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The Modern Chinese Writer: Literary Incomes and Best Sellers

Paul Bady

Obviously, literature is a question of quality rather than quantity. In a speech given on 19 June 1961, which was only published in the *Literary Gazette* (*Wenyi bao*) in February 1979 as the cultural testament of the late premier, Zhou Enlai drew a crude parallel between literary and industrial outputs: "Certain laws governing material production also hold good for mental production. When pressed too far mental production will suffer, perhaps even more seriously. Quotas and pressures of time are vexing problems for mental workers. Take the writing of poetry as an example. Among our leading cadres, Comrade Chen Yi likes to write poems. He composes very quickly and is a prolific writer. He is a genius in this respect. But, it is different with Chairman Mao. He writes only after much deliberation. Though he writes less, he writes with such magnificence and vitality and produces extremely concentrated poems. We should not demand a poem a day from Chairman Mao, nor should we interfere with Comrade Chen Yi and ask him to write less. Mental work cannot be uniform."¹

No doubt the famous literary examples chosen by Zhou, these modern Cao Cao, also deserve the attention of critics. But, leaving this point aside, we are still confronted with the question: is literature, particularly Chinese contemporary literature, to be subjected to one or another kind of socio-economic approach?

Strangely enough, this field of study has been almost entirely neglected by historians. Even those inspired by Marxism in their descriptions of literary life in past decades seemed more interested in ideological debate than in material conditions. (Sometimes, their descriptions seem like an ideal picture of a theological battlefield.) As a result, such important matters as the writing profession, the living conditions of writers and their audience were never systematically studied. One can find some material at random in different articles and books²; but, the different

* First read as a paper at a workshop on Contemporary Chinese Literature and the Performing Arts, held at Harvard University in June 1979, under the sponsorship of the American Council of Learned Societies, the present article owes much to suggestions and comments made by, amongst other participants, E. Gunn, D. Holm, T. Hutters, W. Jenner, B. McDougall and H. Mills.

1. *Wenyi bao* (WYB), No. 2 (1979) pp. 4-5, translated in *Beijing Review* (BR), No. 13, 30 March 1979, pp. 10-11.

2. Besides the different items referred to in the footnotes, one special mention should be made of Lars Ragvald's study, "Professionalism and amateur tendencies in post-revolutionary Chinese literature," in Göran Malmqvist (ed), *Modern Chinese Literature and its Social Context*, Nobel Symposium 32, Stockholm, 1977, pp. 152-79.

elements of the problem, the changes after the May 4th Movement and the present situation are still to be analysed.

An extraordinary high number of societies and journals sprang up in the literary world of the 1920s and 1930s. For both Chow Tse-tsung³ and Zhang Jinglu⁴ this boom and the remarkable quality of many of the literary works being produced should not conceal the fact that most of these new-born societies or journals were only short-lived. It is true, however, that the literary movement as a whole benefited in the longer term from the introduction of modern printing and publishing techniques. Without the Commercial Press (CP) and the *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (which had existed previously), for example, the Literary Association would not have reached such a large audience among Chinese readers. The final disagreement between Mao Dun, who was the editor-in-chief of the journal from January 1921 to December 1922, and the CP, which Xu Tiaofu criticized in 1956 for being a profit-seeking capitalist company, did not hamper the subsequent role of the *Short Story Monthly* under Zheng Zhenduo's editorship, as a leading journal of the literary scene.⁵

However, even when modernized, the material foundation of the "literary temple" (*wentan*) was not very strong. Actually, it was rather limited, for many reasons, among which were: (1) the concentration of the publishing activities in Shanghai, following the decline of Beijing, and (2) the narrowness of the distribution network. Compared with the size of the country, the number of bookshops was probably very small. For example, in Sichuan province in 1949 G. William Skinner⁶ observed that there was a bookshop only at the *xian* level and sometimes one just below the district at the "intermediate market" level.

Therefore, circulation figures could not be very large, even for writers who, later, became very famous. In the Postscript to *The Grave*⁷ Lu Xun noted: "to begin with, a thousand copies were printed of the first editions of my writings and translations; then, this was increased by five hundred, while recently each edition has run from two to four thousand copies." The first printing of *Jia (Family)* by Ba Jin, in 1931, was limited to 2,000 copies. In his *Yenan Talks*, Mao Zedong said that during the war, in the area controlled by the Guomindang, the usual circulation figure was only 2,000 copies for one printing.⁹

3. Chow Tse-tsung, *Research Guide to the May Fourth Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963).

4. Zhang Jinglu, *Zhongguo xiandai chuban shiliao (Materials for a History of Contemporary Chinese Publications)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1954-59).

5. Jean-Pierre Drège, *La Commercial Press de Shanghai, 1897-1949* (Paris: Memoires de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises), Vol. II, pp. 38-48.

