose liaison with Count Waldersee during the Boxer Rebellion allegedly saved China, Zeng Pu’s *Flower in the Sea of Sins* (*Niehai hua*, 1905) portrayed Fu Caiyun as both a promiscuous femme fatale and a national heroine. During Fu Caiyun’s trip to Europe, she encounters the Russian anarchist Sarah Aizenson, who tells her the story of the notorious woman martyr Sophia Perovskaya. Yet Fu never becomes a revolutionary, even if she resolves a country’s crisis in a “promiscuous” way. Different from the female revolutionaries in the genre of new fiction, who merely convey metanarrative voices of revolution, progress, and nationalism, she maintains her keen personality and voice through the whole novel, remaining loyal to her own sexual instinct rather than to the old moral canon or the new “revolutionary” one. The image of Fu Caiyun shows the slippage of the national construction of the “new woman.” Even if her seductive power has mystified the male writer’s imagination, her complexity, shown in both her “depraved” and “patriotic” actions, breaks the totality of nationalist discourse and opens a door for female subjectivity. Thus, the myriad and contradictory narratives of revolution and love in late-Qing novels indicate that nationalism could be a contradictory discourse. Its historical agency could be sometimes progressive though often traditional, sometimes holding indigenous morality though often longing for Western civilization.

It is impossible to delineate a coherent history of revolution and love. As a matter of fact, the literary representation of this theme was interrupted by the flourishing of Butterfly fiction in the early-Republic period. National concerns such as reform and revolution were elided or removed from Butterfly fiction’s exquisite, sentimental world of desires in which physical passion was withheld but scholarly sentiments reached an exciting point. As Rey Chow notes, “Butterfly stories’ frank operation as mere play, entertainment, weekend pastime,

and distraction from ‘proper’ national concerns, meant that they had to be excised not because of their subject matter (which is much more homespun than most May Fourth literature) but because of their deliberately fictional stance, their absolute incompatibility with the modern Chinese demands for ‘reality,’ personal and social.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, taking the form of literature for the masses, whose entertaining and commercial elements replaced the tradition of *wen yi zai dao* (literature as the embodiment of moral principle), Butterfly fiction neither carried the nationalist and revolutionary purpose of late-Qing “new fiction” nor embodied May Fourth literature’s new *dao*, such as language reform, individualism, sexual emancipation, and so forth.<sup>34</sup> Its “reality” of amusement remained very much alive throughout the modern period, even if the tradition was condemned by May Fourth literature. At the end of Xu Zhenya’s (1889–1937) best-selling novel *Jade-Pear Spirit* (*Yulihun*), first published in 1912, the protagonist Mengxia chooses to die as a patriotic martyr in the Wuchang revolution of October 10, 1911, after his unfortunate sentimental adventure with Liniang. The patriotic sacrifice, or the love for country, becomes the shining tail at the end of the love story, an ornament to decorate the extreme sentiment between lovers. It is clear that the protagonist dies for the sake of love itself rather than for the noble national cause. In the sentimental world of Butterfly fiction, national identity was no longer deemed an important issue.

Although women remained “chaste” in Butterfly fiction, they changed drastically in the May Fourth period. The emancipation of women’s bodies associated with the rise of women’s subjectivity became one of the most important signs of literary modernity at this historical moment. In the female writer Ding Ling’s (1904–1986) *The Diary of Miss Sophie* (*Shafei nüshi riji*, 1928), the narrator Sophie, like other “self-liberated” modern Chinese women, confronts the conventional configuration of women. As Jaroslav Průšek characterizes it, the distinctive features of May Fourth literature are subjectivism and individualism.<sup>35</sup> Yet this emphasis on individual emancipation is questioned by Lydia H. Liu, who argues that the discourse of individualism of May Fourth literature was never valorized at the expense of nationalism and social collectivism. “On the contrary, collectivism now inhabited the same homogeneous space of modernity as individualism.”<sup>36</sup> Using Hu Shi’s (1891–1962) subordination of *xiaowo* (the individual “I”) to *dawo* (greater self, or society) as an example, Liu wants to show that “individualism did not always constitute itself as the counter-discourse of nationalism nor did the enlightenment see itself as the other of national salvation.”<sup>37</sup> Liu’s convincing argument allows us to see that the reform of *xiaowo* or the individual is unnecessarily opposed to the nation-state; instead, they are intimately intertwined. Nevertheless, Liu’s concept of nation-state,

which does not seek to problematize May Fourth intellectuals' understanding of nation, needs to be questioned. As in other historical periods, the meanings of the nation-state at this specific moment should be viewed as plural, capable of generating identities that are changeable and sometimes conflicting. Prasenjit Duara points out that the May Fourth activists actually problematized the concept of nation. For instance, Chen Duxiu (1880–1942) “pursues to its extreme the logic of the break with both history and nation that is implied by total commitment to the doctrine of self-consciousness.” In contrast, Li Dazhao (1889–1927) “refused to separate patriotism from self-consciousness: he took self-consciousness to refer to a process in which purposeful people sought to change the world and thus could bring forth a new China.”<sup>38</sup> Duara's study is especially thought provoking because for him, the relationships between *xiaowo* and *dawo*, between individualism and nation-state, during the May Fourth period were much more performative than what Liu has implied.

