

PREFACE

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WHIRLWIND

(ORIGINALLY  
TITLED A TALE  
OF MODERN  
MONSTERS)

Modern Monsters / Death and Life of Fiction

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Over the past 30 years, I have written five novels. I wrote the first when I was 20. That was a twisted romantic tragedy. At the time Hong Xuefan was running a publishing house on Sima Road in Shanghai. I submitted it to him, and he printed it for me. The work was really childish, and afterward I often felt embarrassed about it. After the first printing of 2000 copies sold out, I was hoping to revise it for a second run, but just at this time Hong Xuefan passed away. Modern Publishing House closed its doors, and stopped printing. The second book I wrote was also a love story. Mr. Wang Tongzhao took it and printed it in the Qingdao News. The Nanjing Book Company was looking into buying the publishing rights, but price negotiations failed, and it was cancelled. That book was called *White Coffin*.

In 1926 I witnessed firsthand the behavior of the Communist Party in Hankou, and after I returned to Nanjing the next year, that memory remained fresh in my mind for many years. Two decades later I wrote my third novel *Black Face*. I considered the Communist Party to be the “opposite face of light,” something that inevitably had no future to speak of. But in terms of technique, I was not very satisfied with this work. After a certain amount of time, I consigned it to the flames.

In the spring of 1937 when I was in Xuzhou, I wrote my third novel, *Breaking the Siege*. It described a group of minor civil servants fleeing from Nanjing to Luoyang during the January 28 Incident. My motive was to champion resistance to the Japanese. After I finished the manuscript, I sent it to a literati friend of mine living in Shanghai. (This person is already a ministerial-level official in the Red regime, and I am unwilling to mention his name.) When full-scale war broke out after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, I went to serve in battle. Eventually, I ended up behind the lines and without the means to look after the fate of the book.

In the summer of 1941, I saw this book in the shop window of World Books on Wuku Street in Chongqing, and discovered that it had already been published by World Publishing Company. I immediately purchased twenty copies to give away to friends and relatives. I personally liked this novel quite a lot, but for many years I haven't had a copy in my possession.

In the winter of 1948, I moved to Taiwan to escape the Red army. I could find no gainful employment, and my wife was invalidated with illness. My life had sunk to its most senseless state since the day I was born. When I looked back at all that had transpired, it felt like a dream. And the greatest wound of all was that many other people had also tasted the “death of a nation.” Because of the numerous things I had personally seen and heard over the previous thirty years, I thought I ought to know what the Communist Party was. I recorded a whole series of recollections, trimming them down and adding subplots, until I had composed a complete story. Every day I would arise at four in the morning and write for three hours. Working without a day of interruption for four months, I completed my fifth novel in a flash at the age of 41.

Publishing industry statistics reveal that New Literature novels still do not achieve sales comparable to traditional Chinese episodic novels. According to my own analysis, the reasons are twofold: (1) Traditional episodic novels employ purely Chinese syntax and chapter structures, and can be appreciated by both the elite and ordinary people. Thus, they have found acceptance among the vast majority of readers. (2) The stories are completely engrossing in their plot development, and truly achieve the goal of entertainment. Indeed, the old term for the novel was *xianshu* (“leisure book”).

I think that if we disconnect literature from the purpose of propaganda and consider publishing as fundamentally a form of business, the problem of sales is something the writer cannot ignore. We must use the goal of entertainment to achieve the goal of propaganda. Particularly today, in the modern age of fierce struggle between freedom and enslavement, the writer guided by political objectives can no longer ignore general readers. You have to give them the things they need to read, those salacious, dark, tainted colorations, in order to create an opening, and achieve the maximum advantage.

That is why I adopted the strong form of the episodic novel, and in the end added battle scenes, in the hope of conforming to the interests of most readers. Even though what I wrote wasn't a purely traditional episodic novel, I deliberately moved in that direction. How effective this will be, I do not know.

This book describes the diseased state of the preceding years through the decline and fall of a prominent family. And this state of disease is the breeding ground of the Communists. It has wormed its way in through this crack. In this way, you can always imagine what role is played here: warlord, bureaucrat, local tyrant, venal gentry, prostitute, bandit, decadent literati, Japanese soldier and vagabond, and many other minor characters playing petty roles. Their entanglements with the communists, direct or indirect, their cooperation, intentional or unintentional, their incursions, tangible or intangible – this is what has jeopardized the Republic of China. Naturally, in its current form the Communist Party has a multitude of faces. And the little corner that I depicted is a mere gathering of brigands. But with a single spot one glimpses the whole leopard. I think this will suffice.

Here, there is nearly no upright individual. With some effort, I inserted the die-hard KMT loyalist Fang Bagu to represent the decency of our people, to leave the reader a thread of hope. Sadly, she wages her battle in isolation. Her powers are too weak, and she is swallowed by the undertow. But in the current state of affairs, this view is quite accurate. Right now to talk about resisting the communists, one must concede the leadership of the KMT. This is a real problem, not a theoretical one. And in *Old Auntie Ximen* and *Old Man Cao of Wu Village*, the pen of the author inadvertently discovered two truly benevolent souls. But the reader will be able to comprehend on his own that they are even more isolated than Fang Bagu, even weaker. Because the Old Auntie has her own bodhisattva, a final strand of rope on which to rely, and gains release in the end. As for the end of Old Man Cao, it is really unnecessary to retell.

When I finished writing this book, I thought that, as in times past, I could immediately find a place that would publish it. I searched for a while but began to understand that this would not be the case at all. In this place, most works of literature are paid for by the authors themselves, and I happened to be without the means for this. Consequently, I shelved my book for several years. Now, world opposition to communism is stronger than a few years ago, and Free China is already on the eve of its counteroffensive. The unveiling of this

book to the world can no longer be delayed. Thanks to the assistance of a good friend, I have first printed 500 copies to give away to various parties as a commemorative edition. I leave it in paper form, awaiting formal publication at some later date.

The book was originally titled *Whirlwind*, but as I learned that another book had already been so named, I adopted its current title. According to legend, the emperor Zhuangxiu had a wayward son named Taowu. *Taowu* can also mean “broken wood.” In my judgment, this is largely the same as the “Useless Tree” of Zhuangzi. Both were originally meant to be metaphorical. By association, *taowu* is also thought of as a monster. The historical account of the ancient Kingdom of Chu (circa 1030–223 BC) during the Zhou Dynasty is also called *Taowu*, meaning to “recount evils so as to admonish.” In popular fiction, there is a work entitled *Taowu Saga*, which tells of the evil deeds of Wei Zhongxian and Madame Ke, with the goal of moral improvement. As I approach 50, the year when one realizes one’s fate, I look back on half a life of impecuniness, but have no time for regret. While I stand in awe of virtuous behavior, I have no intention of glorifying any virtue of my own. The purpose of this work is also to “recount evils so as to admonish.”

October 1, 1957

Dongmen District, Tainan

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