6. "Marketing and social structure in rural China, part 1," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (November 1964), p. 27 n.

7. *Lu Xun xuanji* (Beijing, Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1958), Vol. 1, pp. 362-63.

8. Interview with Ba Jin, *Le Figaro Magazine*, 28 April 1979, p. 88. The last printing (1977) amounted to 500,000 copies.

9. *Mao Zedong xuanji* (Beijing, Renmin chubanshe, 1966), p. 852.

The copyright legislation of 1912, reinforced in 1928, provided rather theoretical protection of literary works. In 1941 Rudolf Löwenthal wrote: "The copyright legislation and its application has apparently been satisfactory to Chinese copyright owners. Only on rare occasions were cases brought before the courts and few complaints were heard. Presumably two factors are mainly responsible for this: first, Chinese authors do not like to start a law-suit over such a matter but are rather pleased about gratuitous publicity, even though it may entail some financial loss; and, second, the would-be pirates are deterred by the law . . . from undertaking the reprinting of books, made doubly risky by a doubtful profit on the limited market."¹⁰

In fact, most writers were not in a position to have their literary property respected. Even if their volumes contained the usual notice "all rights reserved" (*banquan suoyou* or *you zhuzuo quan*), book piracy flourished and forgeries were frequent. For instance, the bibliography of Lao She, as listed by Zbigniew Slupski, includes many unauthorized editions, even of early novels, like *The Philosophy of Lao Zhang* (*Lao Zhang de zhexue*) which was published and reprinted many times by the Commercial Press.¹¹

During the first two decades of this century, "as modern printing and distribution methods spread, fiction became a substantial commercial activity."¹² The same situation prevailed during the following decades, but only for one type of author, namely the type specializing in popular *Libailiu* type fiction, like Zhang Henshui. Actually, for all the rest not belonging to that fortunate group "the writing profession [was] one of the poorest paid in China."¹³ This sentence by Lin Yutang¹³ was fairly representative, although the figures given for the "royalties," i.e. fees paid on delivery of manuscript (*gaofei*), of that period were different according to sources available and the literary standing of each writer: for 1,000 characters, they ran from one to three *yuan*, if we accept the figures provided by Lu Xun in 1925,¹⁴ from three to five, as stated, 10 years later, by Lao She,¹⁵ or even 10.¹⁶

The result was that "according to general belief, only four Chinese authors could ever have made a living by writing: Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Lu Hsun, Hu Shih and Lin Yu-t'ang."¹⁷ Remembering the situation of the time, Kai-yu Hsu adds one name to the list but confirms the statement: "Shen Cung-wen was among the very few who could live on his writing;

10. "The copyright in China," *The Yenching Journal of Social Studies*, Vol. III, No. 2 (August 1941), p. 161.

11. *The Evolution of a Modern Chinese Writer* (Prague: Academia, 1966), pp. 105-120.

12. Perry Link "Introduction to Zhou Shou-juan's 'We shall meet again' and two denunciations of this type of story," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, January-March 1976, p. 13.

13. *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1936), p. 160.

14. *Lu Xun quanji*, Vol. III, p. 112.

15. *Lao niu po che* (Canton: Renjian shuwu, 1937), p. 65.

16. Lin Yutang, *History of the Press*, p. 160.

17. Rudolf Löwenthal, "The copyright in China," p. 167.

all the rest had to support themselves with salaries, mostly from teaching. Between jobs they found the going very tough; some, like Yu Ta-fu, led a perennially bohemian, nomadic life, drifting from one city to another."¹⁸

Here, a few examples may be added which are chosen from among poets and novelists. Since royalties paid were dependent upon the number of written characters, the position of the poet was indeed the most precarious. In the mostly autobiographical work *Ganlan (Olive)*,¹⁹ Guo Moruo describes the hapless fate of one of these writers who was compelled to be separated from his family and become *liumang* (a vagrant). Ten years later, in 1933, another poet, Zang Kejia, had his first collection of verse, *The Brand (Laoyin)*, printed only as a result of generous contributions made by Wen Yiduo and Wang Tongzhao.²⁰

Even the most famous novelist led a hard life. "For all the success of his writings, Pa Chin did not earn much. He lived in an attic in Chapei, and when travelling he could afford only third-class fare. A friend said of him that if Pa Chin did not write an article one day, he would have nothing to eat the next."²¹ In order to support his family, including his old mother, Lao She had no choice but to teach, and wrote mainly during summer holidays. After a first attempt which failed,²² he became a professional writer only in 1937 when he published *Luotuo Xiangzi (Rickshaw Boy)*.²³ At that time, the royalties he received for 1,000 characters were 10 *yuan*²⁴ and he could buy, with 30 silver dollars, a scroll by Qi Baishi.²⁵ But he had to write one or two thousand characters daily. In 1934 he once complained that he was not a typewriter.²⁶

The increasing number of literary magazines, especially during 1934, described as "the year of periodicals" (*zazhi nian*),²⁷ was indeed favourable to writing. The first issue of *Les Contemporains (Xiandai)* had been so successful that its first printing of 8,000 copies was not enough.²⁸ But there was also too much competition between the new journals, and it was difficult for each of them to maintain a sufficient

18. *The Chinese Literary Scene* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 13.

