

# The Enigma of Su Xuelin and Lu Xun

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[ Abstract ]

Xuelin “the greatest writer of literary prose among all women authors.” A returned student from France, Su had also achieved academic rank and position. But her sudden and vitriolic attack on Lu Xun shortly after his death turned into what she herself came to describe as “an enterprise which has taken up nearly half my life,” and which in turn may well have had negative repercussions on her own reputation and career. For this reason, the question of what motivated these attacks has become a puzzle both to scholars of Lu Xun studies and within the field of modern Chinese literary history in general. Various scholars on mainland China have offered theories, but none have brought forth decisive evidence. The American-Australian author of this paper, who studied Chinese literature and philosophy in Taiwan during the martial law era, attempts to offer a way forward by re-situating the “puzzle” within its original historical contexts, both on the mainland and in Taiwan.

**Keywords:** modern Chinese literature, Chinese intellectual history, Kuomintang, Taiwan history ( martial law ) , Su Xuelin, Lu Xun, Hu Shi, Cai Yuanpei

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## I. "I use his own tactics on him."

At the outset of her book of collected essays and papers titled *Wo Lun Lu Xun* 我論魯迅 [I Have My Say on Lu Xun] in a preface written in Tainan 台南 Taiwan and dated November 1966, Professor Su Xuelin 蘇雪林 (1897-1999), then approaching seventy, whom Ah Ying 阿英 (Qian Xingcun 錢杏村 1900-1977) had once hailed in the early 1930s as "the greatest writer of *sanwen* 散文 (literary prose) among all women authors [in China]" (女性作家中最優秀的散文作者)<sup>1</sup> stated unequivocally that "opposition to Lu Xun has become an undertaking that has taken up nearly half of my life" (反魯, 幾乎成了我半生事業).<sup>2</sup> Even more intriguingly, she herself posed the question: "但為什麼要反? 究竟是怎樣反? 則好像沒有人能知道清楚。" (But why would I oppose him? In what ways did I oppose him? It appears that this is something no one has been able to get clear on.)<sup>3</sup>

Needless to say, this has become a question that continued to baffle scholars of modern Chinese literature and Lu Xun studies well after the appearance of her book. Why would someone with so promising a career as a writer and scholar, who had already achieved considerable standing in the Chinese world of letters, get involved in a Lu Xun-bashing campaign, not as part of a *bizhan* 筆戰 or "pen-war" with the famous man himself, which arguably could have had career-enhancing advantages for a younger writer, but rather as an ostensibly one-woman posthumous "corpse-whipping" (*bianshi* 鞭屍) campaign, from which she was strongly advised to desist by none other than her professed hero Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) himself as early as 1937 – heartfelt advice which she blatantly ignored. As she put it in the November 1966 preface to her book:

<sup>1</sup> Ah Huang 阿黃 (i.e. A Ying), *Xiandai Zhongguo Nu Zuoia* 現代中國女作家 [Women Writers of Modern China] (Shanghai: Beixin Shuju, 1931), Luyi Lun 綠漪論 (section "On Lüyi," i.e. Su Xuelin).

<sup>2</sup> From the author's preface to Su Xuelin, *Wo Lun Lu Xun* 我論魯迅 [I Have My Say On Lu Xun] (Taipei: Xiandai Wenhua Tuo-zhan She 文化拓展社, 1967?), p. 1. Hereafter cited: Su, *Wo Lun Lu Xun*.

<sup>3</sup> Su, *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, author's preface, p. 1.

If you ask me to evaluate Lu Xun, three sentences can sum him up: his character was small, really small, the smallest of the small. Lu Xun's disposition was vicious, really vicious, the most vicious of the vicious. Lu Xun's behaviour was low, really low, the lowest of the low. To put it in a word, he was a character who couldn't even qualify as "human".....Perhaps some might say "Why don't you criticize Lu Xun in a proper manner, starting with the most important things, discussing his creative pieces, his scholarly work and his ideas, just as Hu Shi suggested you do. Sneering derisively and cursing angrily at him are vain exercises hardly worth your time and effort." -- As regards Lu Xun's thought, over thirty years ago I said he was a nihilist and a philosopher of hate, so what kind of a 'thinker' could he possibly be? I have already published my views on his short-story collection *Call to Arms*, and given it an appropriate appraisal..... Aside from that, among his dozen or more essay collections, are there any that are not devoted to reviling other people, that do not reveal his base nature or his ugly countenance? In the several essays I wrote contra Lu Xun, I used methods I had learned from him, employing his own tactics against him. All his life Lu Xun wielded that nasty, acerbic pen of his to torment other people, so is it not justice to make this pettifogger from Shaoxing taste the bitterness of mine?