It should come as no surprise that the theme of revolution and love was changed into representations of sexual revolution, women's revolution, and individual emancipation, which were indicative of important societal and cultural changes during the New Cultural movement. Among those “minor” revolutions, the narrative of love, with its focus on personal events, personal experiences, and subjective sentiments, transgresses the traditional dichotomy of *qing* (feeling) and *yu* (desire) and comes to stand as a distinct symbol of Chinese modernity. For example, the Creation Society (Chuangzao she) during its early period was fully occupied with representations of the human libido, sex drive, repression, and the unconscious in the forms of romanticism, expressionism, and even symbolism. The increasing emphasis on reform of self and reform of gender and sex roles seem to displace Liang Qichao's reform of *xinmin* (new citizen), but the problem of the individual and his or her relationship to modern society and the nation-state looms large in the background. To be sure, unlike late-Qing political novels' central model of narration, the subordination of self to nation, what occupies the predominant position within the range of May Fourth narrative possibilities is clashes between self and nation (or society), the acknowledgment of the question “Who am I?” in the modern sense. Yu Dafu's (1896–1944) famous novel *Sinking* (*Chenlun*), written in 1921, which owed a great debt to the Japanese “I-novel” (*shi-shosetsu*), combines the crisis of selfhood with the crisis of nationhood, sexuality (or masculinity) with patriotism. The protagonist's sexual impotence can be easily read as a metaphor for China's weakness, yet his self-consciousness, self-doubt, and self-abuse make the connection between sexuality and nationalism difficult.<sup>39</sup> This no doubt means that the discourse of individualism has never been totally severed from nation building, but it also attests to the fact that the self is no longer the trans-

parent and easy vehicle of nationalist discourse. Resembling the Russian “superfluous man,” the protagonist upon his final “patriotic” death sounds more like a self-parody, pointing poignantly to the dilemma of the modern and nationalist self.

The representations of love and the revolution of love (which includes sexual revolution, family revolution, marriage revolution, women’s revolution, and individual emancipation) during the May Fourth period were influenced by the Japanese literary critic Kuriyagawa Hakuson’s book *Symbols of Mental Anguish* (*Kumon no shocho*), translated by Lu Xun in the early 1920s. Leo Ou-fan Lee notes that Kuriyagawa’s work “combines Freud’s thesis of the repressed *id* with Henri Bergson’s famous concept of the *élan vital* to form a synthetic theory of artistic creation.” “According to Kuriyagawa, art and literature are created as a result of the conflict of two archetypal forces: a primordial life force of freedom versus the force of civilized convention in an increasingly institutionalized society.”<sup>40</sup> Kuriyagawa’s notion of “the life force” is obviously the embodiment of Freudian notions of instincts (the pleasure principle, Eros, libido, and so forth). Focusing on the connection between sexual passion and civilized work, Freud wrote, “Our civilization is, generally speaking, founded on the suppression of instincts.”<sup>41</sup> Because the instinctual syndrome of “unhappiness” recurs throughout Freud’s theory of repression, Herbert Marcuse comments, “Freud questions culture not from a romanticist or utopian point of view, but on the ground of the suffering and misery which its implementation involves.”<sup>42</sup> Echoing Freud’s connection between civilization and instinct, progress and suffering, freedom and unhappiness—a connection that is ultimately between Eros and Thanatos—Kuriyagawa emphasizes the life force under the constraint of civilized convention. The anguish of love, one of the most important symbols of mental anguish that stem from the clashes between self and society, thus became the predominant mode of expression in May Fourth literature.

May Fourth writers’ adoption of Kuriyagawa’s theory and Freudian psychoanalysis explains why the mainstream narrative of this period celebrated “unhappy love,” frustration, loneliness, the destructive force of sex, passive sentiments, and decadence—all of which constitute the repressed impulse to overthrow dominant social conventions. The all-encompassing appeal of Goethe’s *Sorrows of Young Werther* to modern Chinese writers and readers was also due to its pessimistic, passive expression of sentiments. However, we should regard the pervasive representation of the repressed individual, sexual repression, and the autonomous transformation of a repressive society as historical phenomena rather than omnipresent facts of existence, invoked by Freudian psychoanalytical theory. After the transformation from literary revolution to

revolutionary literature, sexual relations became much more closely assimilated with social relations than during the previous historical periods. Expressions of love and sex also became more violent, passionate, and masculine.

### Continuity and Discontinuity

The more dominant, and in the long run more political, trend after 1927 was the cooperation of Marxism with the literary field. The suppression of the Communists by Jiang Jieshi in 1927 intensified intellectual interest in revolutionary literature, an interest that was manifested in the emergence of numerous leftist publications at this time. If the literary journal *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*) represents a cultural space in which the May Fourth movement was produced, then the leftist journal *Cultural Criticism* (*Wenhua pipan*), launched in 1928 by Japanese-educated progressive youths such as Feng Naichao (1901–1983), Zhu Jingwo (1901–1941), Peng Kang (1901–1968), and Li Chuli (1900–1994), facilitated the assimilation of Marxism into Chinese literary writing. In the late-Qing and early-Republic periods, efforts had been made to introduce theory, but Marxism did not have an immediate influence on literary practice before 1928. According to the leftist critic Cheng Fangwu (1897–1984), *Cultural Criticism* was designed to criticize capitalist society and replace May Fourth literary hegemony. It is noteworthy that the relationship between the May Fourth movement and leftist literature suggests the intriguing relationship between revolution and modernity: revolutionary literature focuses on capitalist modernity by reducing May Fourth literature to bourgeois values, but at the same time relies on modernity's idea of newness and progress for legitimacy. Therefore, “revolutionary literature” is both the negation and the continuation of May Fourth literature.

The emergence of the class concept did not mean that the myth of the nation-state was replaced by transnational aspirations for the emancipation of the oppressed. Instead, as a result of national crisis, Chinese intellectuals used class as a means of resistance to the imperialist capitalists. Against the conventional view that class and nation are competing and conflicting identities, Duara sees “class as a trope that constructs a particular and powerful representation of the nation.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed, by putting the “universal” Marxist theory in a Chinese context, Chinese leftists accepted class struggle while retaining a strong sense of national identity. The conflict between the petit bourgeoisie and the collective proletariat that captured the attention of Chinese leftists shows not only their criticism of the capitalist mode of production—the imperialists' transnational exploitation of the oppressed—but also their reconsider-

ation of the position of self in the context of nationalism. Love in revolutionary literature is not only a sign of modernity, as in the May Fourth narrative, but also a sign of utopian desire for both the self and the nation.

Feng Naichao's short story "Puppet Beauty" (Kuilei meiren), published in *Creation Monthly* (*Chuangzao yuekan*) in 1928, signifies the penetration of the class concept into gender representation. Based on the genre of story retold, Feng Naichao redesigned the traditional image of the famous femme fatale Baosi, whose astonishing beauty, according to the historian Sima Qian, brought the whole country of Zhou to ruin. In contrast to the conventional view, which views the femme fatale as "disaster water" (*huoshui*), Feng Naichao takes Baosi, who is doubly deprived by her home country and the enemy country, as a symbol of the oppressed, stressing the importance of class consciousness. Gender relations and the woman question thus became hallmarks of class relations in revolutionary literature.