19. Analysed by Jaroslav Průšek, *Three Sketches of Chinese Literature* (Prague: Academia, 1969), p. 103.

20. Zang Kejia, "Lao She yong zai" ("Lao She will be ever with us"), *Renmin wenxue*, No. 9, (1978), p. 83.

21. Olga Lang, *Pa Chin and His Writings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 140.

22. See our Introduction to *Lao niu po che, Essai autocritique sur le roman et l'humour* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), p. XLIII.

23. "How I came to write the novel 'Camel Hsiang-tzu,'" *Chinese Literature*, No. 11 (1978), p. 60.

24. Preface to *Cremation (Huozang)* (Shanghai: Chenguang chuban gongsi, 1948), p. 1.

25. Huang Sha, "Lao She de xiezuo shenghuo" ("The creative life of Lao She"), *Xin guan cha*, No. 7 (1 April 1956), p. 27.

26. "Wode chuanguozuo jingyan" ("My literary experience"), *Diaodou*, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 63.

27. Lin Yutang, *History of the Press*, p. 152.

28. From a letter of Shi Zhecun to Dai Wangshu, 18 November 1932 in Kong Lingjing, *Xiandai Zhongguo zuojia shuxin (Letters of Contemporary Chinese Writers)* (Shanghai: Shenghuo shudian, 1936), p. 104.

circulation figure.²⁹ Besides, the success of periodicals was more advantageous for short texts. The royalties paid for *changpian xiaoshuo* (long novels) were not higher than for *duanpian* (short stories).³⁰ Even translations were paid about the same price as creative writing.³¹ For separate volumes (*danxingben*), the usual rate was between 10 and 15 per cent, but, in 1934, Shi Zhecun could write to Dai Wangshu that publishers were reluctant to accept them directly,³² and many of them, afterwards, forgot to pay, on a regular basis, royalties due to authors.³³

During the war the circumstances deteriorated, since relations between the hinterland and Shanghai were almost broken off³⁴ and also because of the increase of censorship. Except for those, like Guo Moruo and Tian Han, who were employed by the Guomindang propaganda, to make a living was, for many writers, a desperate undertaking. At the beginning drama seemed more profitable than any other genre, in Chongqing as well as in Shanghai. For instance, Lao She was given 300 *yuan* for the 10,000-character play, *The Last of the Mist (Can wu)*, which was his first one.³⁵ But afterwards, inflation rose to such a level that the All-China Association of Writers and Artists against Aggression in December 1939 launched a kind of rescue campaign, in order "to safeguard the lives of writers" (*baozhang zuojia shenghuo*).

Lao She, who was the *de facto* chairman of the Association, took a very active part in the movement. In one of the articles he wrote he suggested five proposals: "One, to increase the remunerations to authors (*gaofei*); two, to restore and to fix royalties (*banshui*); three, to revise publishing legislation (*chubanfa*); four, to grant literary loans (*wenyi daijin*); and five, to provide relief funds to writers suffering from poverty and sickness (*pinbing zuojia jiujiujin*).³⁶ Thereupon, the left-wing literary critic Li Changzhi proposed the idea of a state organization, similar to the one in the Soviet Union, where books could be printed and royalties paid by the state.³⁷

The campaign, which continued after the war, obtained some support from certain Guomindang authorities, and from merchants. As usual,

29. Estimated by Lin Yutang, who edited *Lunyu (The Analects)* and *Yuzhou feng (The Wind of the Universe)*, to 5,000 copies, p. 160.

30. See my study, "Lao She et l'art de la nouvelle," *Etudes d'Histoire et de Littérature Chinoises offertes au Professeur Jaroslav Průšek* (Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises), Vol. XXIV (1976), p. 17.

31. From two letters of Shi Zhecun to Dai Wangshu, 27 December 1932 and 29 May 1933 in Kong Lingjing, *Xiandai Zhongguo*, pp. 108 and 117.

32. Letter of 2 July 1934, *ibid.* p. 124.

33. See, for instance, Lao She's complaining article: "Results are not good, but incomes are even worse" ("Chengji qian jia, shouru geng qian jie"), *Tianxia wenzhang*, Vol. I, No. 1 (10 March 1943).

34. Lao She, "Eight years of storm" ("Bafang fengyu"), first published in *Xin min bao* in 1946, reprinted in *Xin wenxue shiliao*, No. 1 (1978), p. 29.