叫我來評判魯迅，很簡單，三段話便可概括：魯迅的人格，是渺小，渺小，第三個渺小；魯迅的性情是兇惡，兇惡，第三個兇惡；魯迅的行為是卑劣，卑劣，第三個卑劣。便以一言括之，是個連起碼的「人」的資格都構不著的角色.....也許有人說你批評魯迅何不用正面文字，從大處落墨，將魯迅的文藝創作，學術著述，及他的思想提出來討論討論，像胡適之先生對你所建議者，喜笑怒罵，只是徒逞論鋒，實不足取。關於魯迅的思想我在卅餘年前便曾說它是個虛無主義，憎恨哲學者，請問這算什麼思想？關於魯迅的吶喊小說集，我已另有議論，也已給了他應得的評價.....又此之外，則為十幾個雜感集，沒有一篇不罵人，沒有一片不暴露他自己的劣根性，醜嘴臉，我的那幾篇反魯文字，原從魯迅學來，正所謂「以其人之道，還治其人之身。魯迅一輩子運用它那支尖酸刻薄的刀筆，叫別人吃他苦頭，我現在也叫這位紹興

師爺吃吃我的苦頭，不算不公道吧！<sup>4</sup>

Su says she “uses his own tactics” to criticize him, but she did not in fact adopt many of the key elements of the rhetorical style of his *zawen* 雜文 (miscellaneous essays), which make recourse to humour, tongue-in-cheek irony, satire, quotations from his opponents own work, *reductio ad absurdum*, and a strong dash of scepticism. Su Xuelin relies instead principally on rehashed and unexamined biography,<sup>5</sup> pop psychology,<sup>6</sup> personal smears, name-calling, belittling and the repetition of unfounded, unsourced rumours.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Su, *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, pp. 7, 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> For example to say that Lu Xun left Beijing because Zhang Zuolin put him on a wanted list is an over-simplification (actually in Lu Xun’s favor because he left months after the supposed “wanted list” came out, mainly due to the failure of his marriage and his desire to make a new life with his student Xu Guangping). Su tells us nevertheless: “After Zhang Zuolin entered the Pass (i.e. came into China proper from Manchuria), he gave an order for the arrest of fifty radical professors and Lu Xun’s name was among them. Lu Xun had no choice but to go south and went to Xiamen University.” (張作霖入關，下令通緝五十名過激教授，魯迅列名其內。魯迅只好南下，先到廈門大學……)。See her 1966 publication *Lu Xun Zhuan Lun* 魯迅傳論 (On the Biography of Lu Xun) reprinted in *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 7. This biographical treatise in fact displays little critical insight.

<sup>6</sup> Su tells us Lu Xun was bitter about his childhood deprivations, yet both Chiang Kai-shek and Hu Shi grew up in less-than-ideal domestic circumstances and managed to rise above them. This proves that a vile temper was part of his basic nature and not environment-induced. See *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>7</sup> Examples of how she makes heavy recourse to rumor are: “Someone said he plagiarized part of the material used in his *Brief History of Chinese Fiction* from a Japanese work [by Shionoya On 鹽谷溫] (「許多人說他此書一部分材料也是抄襲日本人的」) -- from her November 1956 article “Yu Gongfei Huxiang Liyong de Lu Xun” 與共匪互相利用的魯迅 (Lu Xun, Whom the Communist Bandits Use and Who Used Them) reprinted in *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 145. She later revised her verdict, stating in 1966 that his “*Brief History of Chinese Fiction* is, of course, not bad. But it is only a pioneering work and there are many places it needs to be expanded. But can such a giant of the literary world get by with so scanty a contribution to scholarship?” 中國小說史略當然是一部不壞的書，也不過是開山之作，有待於補苴擴充之處甚多，一位文壇巨匠，僅憑這點子學術著作是可以的嗎？ (*Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 8).

It is not my purpose in this article to defend Lu Xun or to address all the charges levelled against him by Su Xuelin and other critics, such as Chen Yuan and Zheng Xuejia,<sup>8</sup> to whose writings she makes frequent recourse. Suffice it to say that the plagiarism rumours about his *Brief History of Chinese Fiction* started by Chen Yuan have long ago been discounted, as explained in no uncertain terms by Hu Shi in his 1937 letter to Su Xuelin (see below), and many of the attacks on Lu Xun's character are simply matters of personal opinion that have been challenged by the accounts of various persons who interacted with him -- some of whom, such as Xu Yu, were not highly partisan or affected by Cold War positioning and rhetoric, either of the Communist side, or the Nationalist side.<sup>9</sup>

My purpose with this enquiry, rather, is to probe for reasons behind Su Xuelin's

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Another instance: "The only thing he wrote that wasn't bad was Ah Q but someone has already pointed out that it may have been derived from a piece written by a Japanese author....." 只有阿Q正傳寫得還不錯，但已有人指出有套襲日本作家某篇作品的嫌疑) -- from her 1958 article "Pipa Baoyu zhi Cheng Shen Zhe: Lu Xun" 琵琶鮑魚之成神者——魯迅 (The Deification of a Lute and an Abalone -- Lu Xun: an Accidental Idol) reprinted in *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 134.