Nevertheless, the representation of revolution's affiliations with love, sex, and gender, though undeniably a component of class ideology, still remained open and dynamic at this stage. The image of a seductive revolutionary woman, whose promiscuous body accompanies a revolutionary mind, became one of the most popular embodiments of leftist ideology. Sexual liberation, which in one way or another symbolizes revolution itself, is not in conflict with collective revolutionary passion. For example, after his girlfriend agrees to have sex with him, the young revolutionary Huo Zhiyuan in leftist writer Hong Lingfei's (1901–1933) novel *Front Line* (*Qianxian*, 1930) expresses his excitement:

From now on we don't have to worry about anything, or suspect anything. All we need to do is to exert ourselves to run forward! Fight! Fight! We shall encourage each other to fight against the old power! Our association is completely established on the idea of revolution! Yes, just like what we have written on our photo: To love for the sake of revolution! Don't sacrifice revolution because of love!<sup>44</sup>

The above expresses the harmonious relationship between revolution and love, one of the best-known themes in the early period of revolutionary literature around 1930. This theme explores the wondering self, especially the urban intellectual self, in search of his or her position in the turbulent society after the 1927 Nationalist Party liquidation (or the failure of the 1927 Communist revolution, in the mainland version). For leftists such as Hong Lingfei, revolution—the utopian goal of the collective—is personal, because only through the collective fight can individual happiness be secured. Although other leftist writers such as Jiang Guangci (1901–1931) preferred to focus on the clashes

between the petit bourgeois sentiment and the collective revolutionary movement, they still regarded the two factors as reciprocal, springing from the same libidinal source. In Jiang's own famous words, "Romantic? I myself am romantic. All revolutionaries are romantic. Without being romantic, who would come to start a revolution? . . . Idealism, passion, discontent with the status quo and a desire to create something better—here you have the spirit of romanticism. A romantic is one possessed of such a spirit."<sup>45</sup> Despite this formula's political focus, Leo Ou-fan Lee considers Jiang Guangci and his followers part of the "romantic generation," which carries the May Fourth legacy of subjectivism.<sup>46</sup> In contrast to the Mao years, in which personal love as well as subjectivity were repressed or channeled into the sublimated collective energy, Jiang Guangci's period exalted both personal freedom and revolutionary passion. In Yu Dafu's language, "The emergence of a revolutionary career is possible only for that little passion, the cultivation of which is inseparable from the tender and pure love of a woman. That passion, if extended, is ardent enough to burn down the palaces of a despot and powerful enough to destroy the Bastille."<sup>47</sup> What Yu Dafu pinpoints as "that little passion" reminds us of Herbert Marcuse's vision of nonrepressive conditions, under which "sexuality tends to 'grow into' Eros—that is to say, toward self-sublimation in lasting and expanding relations (including work relations) which serve to intensify and enlarge instinctual gratification."<sup>48</sup> This so-called little passion, which successfully connects love and revolution, sexuality and eros (the enlargement of sexuality itself), can well explain why the Creation Society dramatically switched from the representation of individual sentiments to the representation of collective revolutionary passion, an abrupt transformation that is incomprehensible to many scholars.

However, beneath the harmonious relationship between personal love and revolutionary passion in the late 1920s and the early 1930s lies a split personality, or more specifically, a split modern consciousness characteristic of the writers who frantically pursued this fashion. Driven by the utopian dream of a strong China, those leftist writers came to embrace revolution and love enthusiastically both in fiction and in real life but found themselves confronted with dilemmas between the ideal and reality, self and nation, progress and tradition, revolutionary masculinity and sentimental femininity. In other words, they were fascinated with this formulaic writing because it provided a perfect site to linger on the dilemmas and contradictions that epitomized their tormented experience. Although they appear romantic and passionate, they are also schizophrenic—an archetypal modern mental state resulting from their bitter struggle for personal happiness and national idealism.

In his insightful study of the leftist literary movement, T. A. Hsia reveals

that Lu Xun (1881–1936) was not the only writer who experienced “the paradox of his personal life and modern Chinese life, the conflict between hope and despair,” “the dilemma of the shadow whose existence is threatened by both the light and the darkness”;<sup>49</sup> other leftist writers such as Qu Qiubai (1899–1935) and Jiang Guangci also possessed “dual personalities” as sentimentalists and Communists. The revolution plus love formula, as this book demonstrates, is a specific genre that critically underscores that dual personality, which challenges the conventional view of modern consciousness as a symbolic unity. Although those leftists unmistakably longed for progress, freedom, and the utopian society, they at the same time endured a schizophrenic syndrome in which their sensitivity as individuals was troubled by the difference between utopia and reality. Through the production and proliferation of this formula, the individual’s unsettling experience, his or her bitter struggle and tormented anxiety, were repeated again and again.

Looking closely at Mao Dun’s (1896–1981), Jiang Guangci’s, and Bai Wei’s (1894–1987) lived historical experience, David Der-wei Wang illustrates a polemical picture in which “these writers did not merely write down but personally acted out modern Chinese *fictional realism*.”<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the formula of revolution plus love was by no means a literary construction that existed only in textual reality; it was closely associated with the brutal reality in which progressive youths such as Ding Ling’s first husband, Hu Yepin (1903–1931), were murdered for their ideals. Whether life imitates art or vice versa, love and happiness do not simply serve as a symbol for revolution; they are the purpose of revolution. In other words, writers during the early period of revolutionary literature usually personalized revolution or revolutionalized their romantic and sexual adventures, for both are based on utopian desire. This is what enabled them to accept hardship as well as revolutionary frenzy; it is also what aroused their anxiety as the harmonious relationship between revolution and love was hampered by reality.