35. Ranbir Vohra, *Lao She and the Chinese Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 132.

36. "Zenyang weichi zuojia shenghuo" ("How to safeguard the life of writers") *Zazhi*, 5 March 1940.

37. See Hu Jinquan, "Lao She he tade zuopin" ("Lao She and his works"), *Mingbao yuekan (MBYK)*, No. 112 (April 1975), p. 21.

the contributions from overseas Chinese were substantial. Among the writers who received funds, we find the names of Yu Dafu and Zhang Tianyi.³⁸

Inside the "literary temple" along with lives full of privations, sometimes on the verge of starvation, one of the most important effects of the war was to create a feeling of solidarity that had never existed before.³⁹ Even when the writers were scattered throughout the country, nevertheless the common spirit which prevailed among them was stronger than their former disputes.⁴⁰ In spite of the opposition that would occur between the main groups of Yan'an and Chongqing,⁴¹ the influence of the *Wenxue* and its main journal, *Kangzhan wenyi*, was certainly determinant.

After the Japanese surrendered Shanghai re-established its former literary supremacy, while Hong Kong, where many writers had fled during the war, remained active. But the civil war which followed endangered the recovery of the literary scene. The assassination of Li Gongpu, an important member of the Democratic League, and of the poet Wen Yiduo, in Kunming in 1946, turned many intellectuals against the Guomindang regime. In spite of the successive rectification campaigns after 1942, as Merle Goldman pointed out,⁴² "in the later half of the 1940s, even non-communist intellectuals were ready to welcome the rule of the Chinese Communists. Along with the rest of the population, they suffered from economic chaos, runaway inflation, and general frustration. In addition, they were specifically embittered by the KMT's [Guomindang] virtual disregard of their capabilities and accomplishments. Consequently, a sizeable number of China's intellectuals expressed approval of the party in a degree varying from sympathy to a willingness to co-operate."

After the defeat of the Guomindang and the establishment of the Communist Party as the government of China, no writer could actually think that Heine's dream, twice ridiculed by Lu Xun,⁴³ would become reality. But if there was no God to welcome poets and give them cookies or sweets, the living conditions of many "patriotic" writers improved rather substantially under the new regime. In fact, the "labouring masses" (*laodong jieji*) gave most of them the "special treatment" (*tebie youdai*) that Lu Xun precisely indicated. In addition to royalties and salaries paid to the cadres and professional members of the Writers

38. Zhao Jingshen, *Wentan yijiu (Remembrances of the Literary Scene)* (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1948), p. 158.

39. Because of the old tradition of mutual contempt amongst *literati* (*wenren xiang qing*).

40. This is stressed in Lao She's article mentioned above ("Eight years of storm," p. 22): "many colleagues who didn't know each other or only a little (*duoshao*) became friends."

41. See a statement made by Zang Kejia and quoted by Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers*, London, 1960, p. 177.

42. *Literary Dissent in Communist China* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 67.

43. *Lu Xun quanji*, Vol. IV, pp. 108 and 183.

Union,⁴⁴ many perquisites were extended to writers as well as to "high class cadres" (*gaoji ganbu*): houses, cars, free entertainment, banquets and dinner parties. The most famous authors, such as Guo Moruo, Ba Jin, Mao Dun, Lao She, Tian Han, Xia Yan and so forth, were also elected to the National People's Congress or given posts in the cultural bureaucracy.

One unusual kind of perquisite was the opportunity to take part in trips, either collective or individual, organized in order "to get in touch with the masses" and to collect literary material. For many writers, these professional trips were a novelty, since, until recent times, the literary tradition, as reported by Lin Yutang,⁴⁵ was that "Chinese writers never [wrote] with their legs": "Chinese writers [were] scholars and Chinese scholars [were] not supposed to use their legs running about and hunting for live material from a living society." Although limited to members of cultural delegations, journeys abroad were among the most appreciated.

Under the new regime, some famous authors, like Shen Congwen⁴⁶ or Qian Zhongshu, ceased to write and turned to other occupations. But the great majority of writers joined the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (*Zhonghua quanguo wenxue yishu jie lianhehui*; abbreviated *Wenlian*), which was founded as early as July 1949, and the Union of Chinese Literary Workers (*Wenxue gongzuozhe xiehui*; *Wenxie* for short), which became in 1953 the Union of Chinese Writers (*Zuojia xiehui*).⁴⁷

At the national as well as the local level, where provincial branches were established, there were many meetings and "social activities" (*shehui huodong*). A cartoon, published in a 1956 issue of the *Wenyi bao*,⁴⁸ shows the multifarious aspects of the new literary scene. In 1960 the number of writers amounted to 3,719 and more than 80 literary magazines were being published.⁴⁹

Under one form or another financial help was even given to some writers who, for different reasons, were not members of the Union. When Zhang Henshui, who supported himself with his calligraphy, was obliged to sell his house to pay his debts, Zhou Enlai is said to have provided him with a special subsidy. During the 1960s, Zhou Zuoren, as a consultant to Renmin wenxue chubanshe for Japanese texts, received a monthly remuneration of 200 *yuan*, and Ding Ling, who was then

44. According to L. Ragvald ("Professionalism and amateur tendencies," p. 160), writers who belonged to the "literary rank" (*wen'yi ji*) received a monthly salary of 200–300 *yuan*, until the system was abolished in December 1956.