<sup>8</sup> Zheng Xuejia 鄭學稼, *Lu Xun Zhengzhuan* 魯迅正傳 (The True Story of Lu Xun) (Jiangxi: Shengli Chubanshe, 1943) 112 pps. The author was a political economist, historian and scholar of comparative communism. An expanded edition (616 pps.) was published in Taipei (1978, rept. 1987) by Shibao Wenhua Chuban Qiye 時報文化出版企業. The tone is hostile throughout. In one example, often later recirculated by other critics, Zheng argues that Lu Xun was a hypocrite for serving in the Ministry of Education under the warlord government. This argument was later expanded to include his accepting a stipend from the Academia Sinica, "although he reviled the Nanjing government." Su repeats Zheng's complaint in her 1958 article ("Pipa Baoyu"), op. cit., in *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 134; and revisits the issue many years later in her interview with mainland Lu Xun scholar Chen Shuyu 陳漱渝 (see my note 25).

<sup>9</sup> The most recent of these to come to light, by the politically neutral writer Xu Yu 徐訐 was published in the Hong Kong journal *Mingbao Yuekan*. In it Xu engages directly with Su Xuelin's charges, commenting that in terms of supporting destitute younger writers, Lu Xun was the only prominent writer who was generous with his own money and time in the 1930s. See "*Mingbao Yuekan*" 明報月刊 (Ming Pao Monthly) (no. 519) 44:3, March 2009, pp. 61-2.

series of barrages. This is a question of interest not only to Lu Xun researchers but also to the study of the role and response of Chinese intellectuals during the civil war and its aftermath, in which the White Terror, which Lu Xun knew so well, was transferred to Taiwan and another authoritarian regime consolidated its hold on the mainland. Various commentators in mainland China, who have taken Su Xuelin's behaviour to be aberrant, have attempted to offer psychological explanations, starting from Yuan Liangjun's 袁良俊 published statement in the early 1980s: 「這個老太太瘋了。」(“This old lady must have been insane.”) Li Mei 厲梅 speculates that she suffered from a form of emotional narcissism: that there is a certain childish naiveté<sup>10</sup> in her autobiographical fiction (eg. *Jixin* 棘心 [Thorny Heart]), where she constructs an idealized relationship with her husband which was at drastic odds with reality. When their marriage turned sour, she sought divorce, but then stayed in it due to family pressures. This engendered a bitterness in her and so she became harsh in her evaluation of many of her contemporaries, such as Yu Dafu 郁達夫, Zhang Ziping 張資平 (1893-1959), Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902-1988), and especially Lu Xun, whom she initially viewed as a father figure, who rejected her. For this reason and because of her bad relationship with her own father, whom she feared as a child, she increasingly resented Lu Xun. This resulted in a series of emotional outbursts which contain little academic analysis and much rhetorical violence (i.e. name-calling).<sup>11</sup>

After fleeing the mainland in 1949 Su spent a year in Hong Kong editing tracts for the Catholic Truth Society (真理學會) and then two years in Paris, where she researched comparative mythology, developing theories that ascribed Near Eastern and European origins to the myths of pre-Han China alluded to in the *Jiuge* 九歌 (Nine Songs), *Tianwen* 天問 (Heavenly Questions) and *Lisao* 離騷 (Encountering Sorrow). For instance, she held that the legendary Mt. Kunlun was actually Mt. Ararat

<sup>10</sup> She herself, or rather the text, addresses this question in the so-called *Su Xuelin Zizhuan* 蘇雪林自傳 [“Autobiography” of Su Xuelin], a book compiled by mainland scholar Zhang Changhua 張昌華 (Jiangsu Wenyi Chubanshe, 1996), pp. 66-8.

<sup>11</sup> Li Mei, “Su Xuelin de Liangzhong Zitai” 蘇雪林的兩種姿態 (Two Postures Assumed by Su Xuelin) in *Shuwu* 書屋 (Bookroom), issue 6, 2005. Accessed on-line at [www.housebook.com.cn/200506/15.htm](http://www.housebook.com.cn/200506/15.htm).

in Armenia and that the origins of the rituals connected with Duanwu Jie (the Dragon Boat Festival) could be traced back to paying tribute to Ea, the Sumerian god of water, also the god of death.<sup>12</sup> Her theories never won wide acceptance in scholarly circles, but in July 1952, Su was invited to Taiwan, initially as professor of Chinese literature at Taiwan Provincial Normal College, then at the newly-reorganized Ch'eng-kung University 成功大學, both in the picturesque old capital Tainan.