The leftists’ personal experiences are particularly revealing. For instance, Qu Qiubai, the early leader of the Communist Party who was also actively involved in the leftist literary movement in the 1930s, fell in love with Ding Ling’s best girlfriend, Wang Jianhong, but finally left her for the sake of revolution. As he confessed to Ding Ling, Qu was later tortured by Wang’s death from tuberculosis caught from him, for he had been forced by his political beliefs to betray his real heart.<sup>51</sup> In *Superfluous Words*, he repeatedly emphasized that his devotion to political work was a “historical misunderstanding” that even his Communist friends couldn’t understand.<sup>52</sup> The two irreconcilable sides of Qu’s character were vividly captured by Ding Ling’s novel *Weihu* (1930), a typical example of the revolution plus love formula.

Another famous leftist writer, Mao Dun (1896–1981), who joined with Qu Qiubai to poignantly criticize this formulaic writing but whose novels were conspicuously tinged with revolution and romance, after a period of bitter struggle finally chose the marriage arranged by his family over his lover Qin Dejun, a new woman whose dazzling sexual adventures and political awareness inspired him to write *Rainbow* (Hong, 1930).<sup>53</sup> Mao Dun's vacillation between conventional marriage and sexual liberation as well as his uncertainty at the peculiar moment of 1927 expose a modern man's split mental state, which lurks behind his controversial novels related to this theme.

Jiang Guangci, the initiator of this formula, also heroically sacrificed himself both for revolution and for love. Although he played an important role in propagating proletarian literature and revolution, he was nevertheless dismissed by the Communist Party because of his petit bourgeois lifestyle. Despite his lover Song Ruoyu's tuberculosis, he married her; thus his romantic passion led to his own death from tuberculosis, contracted from her.<sup>54</sup> His failed love affair with the Communist Party parodies the romantic spirit of his protagonists and himself. As the heroine Wang Manying in his novel *The Moon Forces Its Way through the Clouds* (*Chongchu yunwei de yueliang*, 1930) romantically uses her own body, infected with a sexually transmitted disease, as a weapon to fight the bourgeois class, Jiang Guangci himself was trapped in a reality that seriously fettered his romantic spirit.

Female leftist writers' personal experiences of revolution and love intriguingly forged a dialogue with those of male writers. Shi Pingmei (1902–1928), the progressive woman writer famous for her romance with one of the early Communist leaders, Gao Junyu, refused to accept his love but fully committed herself to him after he died for both revolution and love. Her love affair with death may seem bewildering, a bizarre romance that conflicts with revolutionary literature's propaganda purpose. In Lu Yin's (1898–1934) *Ivory Rings* (*Xiangya jiezhi*, 1934), Shi's obsession with sentimentalism and death, her elevation of the utopian woman-to-woman relationship, which is also expressed in Shi's own writing, strike an incongruous note in the male-constituted world of revolution and love.

After her first husband, Hu Yepin, was executed by the GMD in 1930, Ding Ling completed her transformation from a feminist writer who specialized in representing modern girls' subjectivity and sexuality to a female leftist identifying with Marxist ideology. As Ding Ling tried to carry on and spread that ideology under difficult circumstances, she was kidnapped and imprisoned by GMD agents from 1933 to 1936. During this period of detention, even though she knew that her second husband, Feng Da, who was also a Communist, had betrayed his political beliefs, she compromised, living with him and

bearing his child. She explained, “I was a Communist, but I was after all a human being, who still naturally maintained a person’s little desire of survival. . . . I could only blame myself for not being strong enough—that I even could tolerate my former husband’s hand reaching to me, the hand belonging to someone that I should hate.”<sup>55</sup> No doubt, Ding Ling was experiencing the most awkward dilemma between romance and revolution. Her ambiguous attitude toward the traitor husband was later criticized by her comrades in Yan’an and during the Cultural Revolution. The two sides of her character—a woman with a human nature and a devoted Communist—were delivered in her essays “Thoughts on March 8” (Sanbajie you gan, 1942) and “When I Was in Xia Village” (Wozai xiacun de shihou, 1941), which showed great concern about women’s fate in Yan’an.

Another female leftist writer, Bai Wei, whose works *Fight out of the Ghost Tower* (*Dachu youlingta*, 1928) and *A Bomb and an Expeditionary Bird* (*Zhadan yu zhengniao*, 1929) keenly accentuate women’s problems in the revolutionary movement, had a failed affair with her lover Yang Sao. Their painful romance brought Bai Wei a sexually transmitted disease, gonorrhea, which prevented her from engaging in revolution. In her autobiographical novel *Tragic Life* (*Beiju shengya*, 1936), Bai Wei meticulously recorded how she was incarcerated by her diseased body, the result of the romantic pursuit of personal happiness, and how much she despaired because she was disqualified from both love and revolution.<sup>56</sup> She was hysterical and often wrote in a hysterical mode: she was irritated by the contrast between the progressing historical tide and her own decaying body. Living with disease, she poignantly expressed her suspicious attitude toward the utopian desire that triggers the formula of revolution and love.

Taking a brief look at the romantic lives of these leftists allows us to learn more about their inner world, full of contradictions. As agents working for progress and revolution, who personally act out their idealism, they themselves are reluctant to privilege the collective at the expense of the individual. As a result, their literary practices of revolution plus love were crammed with paradoxes: they violently attacked the passive sentimentality and individualism that prevailed in the May Fourth literature, but their writing could not escape the petit bourgeois mentality; they seriously criticized capitalist materialism, but the sale of their work was largely based on a consumer culture; their bold description of sex connected sexual emancipation with revolutionary and antifeudal acts but at the same time contained the elements of bourgeois decadence. Those paradoxes show that the “mutual enrichment”<sup>57</sup> or the reciprocal relationship between love and revolution has never been easy; the uneasiness not only engendered the split personality of these writers but

also suggested the multiple and contested nature of historical identities in the revolutionary literature around 1930. Thus, the ceaseless reiterations of those paradoxes are potentially resistant to totalizing revolutionary ideology.