45. Lin Yutang, *History of the Press*, pp. 160–61.

46. See Nie Hualing, *Shen Ts'ung-wen* (New York, Twayne Publishers, 1972).

47. Lin Manshu et al. *Zhongguo dangdai wenxue shi gao* (*Histoire de la littérature en République Populaire de Chine, 1949–1965*) (Hong Kong, Centre de publication Asie Orientale de l'Université Paris 7, 1978), pp. 347–53.

48. WYB, 15 November 1956. A reproduction of the cartoon is appended to Takeuchi Minoru, *Gendai Chūgoku no bungaku* (*Chinese Contemporary Literature*) (Tokyo: Kenkyūsha, 1973).

49. Lin Manshu, *Zhongguo dangdai wenxue shi gao*, pp. 26–27.

teaching at Wuhan University as a B class professor (*erdeng jiaoshou*) received a salary of 280 *yuan*.⁵⁰

The considerable improvement in writers' living conditions must not, however, hide the fact that many of them, in exchange for his material independence, were deprived of intellectual freedom.⁵¹ When the Cultural Revolution began this financial security was also taken away. In 1966 the Writers Union was soon criticized and disbanded. In order to reduce the difference between manual and mental workers, writers' salaries were then cut by one-third and even by one-half.⁵² In 1967 a Red-Guard newspaper, *The Storm (Fenglei)*, published in Beijing, launched a frontal attack on what it called not only a "revisionist" but a "criminal" (*zui'e*) system.⁵³

The text, written by a group of "revolutionary rebels" of the People's Literature Press, gives some information about the different remuneration systems that existed after 1951, when the Press was founded. The first one followed the "capitalist royalties system" (*banshui zhi*): the payment was calculated according to the number of characters and the circulation figure. The second one, which prevailed between 1954 and 1958, was inspired by the Soviet example: it was a "system of quotas" (*ding'e zhidu*), which determined the remuneration only in proportion to the number of characters. The same amount of royalties were paid every time the fixed quota was printed. The third one was a "basic remuneration system" (*jiben gaochou zhi*), which was determined by the number of characters; in addition, there was also a remuneration calculated according to the circulation figure (*yinshu gaochou*). In 1958, during the Great Leap Forward, the last mentioned remuneration was cancelled and the "basic" payment reduced by half.⁵⁴ But the following year the *status quo ante* was restored and compensation (*tuipei*) was even given. From that time this system has prevailed.

Appended to the *Fenglei* text is a list of royalties paid to 17 writers by the People's Literature Press. Since the Renmin wenxue chubanshe is a major publishing house, the list in effect indicates the best sellers of the time (although one does not know exactly the period of time concerned or whether the figures as given represent total earnings or not):

50. See Gu Zhengjian, *Qianqu shangxin wenhuaren (Eternally Broken-hearted Writers and Artists)* (Taipei, Baiyun wenhua, 1978).

51. On this subject, see my study: "L'intellectuel et les masses," *France-Asie*, No. 3 (1974) pp. 123-55.

52. Hu Jieqing, "Dang de yangguang wenuan zhe wenyijie" ("The party sunshine is warming up the literary scene"), *WYB*, No. 1 (1978), p. 32.

53. "Kan, zui'ede xiu zhengzhuyi gaochou zhidu!" ("Look how criminal was the revisionist remuneration system!"), *Fenglei*, No. 9 (9 June 1967), p. 4.

54. G. Raymond Nunn (*Publishing in Mainland China*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1966, pp. 11-12) made a similar, but less precise, observation: "The established rates of payment to authors were later considered excessive. In 1958, the leading publishing houses in Shanghai reduced their payments for articles in periodicals and newspapers and for books, and the houses in Peking followed their lead. The general rate for payment was cut in half, both for original writing and translation."