She began to attack Lu Xun again in 1956, blaming the entire Kuomintang debacle on the mainland on him for having discredited the Nationalist government with his *zawen* 雜文 (miscellaneous essays).<sup>13</sup> By 1959 she wrote that even her friends had begun to laugh at her for tacking this type of virulent “anti-Communist” rhetoric onto everything she wrote.<sup>14</sup> In fact, as I intend to show through a chronological examination, Su Xuelin’s anti-Lu Xun agenda was a mere device. It had little to do with the man and his writing. Lu Xun was, for her, a straw man in a broader agenda calling for the tightening of governmental control over intellectual dissent, both in Kuomintang-ruled mainland China and later in Kuomintang-occupied Taiwan.<sup>15</sup> As she put it, ascribing near-diabolical powers to his writing:

As soon as the Lu Xun cult enters Taiwan, I can guarantee that within a half a year, the tenor of [all] writing will change for the worse and within a year or two, the entire intelligentsia of Taiwan will capitulate in spirit to Communism and before the Communists bandits arrive in Taiwan militarily, on the cultural

<sup>12</sup> See the “Study of Professor Su Xue-lin” posted on-line by National Cheng Kung University Museum at <http://museum-en.ncku.edu.tw/files/13-1047-17332.php>, p. 2 (subsection: “The Realm of Mythology”). Also the biography of Su Hsueh-lin in Howard L. Boorman, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, 5 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967-70), 3:156. Hereafter cited as Boorman.

<sup>13</sup> Su, “Dui Zhandou Wenyi de Wo Jian” 對戰鬥文藝的我見 (My Views of the Literary Front), reprinted in *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, pp. 140-142.

<sup>14</sup> Su, “Xin Wentan Sishinian” 新文壇四十年 (40 Years of the New Literary World), reprinted in *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 152.

<sup>15</sup> Su, “Dui Zhandou Wenyi de Wo Jian” 對戰鬥文藝的我見 (My Views of the Literary Front), reprinted in *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, pp. 140.

front they will have already achieved a stupendous victory. 魯迅偶像一入臺灣，我敢保證：半年內文風丕變，一二年內，全台的知識階級的心靈，均將屈服於共產主義之下，共匪武力尚未到達臺灣，文化戰先就奏了極大勝利……。<sup>16</sup>

This began again in 1966-7 with the publication of her two lengthy articles titled “On the Biography of Lu Xun” (*Lu Xun Zhuan Lun* 魯迅傳論) in two issues of the Taipei journal *Zhuanji Wenxue* 傳記文學 (December 1966; January 1967)<sup>17</sup>, where she begins to repeat herself, her anthology of essays on Lu Xun *Wo Lun Lu Xun* 我論魯迅 [I Have My Say On Lu Xun] in 1967, and her piece in *Xianggang Yuekan* 香港月刊 [Hong Kong Monthly] (Nov. 1988) titled “Dalu Guaqi Fan Lu Feng” 大陸刮起反魯風 (An Anti-Lu Xun Wind Stirs on the Chinese Mainland), which repeats an accusation first run in the Hong Kong tabloid *Taiyang Bao* 太陽報 (The Sun) that Lu Xun’s diary states that he “zhao ji faxie” 召妓發洩 “called in a prostitute to relieve himself” the actual quote has to do with being in a wine-shop with a group of people and says: “yao yi ji lue lai zuo, yu yi yi yuan” 邀一妓略來坐，予以一元 (“[we] invited a sing-song girl to sit briefly with [us], giving her one yuan”).<sup>18</sup>

## II. “I know the reason Lu Xun hated me…….”

Su Xuelin (aka Su Mei 蘇梅, Lüyi 綠漪) was born Rui’an 里安 in Zhejiang

<sup>16</sup> Su, author’s preface (zi xu 自序) to *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 5. The preface is dated November 1966.

<sup>17</sup> *Zhuanji Wenxue* (Biographical Literature), vol. 9, no. 6 (Dec. 1966), pp. 22-28; vol. 10, no. 1 (Jan. 1967), pp. 103-110.

<sup>18</sup> This is part of the entry for February 16, 1932. “……That night the entire household, ten of us, all went to Tongbaotai to drink and got quite inebriated. We then went on to Qingliange to drink aperitifs, inviting a sing-song girl to sit briefly with us, giving her one yuan.” (夜全寓十人皆至同寶泰飲酒，頗醉。復往青蓮閣飲茗，邀一妓略來坐，予以一元)。Obviously it was an innocent outing. See *Lu Xun Quanjì* (1981) 15:5.