If in the period of the Creation Society, the Sun Society (Tai yang she), and the Chinese League of Leftist Writers (Zuolian) leftist writers illustrated private feeling, sex, and love from various angles, they and other writers from the new generation developed an ambivalent attitude during the Yan'an period and the first seventeen years of the People's Republic of China. That is to say, the intensive relationship between revolution and love had begun: writers had to carefully control the representation of this theme under the pressure of Mao's famous Yan'an talk. As a matter of fact, Mao encouraged revolutionary romanticism, a positive romantic spirit that is able to mobilize and sublimate individual sexuality into the higher goal of political culture. Yet Mao gave individualism and subjectivity negative connotations because the individual's private feeling and space may pose a threat to the stable and pure form of revolutionary ideology. Therefore, the antagonistic embrace of sex and politics—personal feeling, gender, and sexuality being suppressed by the Party discourse of class, nation, and state or, alternatively, politics being sexually charged and driven—represents two major narratives of revolution plus love during this historical period. Meng Yue's reading of *The White-Haired Girl* (*Baimao nü*, 1942) and *Song of Youth* (*Qingchun zhige*, 1958) observes that as the myth of class victory and the myth of women's liberation joined together, the narratives of private sexual issues, women's individuality, and femininity were repressed and eliminated by the state's political discourse.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, Wang Ban's reading of the film *Song of Youth*, based on Yang Mo's (1914–1995) novel, borrows Herbert Marcuse's notion of nonrepressive sublimation to explain why the sexually charged revolutionary discourse had a great emotional effect on a mass audience.<sup>59</sup> Apart from these two opposing interpretations of sex and politics, a third option is to acknowledge the temporary convergence of individual sexuality and the broader sexual implications of politics, from which writers' ambivalent treatment of private feelings resulted in an "ambiguous pluralization."<sup>60</sup> This position again shows the split personality of Chinese intellectuals who painfully swing back and forth between the hope for self-fulfillment and the hope for a certain supportive communal environment. Seen from this angle, not all the private passions or petit bourgeois sentiments could be repressed by or uplifted to political enthusiasm and collective libidinal satisfaction; many Chinese writers were still struggling between individual love and national revolution during the Yan'an period and the first seventeen years. In other words, the split modern consciousness was never fully erased by the totality of Maoist discourse; instead, it tenaciously existed in the repetition of this

literary formula. For instance, Xiao Yemu (1918–1970), Lu Ling (1923–1994), Wang Meng (1934– ), Ouyang Shan (1908–2001), Zong Pu (1928– ), and many other writers all created a complex private space in their novels through which to temporally negotiate with the totality of political power.

During the period of the Cultural Revolution, private feelings, sex, and personal love, which were regarded by the Communist Party as harmful and destructive elements, were expelled from literary production. In Yang Mo's *Song of Youth*, the author describes the sexual relationship, however ambiguous, between the heroine Lin Daojing and her comrade Jiang Hua in the guise of "comradeship." This kind of subtle description of sex and personal love was eliminated in Hao Ran's (1932–) *Golden Road* (*Jinguang dadao*, 1972) and notorious eight revolutionary model plays (*yangban xi*). In the plays, the image of wife (or husband), who symbolizes the private space, ordinary daily life, and emotional and sexual relationships, is removed from the stage as in *The Story of Red Light* (*Hongdengji*). As a signifier of the repressed, women's bodies were required to be pure, without any reference to sex, as the raped body of Xi'er in the revolutionary model ballet *The White-Haired Girl* is purged and erased.<sup>61</sup> Even the comradesly love between Wu Qinghua and the Party representative, which is vague but still visible in the film of *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzi jun*), was omitted in its ballet version, supervised by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing. Heterosexual love became unspeakable, unhealthy, and inappropriate. Accordingly, the thematic repetition of collective revolution and personal love was disrupted in this period, for "individual identity was no longer something unique but was extensively socialized and standardized, the local mark of a homogeneous communal identity."<sup>62</sup> Instead, love, sexuality, and life instinct were channeled into a high degree of libidinal satisfaction. In Herbert Marcuse's words, "The biological drive becomes a cultural drive."<sup>63</sup> That is to say, "the cultural-building power of Eros is non-repressive sublimation: sexuality is neither deflected from nor blocked in its objective; rather, in attaining its objective, it transcends it to others, searching for fuller gratification."<sup>64</sup> The cult of Mao, the exaggeration of revolutionary heroes, and the frenzy of the Cultural Revolution resulted from such an aggrandizement of sexual instinct and sensuousness, which in return was catastrophic for personal identity. The Communist revolution promised individual self-fulfillment and self-development, but in the process it seemed to have lost its original purpose. The repression of personal feeling and sexuality corresponds to the myth of Mao's nation building, with the goal "to purge or disenfranchise undesirable classes in the nation and strive to shape the nation in the image of the idealized proletariat."<sup>65</sup> The urgent feeling of anti-imperialism that is continually carried by Maoist discourse and its

myth of the nation does not leave any space for Chinese intellectuals to linger on their split modern consciousness.

Since the early 1980s, personal love has been rediscovered and has become one of the most popular themes in novels, poetry, plays, and films. Loaded with the social duty to reflect what was destroyed by the Cultural Revolution, “scar literature” embraced love as a key to solving social problems. Even a quick glance at scar literature titles, such as Liu Xinwu’s “Place of Love” (Aiqing de weizhi), Zhang Jie’s “Love Cannot Be Neglected” (Aishi buneng wangji de), Zhang Kangkang’s “Right to Love” (Aide quanli), and Zhang Xian’s “Corner Forgotten by Love” (Bei aiqing yiwang de jiaoluo), reveals writers’ obsession with this taboo subject. Containing the political unconscious, love for those writers represents the banner of humanism, a way to save society, and a tentative vision of the lost “self.” However, though they use love to criticize Maoist politics and to condemn the Cultural Revolution wholesale, those writers are not necessarily disillusioned with revolution or Marxism. Rather, they strive to humanize the revolutionary discourse by focusing on the individual’s love life. Among novelists who use the formula—“a literary creation is equal to X [which refers to any topic] + wound + love”<sup>66</sup>—Zhang Jie (1937– ) makes the problem of the female subject in the socialist context a challenge to the received idea of women’s emancipation.<sup>67</sup> Showing significant concern with questions of gender relations, her female subjective voice explores women’s bitter experiences in love relationships, which are not easily explained by existing Marxist thought.