		<i>yuan</i>
Ba Jin	<i>Works (Ba Jin wenji)</i> , etc.	229,624
Mao Dun	<i>Works (Mao Dun wenji)</i> , etc.	182,266
Du Pengcheng	<i>Defence of Yan'an (Baowei Yan'an)</i>	107,400
Ding Ling	<i>When the Sun Shines upon the Sungari (Taiyang zhao zai Sanganhe shang)</i> , etc.	70,248
Ai Qing	<i>Selected Poems (Ai Qing shi xuan)</i> , etc.	58,836
Qu Bo	<i>Tracks in the Snowy Forest (Lin hai xueyuan)</i>	54,349
Li Jieren	<i>The Swell (Da bo)</i> , etc.	50,940
Zhou Erfu	<i>Morning in Shanghai (Shanghai de zaochen)</i> , etc.	49,326
Lu Kanru	<i>The History of Chinese Poetry (Zhongguo shi shi)</i> , etc.	46,696
Feng Yuanjun		
Yang Mo	<i>The Song of Youth (Qingchun zhi ge)</i>	43,400
Sha Ting	<i>Back to My Native Place (Huanxiang ji)</i> etc.	41,634
Zhou Libo	<i>The Hurricane (Bao feng zhōu yu)</i> , etc.	40,086
Li Liuru	<i>Sixty Years of Changes (Liushi nian de bianqian)</i>	36,203
Qin Zhaoyang	<i>Into the Fields (Zai tianye shang qianjin)</i>	35,985
Fu Lei	<i>Jean-Christophe (Yuehan Kelisiduofu)</i> , etc.	33,880
Liang Bin	<i>The Spread of Fire (Bo huo ji)</i> , etc.	30,061

A similar list was published in another Red Guard newspaper, *Wenyi zhanbao* (No. 1, 13 May 1967), in which there appear a few discrepancies due either to the period of time concerned, or to the fact that the *Fenglei* list deals with authors, not only single titles:

		<i>yuan</i>
Du Pengcheng	<i>Defence of Yan'an</i>	107,000
Ba Jin	<i>Ba Jin wenji</i>	76,800
Qu Bo	<i>Tracks in the Snowy Forest</i>	58,000
Yang Mo	<i>The Song of Youth</i>	52,300
Zhou Erfu	<i>Morning in Shanghai</i>	35,000
Liang Bin	<i>The Spread of Fire</i>	25,800
Ouyang Shan	<i>Bitter Struggle (Ku dou)</i>	14,000

Apart from the importance of poetry, the absence of drama⁵⁵ and the continuous success of the Romain Rolland's masterpiece,⁵⁶ the first list underlines a remarkable stability in the appreciation of novelists. The top positions occupied by Ba Jin and Mao Dun were already recognized, in 1937, in a study quoted by Olga Lang.⁵⁷ Strangely enough, Lao She is missing from the list.⁵⁸ But for all the other names mentioned the placing accorded to each writer seems plausible.

From another source⁵⁹ we know, for instance, that Qu Bo's and Yang Mo's novels, published in 1957 and 1958 respectively, were both printed

55. Most of the new plays were published separately by the Zhongguo xiju chubanshe.

56. First published in 1937 by the Commercial Press, Fu Lei's translation was reprinted by the Renmin wenxue chubanshe in 1957.

57. *Chinese Family and Society*, London, 1946, p. 363.

58. Although his *Luotuo Xiangzi* was published by Renmin wenxue chubanshe in 1955, along with two collections of short stories in 1956 (*Lao She duanpian xiaoshuo xuan*) and 1959 (*Yueyan*).

59. Lin Manshu, *Zhongguo dangdai wenxue shi gao*, pp. 27–28.

13 times and had a circulation of 1,460,000 and 1,210,000. These two titles were also among the first to be re-published after the fall of the so-called "gang of four,"⁶⁰ followed by Zhou Libo's,⁶¹ Liang Bin's⁶² and Sha Ting's⁶³ books. Li Liuru's and Li Jieren's novels have only been reprinted in Hong Kong.⁶⁴ Qin Shaoyang is now writing again⁶⁵, Ai Qing was rehabilitated in 1978, Ding Ling went back to Beijing in 1980,⁶⁶ and Du Pengcheng, who had been criticized for "getting rich" (*fa le cai*) from the royalties of 970,000 copies of his *Defence of Yan'an*, had his book reprinted immediately after Peng Dehuai's rehabilitation.⁶⁷

The present situation is quite different from what it had been under the rule of the "gang of four". In 1973 Kai-yu Hsu pointed out that "royalties [had] become irrelevant,"⁶⁸ and Hao Ran was singled out as a model proletarian writer, who took no interest in personal gain or fame.⁶⁹ Now, the same unselfishness is no longer required, although Liu Qing, the famous author of *The Builders* (*Chuangye shi*), who died in 1978, is praised for having donated his royalties (16,000 *yuan*) to the construction of a hospital.⁷⁰