浙江 province, most probably in 1897.<sup>19</sup> That makes her a fellow-provincial of Lu Xun, although Rui'an is about 330 kilometres south of Shaoxing, and her family actually hailed originally from the town of Taiping 太平 in Anhui 安徽 province. Su studied at Normal Schools in Anhui 安徽省立第一女子師範學校 (graduating in 1917) and Beijing (1917-1919) 北京女高師 before going to France on scholarship (1921-5) as a student at the Université d'Outre-Mer de Lyon, where she studied literature and fine arts.<sup>20</sup> When she studied at Beijing Higher Women's Normal it was actually before Lu Xun had begun lecturing there. But she had taken an overview of Western literature taught by his brother Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967) and also said she was influenced by Zuoren's interpretation of *A Q Zhengzhuan* 阿Q正傳 [The True Story of Ah Q] as a critique of negative aspects of the Chinese national character.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The back cover of the 1971 edition of *Wo Lun Lu Xun* (Taipei: Aimei Chubanshe) gives 1899 as her date of birth. Other sources such as the *Su Xue Lin Zuopin Ji: Duan Pian Wenzhang Juan* 蘇雪林作品集：短篇文集卷 (Collection of Su Xuelin's Works: Short Prose Essays) 3 vols. (Tainan: Guoli Chenggong Daxue Zhongguo Wenxue Xi, 2007) 1:3 give 1896. Cheng-kung University Museum's website (op. cit.) gives her DOB as 1897, but claims the birth occurred in Anhui.

<sup>20</sup> See Boorman, 3:155.

<sup>21</sup> This is according to the *Su Xuelin Zizhuan* 蘇雪林自傳 [“Autobiography” of Su Xuelin], op. cit., pp. 38-9. In her 1934 article “A Q Zhengzhuan ji Lu Xun Chuangzuo de Yishu” 阿Q正傳及魯迅創作的藝術 (The True Story of Ah Q and Lu Xun's Creative Art) she uses this analysis, but does not ascribe it to Zhou Zuoren, stating: “*The True Story of Ah Q* does not just excel at depicting rustic louts, it actually alludes to many of the negative aspects of the Chinese national character.” She then goes on to delineate them under specific headings; see *Su Xuelin Daibiao Zuo* 蘇雪林代表作 [Representative Works of Su Xuelin], Liu Na 劉納, ed. (Beijing: Hua Xia Chubanshe, 1999) p. 312 passim. In the *Su Xuelin Zizhuan* (p. 39), however, she later recants this analysis, saying that every nation, every people has its *junzi* 君子 (persons of virtue) and *xiaoren* 小人 (lowly characters), so Zhou Zuoren was biased in saying the Chinese had inherited a dastardly nature from their slavish ancestors. When teaching a course on the new literature at Wuhan University in 1934, she published an article criticizing Zuoren's theories likening the Chinese to zombies (*jiangshi lilun* 僵屍理論), which, she claims, infuriated him (see also *Su Xuelin Zizhuan* (p. 39)).

According to Su Xuelin, her first encounter with Lu Xun would have been in 1925 when she “personally witnessed the lowly ways of Lu Xun and others” (目睹魯迅等人的小人行徑) during the student strike at Women’s Normal,<sup>22</sup> although the dates don’t seem to coincide<sup>23</sup> (she was not in Beijing then) and she never wrote anything about her objections to the way he acted at the time.<sup>24</sup> According to her “Autobiography,” she returned to Shanghai by ocean liner “in the spring of 1925” (p. 58). From there she went immediately to Lingxia 嶺下 to see her beloved mother, whose illness, we are told, pressured Su into an arranged marriage with Zhang Baoling 張寶齡, an MIT-graduated ship-building engineer and later professor, a man she described as “cold and unfeeling……a male chauvinist……who didn’t care whether he had a wife or not, whether she was beautiful or ugly meant nothing to him, he only cared about his own

<sup>22</sup> As quoted in Wang Xirong 王錫榮, *Lu Xun Shengping Yi’an* 魯迅生平疑案 [Unresolved ‘Cases’ in Lu Xun’s Life] (Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 上海: 上海辭書出版社, 2002), p. 366. Hereafter cited as Wang Xirong. Also see Fang Weibao 方維保, *Su Xuelin: Jingji Huaguan* 蘇雪林: 荊棘花冠 [Su Xuelin: A Crown of Thorns] (Guilin: Guangxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 2006), pp. 166-167. Fang says Su’s campaign against Lu Xun began with her attempt to *fan’an* 翻案 or “reverse the verdict” on Yang Yinyu 楊蔭榆 in her (Su’s) essay “Jige nu jiaoyujia de suxiexiang” 幾個女教育家的速寫像 (Sketches of several women educationalists).

<sup>23</sup> I have yet to see a detailed chronology of her life, but the sections in the *Su Xuelin Zizhuan* which treat this portion of her life (“Fan Guo” 返國 [Return to China] pp. 58-63 and “Suzhou Jiaoshu ji Fan Hu” 蘇州教書及返滬 [Teaching in Suzhou and Returning to Shanghai] pp. 64-79) do not mention this. The entry under her name in Boorman (3:155-6) tells us: “In 1925 Su returned to China and submitted to an arranged marriage……On her return [to China from France] she went to Soochow, where she taught Chinese at the Laurel Haygood Normal School and the Chen Hua Girls Middle School. She then taught Chinese literature at Shanghai University, Soochow University, and Anhwei University. In 1931 she became professor of Chinese literature at Wuhan University. Except for the war years, which she spent at Loshan, Szechwan, she held the Wuhan post until 1949.” No mention is made of her having returned to Beijing Women’s Normal in 1925-6 when Lu Xun’s support of the student activism took place. Ditto for the short chronology appended to *Su Xuelin Daibiao Zuo*, p. 345.