Although scar literature was burdened with social responsibility and its description of love carefully surrounded by the question of morality, extravagant descriptions of sex, erotica, and physical experience soon took over the literary scene following Zhang Xianliang’s *Half of Man Is Woman* (*Nanren de yiban shi nüren*). The Chinese reader, accustomed to traditional as well as revolutionary morality in judging sex, was stunned by this new literature flooded with men’s and women’s sexy bodies, primitive sensations, libidinal energy, and erotic desire. This phenomenon provoked great controversy because critics could no longer categorize it with their familiar Marxist approaches.<sup>68</sup> Crossing and recrossing the boundary of revolutionary morality, sex and erotica soon appeared as the most forceful instrument for Chinese writers to rediscover their own roots, personal languages, and subjectivity marginalized by Maoist discourse. For example, avant-garde writers such as Mo Yan, Li Rui, Liu Heng, Su Tong, and Ge Fei employ sex as a narrative strategy to deconstruct the metanarrative of national myth, revolutionary history, and critical realism. Unlike the previous generation, who still believed in socialism, these avant-garde writers were disenchanted with revolutionary ideology. They de-

pict sex at its most primitive, physical, celebrated, and carnivalistic in order to rebel against the sublime version imposed by the official discourse. But even if they transcend politics and pay more attention to formalities such as language, narratology, and structure, which are influenced by Western modernism, the symbolic meaning of sex in their writings is still very political: it is a subversion of political allegory. However, this way of depicting sex eventually disappeared among the much younger generation's literary practices in the context of globalization. The so-called new human beings (*xinxin renlei*), represented by Wei Hui and her generation's "women's bodily writing," neither identify with the heavily loaded sense of nationalism nor care to pursue the autonomy of literature. In her representation of sex, Wei Hui ambiguously mixes the consumer culture's manipulation of women's bodies with a postmodern sense of female sexuality. The old paradigm of revolution plus love, which attracted the modern Chinese literary imagination for almost a century, eventually lost its seductive power over the postsocialist generation.

### A Performative Act

So far, I have briefly delineated the interactions of revolution and love in different historical periods. Although I have tried very hard to characterize the "spirit" and "face" of each historical period, I find that what needs to be questioned is not only sociological mechanistic determinism but also the false unity of revolution and love in linear history. How true is a historical description based primarily on a single, seamless account of the spirit of a period? What has been concealed or marginalized in it? How dynamic were the interactions of revolution and love in different historical periods? What should we do with interactions that were inconsistent but overlapped and coexisted in time? If the *zeitgeist* cannot represent the original and authentic history, then how can history be represented, how "thickly" can it be described?<sup>69</sup>

Bearing these theoretical questions in mind, my project of historicizing the interplay of revolution and love focuses on "a plurality of histories" to determine what relationship is described by the discontinuity and continuity of that interplay. By examining different historical periods, I challenge the "total history" that "seeks to reconstitute the overall form of a civilization, the principle—material or spiritual—of a society, the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion—what is called metaphorically the 'face' of a period."<sup>70</sup> However, I am also aware that whether diversity should be valued over unity is not a theoretical question, but a question that hinges on a certain historical moment. The relationships

between difference and unity, particulars and the universal, the individual and society, gender difference and gender abstraction do not automatically contain any moral judgment, but rather are themselves objects of critique depending on circumstances.

Few novels have been more thoroughly written according to a formula than Chinese novels about revolution plus love of the late 1920s and 1930s. The popular theme attracted avowed revolutionary writers and their followers. The wide application of this formula in fiction writing unavoidably elevated and belittled it. Unlike other narrative modes that belong to mainstream literature, such as critical realism or revolutionary realism, the formula of revolution plus love presents a dilemma in orthodox literary history. Most critics are incapable of accommodating it within established categories. Simply calling it a failure because it produced only copies relegates a series of problems brought up by this type of writing comfortably to oblivion. What has been seriously ignored is the complicated reality that the formula of revolution plus love tried painstakingly to define. Although this formula was to represent “newness” and modernity’s progress, it aims to criticize capitalist modernity, freeing the Chinese people, the national proletariat, from the oppression of Western capitalism. Although it targets capitalist materialism, its proliferation and commercial triumph sustained and erased that idea at the same time. Therefore, to see the formula as a simple reflection of standardized Marxist thought would reduce this intricate literary practice to a fixed form with a universal or authoritative voice. In my discussion of this formula writing, I try to avoid being limited by the literal definitions of “revolution” or “love.” The varied representations of their complicated relationship tell us we cannot perceive the connotations of these terms as fixed in a social vacuum, nor can we reduce them to the very thing against which they are constructed by simply interpreting literary representations within the dominant political field. Instead, I view the thematic repetition of revolution plus love as a performative act mobilizing the relationship between revolution and love within different cultural and historical contexts, thus causing their definitions to vary in the struggle for dominant symbolic power.

The word “performative” may be reminiscent of J. L. Austin’s speech act theory and Derrida’s further deconstructive reading of it.<sup>71</sup> My usage is certainly derived from such a genealogy that focuses on iterability, possible imitation, and repetition in various serious and nonserious contexts, but I point to concrete historical conditions that make such reiterations possible. My definition of “performative” is more than a linguistic formulation and reformulation and is inseparable from broader concerns about power relations in the literary field. Lying behind the endless, enthusiastic thematic repetition of revolution plus love are the utopian desire and the revolutionary ideal, which

generate pleasure and pain, laughter and tears, love and hate, ecstasies and disappointments. The utopian desire best explains why numerous writers came to embrace, imitate, and repeat the theme of revolution plus love and why their imitation and repetition put their political and sexual identities in question. In other words, revolution's dealings with reality, which include passion and despair, sacrifice and blood, are more than performative theory can grasp and comprehend. Writers driven by utopian desire, who have real interests in the different possibilities in the literary field, repeat, reiterate, and contest the meanings of revolution and love in different ways that show the stable modern consciousness to be only and always an illusory construction.