The double system (i.e. salary plus royalties) has been restored. For 1,000 characters royalties vary from four to eight, or even 12 *yuan*.⁷¹ The Writers Union has been re-established,⁷² and collective trips have been organized again.⁷³ Elder writers, like Yao Xueyin, who is completing his voluminous historical novel *Li Zicheng*,⁷⁴ are offered the help of assistants.⁷⁵ Literary prizes are not condemned or despised any more. In December 1978 the *People's Daily* published a detailed article on the Nobel Prizes, including the amount (725,000 Swedish crowns) of the Literature Prize.⁷⁶ A few days later, Zong Fuxian, the author of a new drama inspired by the Tian An Men spirit, *Where Silence Prevails* (*Yu*

60. In May 1977 by Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

61. In August 1977 by the same publishing house.

62. *Hongqi pu* (*Keep the Red Flag Flying*) was published in April 1978 by the Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe.

63. Sha Ting's *Selected Short Stories* (*Sha Ting duanpian xiaoshuo xuan*) were reprinted in November 1978 by Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

64. Respectively in December 1977 (2 vols.) and January-March 1978 by the Guangjiao jing chubanshe (Wide Angle Press).

65. See Qin's entry in the *Dictionary of Chinese Writers* (*Zhongguo wenxuejia cidian*, Vol. 1 (Modern), compiled by the Peking Languages Institute, unrevised edition, 1978, pp. 412-13).

66. See pictures published in *Zhengming*, 1 April 1979, p. 37.

67. See Du's recent Postscript, *Renmin ribao* (RMRB), 19 March 1979, p. 3.

68. *The Chinese Literary Scene*, p. 9.

69. See Joël Bel Lassen's Preface to Hao Ran, *Ma plume au service du prolétariat* (Paris: Alfred Eibel, 1976), p. 10.

70. BR, No. 38, 22 September 1978, p. 16.

71. *Le Monde des livres*, Paris, 23 December 1978, p. 18.

72. During the meeting of the Wenlian, which was held in Beijing at the end of May and beginning of June 1978, see the reports in WYB, No. 1 (1978), pp. 8-43.

73. WYB, No. 4 (1978), p. 22.

74. The two volumes of the First Part (already published in 1963) were reprinted in July 1977 by the Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe.

75. *Renmin huabao*, No. 7 (1978), p. 36.

76. RMRB, 12 December 1978, p. 6.

wu sheng chu), was awarded 1,000 *yuan* in the presence of the highest dignitaries.⁷⁷ More recently, the authors of 25 short stories, selected by the readers of *People's Literature* (*Renmin wenxue*), were also given substantial prizes: 300 *yuan* each for the first five, 200 for the others.⁷⁸

Here, it would be interesting to compare these figures with those concerning other intellectuals and scientists. Unfortunately, if it is possible to collect some information about a relatively small number of prominent scientists, it is still very difficult to have a precise idea of the earnings of artists, such as painters, sculptors or musicians. Nevertheless, in the literary scene as well as in the intellectual world as a whole, one can say that there is an important contradiction between the salaries some intellectuals are paid and the harsh way many were treated in the past. No kind of financial compensation, indeed, can compensate for all the sufferings endured during the black years of the Cultural Revolution. When 10 years or more of productive work were entirely lost, money is obviously to no avail. For many aged writers that still survive, although they continue to write or want to do so, time has passed by for ever and creative writing seems difficult, if not impossible.

From a literary point of view, any *figure de style* is far more important than the largest circulation figures. Zhou Enlai in his 1961 speech pointed out: "If literature and art are to serve the people well, they must be tested through practice. They must be tested by the masses. Whether the images you have created are successful or not and whether they are appreciated or not by the people, is not decided by the approval of the leadership. At present, however, there are more decisions by the leadership than by the masses. Whether a work of art is good or bad must be decided by the people and not by the leadership. . . . Art must be approved by the people."⁷⁹ Certainly, such a criterion seems rather loose, and must be supplemented with a true critical approach of the works presented to the masses – not only through political checks (*baguan*) and investigations (*shencha*).⁸⁰ But, as with any kind of democracy, cultural democracy (*wenyi minzhu*), which is said to be the main trend of the present movement,⁸¹ is based upon the people's choice and *la loi du nombre*.

The Marxist prophecy of a communist society, where "there will be no more painters [or writers]," but only men who will draw pictures [or write], deeply influenced Lu Xun, through Qu Qiubai,⁸² and some

77. GMRB, 19 December 1978, p. 1.

78. BR, No. 15, (13 April 1979), p. 29.

79. WYB, No. 2 (1979), p. 8, translated in BR, No. 13 (30 March 1979), p. 13.

80. On the subject, see an article by Zheng Wen, "Jiefang sixiang yu ' zuojia yao xiaqu ' " ("On the Liberation of thinking and the necessity for writers to go down), GMRB, 29 January 1979, p. 4.