<sup>24</sup> Wang Xirong 王錫榮, p. 366.

comfort and was just looking for someone who would dedicate her life to serving him as if he were a crown prince or something.” (p.62) . Her mother died three months after the wedding and Su then repaired to her in-laws in Shanghai in 1926 (pp. 62-4) , thence to Suzhou, where she served as head of the Chinese Department at Jinghai Nuzi Shifan 景海女子師範 (The Laurel Haygood Normal School) until the end of 1926, after which she returned to Shanghai and taught at Hujiang Daxue 滬江大學 (Shanghai University) (pp. 68-9) .

According to Lu Xun’s diary, his first meeting with Su Xuelin (that he recalled at least) did not take place until July 7, 1928 when they had both moved to Shanghai and had been invited to a luncheon by their shared publisher, Li Xiaofeng 李小峰, the owner of Beixin Shuju 北新書局 (The “New North” Book Co.) . Su Xuelin had recently published her *sanwen* 散文 (prose) collection *Lü tian* 綠天 (Green Skies) with Beixin. At the time she was teaching at Dong Wu 東吳 (Soochow) University in Shanghai. Other guests at the luncheon included [ Xu ] Qinwen 許欽文, Yu Dafu 郁達夫 (1896-1945), Wang Yingxia 王映霞, Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895-1976), Mrs. Lin and Mrs. Li. It may be worth noting that both Lu Xun and Su Xuelin appeared unescorted. In an alleged reaction, recorded much later, Su Xuelin wrote that Lu Xun “appeared arrogant” (神情傲慢) . She herself only nodded at him.<sup>25</sup> They did not converse. This, in and of itself, is not entirely out of character. Lu Xun rarely struck up a conversation with people he did not already know at such social occasions and Su’s

<sup>25</sup> Writing many years later, Su Xuelin described the circumstances thus: “I met Lu Xun in Shanghai. At the time Li Xiaofeng, the owner of Beixin Books, put on a banquet and invited everyone who had published through his book company. Beixin was the only book company that continued to publish works of the new literature after the May Fourth [wave of enthusiasm] was over. Because I had published three books through them, I was on the invitation list. Lin Yutang, Yu Dafu, and Zhang Yiping were all there. Lu Xun came off as arrogant to me, so I just nodded at him slightly and didn’t say a word.” 我在上海……曾晤及魯迅。那時北新書局老闆李小峰在一家酒樓辦了一席，請凡在他書店出過書的人。北新是當時印行五四後新文藝唯一的書局。因我曾在書店出了三本書，故亦在被邀之列。林語堂，郁達夫，章依萍都在座。魯迅對我神情傲慢，我也僅對他點了一下頭，並未說一句話。See the *Su Xuelin Zizhuan* 蘇雪林自傳 [“Autobiography” of Su Xuelin] , op. cit., p. 74.

merely nodding in his direction may be an indication of her feeling ill-at-ease at the gathering or else a painful shyness, to which she herself has referred elsewhere in her autobiographical writings. On another instance, when she was first invited for tea by Hu Shi, whom she greatly admired, instead of going with the group he had invited, she simply snuck away.<sup>26</sup> That much being said, it is possible that Su was hoping for a greater degree of recognition or affirmation as a writer from Lu Xun and felt disappointed by the banquet. Nevertheless, I do not think that too much can be deduced from such an interaction. It would in all probability have been considered inappropriate if Lu Xun had made a fuss over her at such a gathering. Unfortunately, we do not have access to Su Xuelin's diaries from this period, which would have been left either in Wuhan or Shanghai when she fled the mainland in 1949 and may now be destroyed.

As mentioned above, a number of researchers on mainland China have suggested contradictory theories on the reasons for her later obsession with Lu Xun. Chen Shuyu 陳漱渝, a senior Lu Xun scholar who had the opportunity to interview Su Xuelin in the last years before her death noted that when asked why she attacked Lu Xun so virulently, Su replied: "Some people say the reason I attacked Lu Xun was because I had a crush on him and that that love, which was never reciprocated [ by him ], turned into hatred. This is groundless." 有人說，我之所以攻擊魯迅，是因為我單相思，愛而不得轉為恨。這是沒有根據的。<sup>27</sup> Wang Xirong 王錫榮 in his book *Lu Xun Shengping Yi'an*

<sup>26</sup> Her positive impression of Hu Shi dates back to the days when he lectured at her school (Beijing Women's Normal). She had an "indescribable feeling" when he invited her to tea, and merely snuck off. When she finally visited his home, she felt "overwhelmed" by the undeserved honor and could not respond on a social or emotional level until after his death, when she exhibited an outpouring of grief tantamount to the passing of someone who had been a great father figure to her. See Li Mei 厲梅, "Su Xuelin de Liang Zhong Zitai" 蘇雪林的兩種姿態 (The Two Postures of Su Xuelin) in the journal *Shu Wu* 書屋 [Book Room], issue no. 6, p. 4 -- posted at [www.housebook.com.cn/200506/15.htm](http://www.housebook.com.cn/200506/15.htm).