My focus in the first chapter is on the *wentan* (literary scene) during the period of revolutionary literature. Questioning the coherent identity and form of so-called revolutionary literature, I describe different groups of writers, who sometimes also acted as editors and critics, expressing their interaction with revolutionary beliefs. By focusing on the popular revolution plus love fiction from 1926 to 1935, chapters 2, 3, and 4 not only question the coherence of the modern Chinese literary canon itself but also explore some noncanonical writings that have been ignored by official history. Copies and repetitions of the revolution plus love formula are deceptively simple. Every imitation creates unpredictable modifications of and differences from the original (if there is an original). This fact should have been clear to the utopian critics who saw the theory of revolutionary literature and its literary practice as a romantic harmony, and who saw duplications of the form as identical. The historical participants using this all-embracing formula, such as left-wing writers, female writers, and the early New Sensibility writers, all contributed different interpretations from their own perspectives, thus expanding and diffusing each carefully formulated practice. It is important to note that agents' different responses to cultural norms, with concealed modes of imitation, have both undermined and affirmed the existing systems of power.

The correspondence between revolution and love appears tangled in different historical periods. Therefore in chapters 5 and 6 I examine women's bodies as a site of intense interactions structured by the power controlling reality. Regarding women's sexually specific bodies as socially and politically constructed entities reveals the complexity of the connection between erotic imagination and symbolic power. My study shows that women's bodies are subject to endless rewriting and reinscription that establish various sign systems in social space. By analyzing women's bodies and their relationship to politics in the first seventeen years of the PRC and the twentieth-century fin-de-siècle period, I aim to draw a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics between revolution and love.

Tracing how women's sexual bodies are produced by culture and society, I refuse to accept them as ahistorical, precultural, or natural in any simple way. The feminist critic Judith Butler rejects gender's ontological status by putting it back within a discursive framework.<sup>72</sup> I agree that gender is the site of a historically specific organization of power relations, but I also do not want to disregard the biological aspect of women's bodies, which seeps beyond the power structure and social space that attempt to contain it.<sup>73</sup> In contrast to solid men's bodies, the female body symbolizes various forms of uncontrollable flow; this naturalness and fluidity may be a threat to men's purported rationality and transcendence.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, by taking both the containability and uncontainability of women's bodies into account, I freely cross and recross the boundaries of outside and inside, public and private, knowledge and desire. I ask, for example, When we scrutinize how women's bodies are distributed, censored, and put to political use, aren't we only emphasizing their fundamental passivity and transparency? What about the inarticulate part of the body that might act to produce fragmentations, fractures, dislocations in different historical and social spaces? How can we historicize the relationship between revolution and love in terms of both the containability and the uncontainability of women's bodies? My frequent use of feminist theory throughout this book is not simply an antifoundational gesture but a means to observe the ceaseless struggles between politics and gender.

Over the past two decades or so, there has been much sophisticated discussion of revolutionary discourse and romantic imagination, but no systematic analysis of the dynamic interplay between these two elements in modern Chinese literary history. Admittedly, much more is involved here than popular conceptions of body politics or the political meanings of eros. How can we rewrite a modern Chinese literary history that has been constrained by established modes of thinking? For example, canonization often subordinates discussions of marginalized writers to footnotes in the evolution of mainstream literature. Is digging out some marginal writings enough to challenge the critical system? This question becomes more urgent when we consider that the interplay of revolution and love is related to the ongoing enactment of Chinese modernity. The transmission of power from a canon to a countercanon represents a critical moment in the reciprocal relation between the history of literature and social patrimony. Therefore, although my study explores different modes of marginal writing that have not garnered the scholarly and critical attention they merit, I do not mean to merely use them as replacements for canonical works. Rather, I wish to draw attention to how the canon and countercanon have been established as a way of relating literary texts to their historical context within the matrix of power relations. Examining the discursive

construction of the canon and the countercanon enables us to question the apparently unified concept of newness, progress, and revolution, stratifying it into different layers according to its constant repetitions in the formulary writing of revolution and love.

### A Self-Recycling Discourse of Revolution

At the end of the twentieth century, Li Zehou and Liu Zaifu published their co-authored book *Farewell Revolution* (*Gaobie geming*), which criticizes the revolutionary mode of thinking that had manipulated not only the intellectual life but also the daily life of the Chinese people. In his article “No Revolution to Literature” (*Wenxue buke geming*), Liu Zaifu especially questions the necessity of “revolution” in literature and the arts, which originated with Liang Qichao’s “revolution in poetry” and “revolution in fiction,” then was carried on by the “literary revolution” of the May Fourth movement and leftists’ much more radical advocacy of “revolutionary literature.”<sup>75</sup> Under the pressure of nationalist urgency, those revolutions have repeatedly subordinated literature to social concerns, nation building, and political ideologies; as a result, writers’ individuality and subjectivity have been gradually eliminated, and the traditional Chinese literary legacy has been less cherished. Liu’s criticism of literary revolution and revolutionary literature epitomizes his generation’s disillusionment with the utopian dream after the trauma of the Cultural Revolution. His targeting literature’s social and political function is more or less congruent with Lu Xun’s prediction of literature’s association with revolution: “Revolution, anti-revolution, revolution of revolution, revolution of anti-revolution, anti-anti-revolution of revolution . . .”<sup>76</sup> In Lu Xun’s words, “[Some people] often like to address the close relationship between literature and revolution in order to propagate, advertise, stir up, propel, and complete revolution. However, I think this kind of article is powerless, for a good artistic work should not obey others’ orders, should not concern gains and losses, but is something naturally coming from one’s heart.”<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately, only at the end of the twentieth century did Chinese intellectuals have the luxury to reflect on a “self-recycling”<sup>78</sup> revolutionary discourse, which believes in the myth of progress but in fact merely revolves around literature’s submission to politics.