81. See the report of the meeting, organized by the three main organs of the Writers Union (*Wenyi bao*, *Renmin wenxue*, and *Shikan*), GMRB, 24 November 1978, p. 1.

82. See Paul Pickowicz, "Lu Xun through the eyes of Qu Qiubai: new perspectives on Chinese Marxist literary polemics of the 1930s," *Modern China*, Vol. II, No. 3 (July 1976), pp. 327-68, and "Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai and the Chinese Marxist Conception of Revolutionary Popular Literature and Art," *The China Quarterly* (CQ), No. 70 (June 1977), pp. 296-314.

of those who followed him blindly during the Cultural Revolution. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine what the author of *Nahan* would have written 30 years after his death. However, one may say that, as in 1925 and 1927,⁸³ he would have strongly opposed the old doctrine, first formulated by Sima Qian,⁸⁴ and vigorously supported by Mao Zedong,⁸⁵ of the *poète maudit*. On 16 December 1971 Mao expressed his "hope that more and better works will be produced."⁸⁶ But this last call was to no avail. The Cultural Revolution, which was designed to suppress professional writers and to banish "the lure of personal gain and fame,"⁸⁷ has proved, at least, that the ancient saying (*qiong chou zhu shu*) is no longer true: one does not "write when poor and distressed." After all, Lao She was right when he said in the Preface of *Cremation (Huozeang)*: "If society still needs literature, one must consider every writer as an animal who cannot live without having food and tea."⁸⁸

Since the May Fourth era, a new phenomenon has appeared on the Chinese literary scene: under the direct influence of the west or through Japanese mediation, the writer has become, in the full sense of the word, an "author" (*zuojia*). First, he wanted to create something new in the different fields of fiction, poetry or drama. Conceived as "creative writing," the result was a "work" (*zuopin*). In this respect, the name of the Creation Society (*Chuangzao she*) is full of meaning, even though, for Guo Moruo, Yu Dafu and Cheng Fangwu, the main purpose of writing was self-expression.⁸⁹ Secondly, the writer aimed at becoming professional, although very few could make a living only by writing. During the war, Lao She denounced the old prejudice against writers who, allegedly, "have no occupation" (*wenren wu hang*).⁹⁰

After Liberation and until the present time the writer's status remained ambiguous. Before the meeting of the Fourth Congress of artistic workers held in Beijing in November 1979⁹¹ Xia Yan stressed the need for a legal regime: "We should draw up without delay a publishing legislation (*chubansha*) and a copyright law (*zhuzuoquan fa*)."⁹² But in his long report to the Congress, Zhou Yang only mentions the necessity to formulate again or to revise the remuneration system and the royalties, without saying how this should be done.⁹³ We are told that today the

83. *Lu Xun quanji*, Vol. III, pp. 52 and 315.

84. *Shi ji*, Chap. 76.

85. Among others, see the 30 January 1962 speech, lately published in RMRB, 1 July 1978, p. 1.

86. RMRB, 16 December 1971, p. 1.

87. David Pollard, "The short story in the Cultural Revolution," CQ, No. 73 (March 1978), p. 99.

88. *Lao niu pa che*, p. 6.

89. See the chapters devoted to these authors by Marian Galik in *The Genesis of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism*, London & Bratislava, 1980.

90. "Women and literature" (*Funü yu wenyi*), *Xiandai funü*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1 January 1943), p. 19.

91. Opened on 4 November, the Congress was closed the 16th of the same month; RMRB, 17 November 1979, p. 1.

92. WYB, No. 8 (1979), p. 2.

93. *Ibid.*, Nos. 11-12 (1979), p. 25.

membership of the Writers' Union amounts to 1,347: before the Cultural Revolution, there were only 1,059 members; since then, 194 died and 482 new members were admitted.⁹⁴

Yet, we do not know whether all of the present members are professional or not. In 1956 Liu Baiyu already complained that full-time writers represented only one fifth of the total amount of members.⁹⁵ The proportion of young people (under 40) looks very small: 14 per cent of the whole Congress audience.⁹⁶ But it is noticeable that many members are also Party or state officials. Deng Xiaoping himself, in his opening speech, condemns the "yamen" or "bureaucratic style of work" (*yamen zuofeng*) still prevailing in cultural spheres as well as in other parts of the administration.⁹⁷ Such a situation indicates that the modern Chinese writer, under the present regime, has not obtained total independence, either financial or political. However, writing is no longer considered only as a subsidiary activity, or as a substitute for unfortunate candidates of the old examination system.

94. *Cahiers de la Chine Nouvelle* (CCN), 5 November 1979, p. 20.

95. Lars Ragvald, "Professionalism and amateur tendencies," p. 159.

96. CCN, 19 November 1979, p. 14.

97. WYB, Nos. 11-12 (1979), p. 5.