<sup>27</sup> In the same interview with Chen she gave the "main reason" she found Lu Xun distasteful to be his "hypocritical character." "He accepted a salary from an educational organ of the National government, getting two hundred silver dollars a month all the way up until his death; while all the time referring to the National [ist] government in his essays as the Nanjing government." 「我對魯迅反感，主要是因為他人格分裂。魯迅一方面從國民政府的文教

[ Unresolved ‘Cases’ in Lu Xun’s Life ] points out that Chen Shuyu never asked her if she had been in love with Lu Xun in the first place, she just volunteered the information at the outset, as if to cover something up.<sup>28</sup> But Wang Xirong has also suggested that Su imagined Lu Xun hated her because she had been associated with the *Xiandai Pinglun* 現代評論 [ Modern Review ] group around Chen Yuan 陳源 (Chen Xiying 陳西滢 1896-1970).<sup>29</sup> Indeed, her “autobiography” states:

I know the reason why Lu Xun hated me. It was because when he was fired from his estimable sinecure as a *qianshi* 僉事 (section head) at the Ministry of Education for having been involved in the student uprising at Beijing Women’s Normal and went south to Guangzhou and Xiamen University, I had published articles in *Xiandai Pinglun*, and was on friendly terms with Yuan Changying 袁昌英 and others who had studied in England. Because Chen Yuan had written a letter to Xu Zhimo 徐志摩, he [ Lu Xun ] hated *Xiandai Pinglun* as well as Chen Yuan and me, since I had published with them. That’s why things went that way that day.

魯迅之所以恨我緣故，我知道。他在北京鬧女師大風潮，被教育部長革去他那並不區區僉事之職，南下到廣州及廈門大學轉了一遭，因我曾在現代評論發表過文章，又與留英袁昌英等友好。魯迅因陳源寫給徐志摩一封信，恨陳源連帶恨現代評論，恨現代評論連帶恨曾在現代評論上寫文章的我，遂有那天的局面出現。<sup>30</sup>

But this does not stand either. In a letter to Zhang Tingqian 章庭謙 (aka Chuan Dao 川島) dated 14 March 1928 Lu Xun expressed a degree of recognition of, but not any kind of genuine dislike for her. Moreover, he indicated that he had “possibly seen/met

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機構領薪，每月得二百元大銀洋，至死才罷；另一方面又在文章中輕蔑地稱國民政府為南京政府。」As quoted in Fang Xiangdong 房向東, *Lu Xun Shifei* 魯迅是非 [ Lu Xun’s Rights and Wrongs ] (Shanghai: Dongfang Chuban Zhongxin, 2008), p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> Wang Xirong, p. 382.

<sup>29</sup> Wang Xirong, pp. 381-2.

<sup>30</sup> “*Su Xuelin Zizhuan*”, p. 74.

her once” already. That paragraph in his letter reads:

The private morals of Chinese literati have actually improved considerably, so public virtue has improved as well. I wouldn't mess with it. [Irving] Babbitt and [Matthew] Arnold have just caught on here and show no signs of fading from the scene, so Madame Su need not worry needlessly. It seems I possibly met this lady once – the “commemorative volume for [her] wedding” should be published soon, no?

中國文人的私德，實在是好得多，所以公德，也是好得多，一動也不敢動。白璧德 and 亞諾德，方興未艾，蘇夫人殊不必有杞天之慮也。該女士我大約見過一面，蓋即將出「結婚紀念冊」者歟？<sup>31</sup>

The reference to her prose collection *Lü Tian* 綠天 [Green Skies] as a “commemorative volume for [her] wedding” is not necessarily derisive — it was in fact taken from an ad in the journal *Yusi* [Thread of Talk]<sup>32</sup> and may have been coined by herself. *Lü Tian* came out in March of 1928 and, judging from Lu Xun's close cooperation with Beixin at the time, he might have had a hand in publishing her book or considered her a colleague in publishing. Certainly she had a great deal of respect for him at the time, because she presented him with a copy of the book, which still exists among his personal library in the archives of the Lu Xun Museum, inscribed (literally): “For [my] teacher, Lu Xun, to correct. Respectfully offered up by [his] student, Su Xuelin. 4 July 1928.” (魯迅先生教正學生蘇雪林謹贈 7.4. 1928). It would have been unlikely that they would have had such an even-keeled, albeit formal, interaction in 1928 if Su Xuelin indeed had built up as much contempt for him as she later claimed she had

<sup>31</sup> *Lu Xun Quanji* 魯迅全集 [Complete Works of Lu Xun] (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1981) 11: 615. The first collection of Lu Xun's letters (aside from *Liangdi Shu* 兩地書) were published in June 1937 under the title *Lu Xun Shujian* 魯迅書簡 [Lu Xun's Correspondence], containing only 69 letters. The second edition (under the same title) came out in October 1946, containing 855 letters. Hence it is unlikely that Su Xuelin ever saw this letter until well after her first attack on Lu Xun was launched on 12 November 1936.