Borrowing Matei Calinescu’s definition of modernity, which contains two bitterly conflicting sides—the cult of progress and an aesthetics<sup>79</sup>—Leo Ou-fan Lee discusses Chinese intellectuals’ search for modernity in Chinese social and historical conditions. He argues that in China, the second modernity of culture and aesthetics never launched serious criticism of the first modernity

of time and human progress, as happened in the West. “The crucial point of difference, however, is that these Chinese writers did not choose (nor did they feel the necessity) to separate the two dominants of historical and aesthetic modernity in their pursuit of a modern mode of consciousness and modern form of literature.”<sup>80</sup> Instead, the cultural or aesthetic modernity “was not co-equal with but ultimately subordinate to the new historical consciousness.”<sup>81</sup> Chinese intellectuals were so deeply involved in the processes and pressures of mundane modernization that they lost the capacity to repudiate or question this subordination. All their efforts were required to adapt to the fluctuating and immediate demands of the social order. This attitude affected all the arts. The personal, subjective, and private had to yield to the ideology of the new, of progress conceived as a positive, continual movement forward through the destruction of old forms and the invention of new ones adequate to the expression of imperative reality. The form that could best express the new historical consciousness was the realistic narrative. Other narrative modes, such as romanticism or neoromanticism, were definitely inferior, although they “were also made within the conscious framework of the modern ‘tides’ of history.”<sup>82</sup>

Leo Ou-fan Lee provides a panorama of Chinese literary history, based on an analysis of Western modernity’s transformation in China, in which art serves as an instrument for political and social purposes. This argument captures the broad tendency and tide of literary history; however, it does not mean that resistance to the inevitable flow of modernization or ambiguity toward the new historical consciousness has never existed. We can find private doubts and waverings about the ideology of progress in Lu Xun’s paradoxical writings and the experimental modernism of the new sensibility school, in Shen Congwen’s detachment from modernization and Zhang Ailing’s aesthetic concept of desolation. Even if literary form itself rests on the idea of revolution, the process of representation will generate degrees of obscurity and heterogeneity within it. As Franco Moretti has said, “Literature is perhaps the most omnivorous of social institutions, the most ductile in satisfying disparate social demands, the most ambitious in not recognizing limits to its own sphere of representation. One cannot ask that heterogeneity to disappear, but only (and it is no small request) to reflect faithfully the real diversity, in terms of their destination and function, of the texts under examination.”<sup>83</sup> It was precisely the fundamental distinction between representation and the represented, between the sign and the signified that refined and extended the territory of the realist mode, which aptly expressed Chinese intellectuals’ pursuit of modernity as progress. For example, the work of leftist writer Lu Ling represents the complexity of Chinese cultural modernity, as Kirk A. Denton describes it, “characterized by two discourses—romantic individualism and revolutionary collectivism.”<sup>84</sup> Because

the author is caught by the contradictions between these two discourses, his work is filled with tensions stronger than the revolutionary authoritarian voices carried by the form of realism. Therefore, although the representation of historical modernity has largely dominated that of aesthetic modernity in the history of modern Chinese literature, we still need to dig out the “repressed modernities” (David Der-wei Wang’s term) that have been denied or suppressed in mainstream literature.

Despite Liu Zaifu’s and Leo Ou-fan Lee’s different critical angles—one reflecting revolution, the other modernity—both point out the lack of individualism and subjectivism in modern Chinese narrative. The trend of experimental fiction in the 1990s, which extolled the autonomy of literature and the arts, to some extent filled such gaps, which always existed in modern Chinese literature. However, in the newly emerged context of globalization, the debates between the new leftist school and the neoliberal school have shown Chinese intellectuals’ doubts about capitalist modernity, which organized the world through the continual expansion of economically powerful nation-states. If Liu and Lee criticized the “phantasmagorias” production of revolution and modernity as progress, then the new leftist school made its target global capitalism in the new historical situation. As Walter Benjamin wrote, “Capitalism was a natural phenomenon with which a new dream sleep fell over Europe, and with it a reactivation of mythic powers.”<sup>85</sup> This capitalist “phantasmagorias” has successfully turned into a global dream. Critics of the new leftist school have written that the dream world built on the economic market is all illusion, belying the success of the new order of globalization. They have criticized the continuity of experimental literature or the autonomy of literature, which seems to have lost its critical power over the postsocialist and postmodernist reality. Thus literature is reassociated with social concerns as new leftists cautiously reveal the West’s political and economic motivation behind its promotion of global consumerist dreams. It is in this new context that some critics, such as Kuang Xinnian, urge a reexamination of the leftist literature of the 1930s, the manifestation of the intriguing relationships between socialism and capitalism, between Chinese intellectuals’ pursuit of modernity and their reflection of and resistance to it. According to Kuang, both modernism and leftist literature respond to modernity in relation to capitalist development. However, the former never transgresses capitalism even if it constantly produces newness; the latter, on the contrary, intends to thoroughly destroy the structure of capitalism.<sup>86</sup> Apparently, Kuang’s reaffirmation of the leftist literature of the 1930s can shed some light on new leftists’ concern about what kind of role literature should play in the increasingly global situation.

From Liu and Lee’s denouncement of literature’s association with social

and national affairs to Kuang's recall of that association, we find that the self-recycling discourse of revolution has once again made history turn backward upon itself. This phenomenon reminds us of Herbert Marcuse's discussion of revolution:

Each revolution has been the conscious effort to replace one ruling group by another; but each revolution has also released forces that have "overshot the goal," that have striven for the abolition of domination and exploitation. The ease with which they have been defeated demands explanations. Neither the prevailing constellation of power, nor immaturity of the productive forces, nor absence of class consciousness provides an adequate answer. In every revolution, there seems to have been a historical moment when the struggle against domination might have been victorious—but the moment passed. An element of self-defeat seems to be involved in this dynamic (regardless of the validity of such reasons as the prematurity and inequality of forces). In this sense, every revolution has also been a betrayed revolution.<sup>87</sup>

Marcuse's definition of revolution is in tune with Liu Zaifu's argument: each revolution in literature embodies an element of self-defeat and unnecessarily brings literature to a more progressive stage. Yet in light of Marcuse's theory, we can also say that a farewell to revolution and a reconsideration of revolutionary literature are both historically constructed criticisms of revolution. The former rebels against the domination of the official political language; the latter struggles with the control of global capitalism. But their moments of militating against domination (either Communist or capitalist) will eventually pass as we face another new historical situation. By then, how will we be reinterpreting the "revolutionary literature" of the twentieth century? Will Chinese intellectuals' search for modernity do justice to revolutionary passion and spirit? Will revolution's self-defeat illuminate the rethinking of discourses of modernity and antimodernity? What is the role of literature in association with social change? Although the following chapters cannot offer sufficient answers to those questions, they at least reconsider a more dialectical relationship between revolution and modernity.