<sup>32</sup> See *Yusi* 語絲 (Thread of Talk, aka “The Tattler”), vol. 4, issue 9 (27 February 1928).

by 1925 already (when the student strike at Women's Normal took place). Also, it seems likely that she would have spoken with him at the banquet or even several days earlier, at least to present him with the book (usually a semi-formal interaction), and that he thought enough of it to keep it. So this also casts doubt on the accuracy of her latter-day description of their interaction at the banquet.

More importantly, in a lengthy article published in the November 1934 issue of *Guowen Zhoubao* 國聞週報 [National News Weekly] titled "The True Story of Ah Q and Lu Xun's Creative Art" (*A Q Zhengzhuan ji Lu Xun Chuangzuo de Yishu* 阿 Q 正傳及魯迅創作的藝術)<sup>33</sup> Su Xuelin appraised Lu Xun's work highly and in no uncertain terms, stating: "With just two volumes (of short stories) he has earned an eternal place in the future history of Chinese literature.....and gained considerable international recognition with works that can stand up as equals among the famous works of world literature." (吶喊和彷徨是他五四時代到於今的收穫。兩本，僅僅的兩本，但已經使他在將來中國文學史占到永久的地位了……阿 Q 正傳……與世界名著分庭抗禮，博得不少國際的光榮)<sup>34</sup> She even went so far as to challenge Hu Shi's critique that "The True Story of Ah Q" might have been improved by the use of Shaoxing 紹興 dialect. Su countered that dialect writing is jarring, at times incomprehensible, to readers outside of a given region and the appeal of "local-color" (xiangtu 鄉土) literature is already limited, so we in fact get an indication of Lu Xun's insight into the role and function of literature precisely from his avoidance of Shaoxing dialect.<sup>35</sup> This is indicative, in fact, of a degree of critical sophistication on the part of Su Xuelin far above that of Hu Shi, at least in terms of analysing literature. It is a pity she did not continue her work on Lu Xun in that direction, but rather chose to take a political turn.

<sup>33</sup> *Guowen Zhoubao* 國聞週報 [National News Weekly], vol. 11, issue 44, 5 November 1934. Reprinted in *Su Xuelin Daibiao Zuo*, pp. 311-328.

<sup>34</sup> *Su Xuelin Daibiao Zuo*, p. 311.

<sup>35</sup> Wang Xirong, p. 367.

### III. “Before we start wagging our pens, we should decide what our ideology is.”

The documentable change in Su Xuelin’s attitude toward Lu Xun in fact dates from the time shortly after his death and was announced in two letters she had published, one to Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, urging him to withdraw his name from the planning committee for Lu Xun’s funeral. But that letter is dated 12 November 1936, ten days after the grand-scale public funeral was over. Moreover, it was never actually delivered to Cai Yuanpei, ostensibly because Su Xuelin “did not know his address and therefore asked someone to give it to him”.<sup>36</sup> That “someone” clearly thought the better of it, after ascertaining the contents, as Su herself indicates in her postface to the letter, dated 23 February 1937.<sup>37</sup> Although even Hu Shi urged her not to write this sort of vitriol (“the language of the letter is couched in the vicious tones which characterized the old-style writing and should be strenuously avoided by us [today]” 此是舊文字的惡腔調，我們應該深戒)，<sup>38</sup> she ignored his objections and published it anyway, along with her exchange with him (which gave her letters more credibility in the eyes of editors and the reading public than they would have had on their own) .

The departure point of her letter is that Cai Yuanpei should not now lend his name to commemorating his old friend Lu Xun because Cai was a distinguished educator and founding father of the Republic, whereas Lu Xun was a disturbed individual who has exerted a bad influence on China’s youth. In the past many youths were deluded by him, in the future many more will be transformed [by his writing] into bitter cynics (p. 52) . She asks Cai rhetorically: “As an educator how could you want this?” Although she recognizes at the outset of the letter that Lu Xun had made an estimable contribution to the New Culture Movement, she holds that ever since he was fired from his post [at the Ministry of Education for supporting the student strike at Women’s

<sup>36</sup> *Su Xuelin Zizhuan*, p. 89.

<sup>37</sup> Su, *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 56.

<sup>38</sup> Su, *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 67. I have included page numbers from this edition for quotations from the letter within the text above.



Normal ], he nursed a grudge, which so effected him that he became psychologically abnormal. He became obsessed with revenge against those “proper gentlemen” he believed had done him wrong and this resulted in 99% of the contents of his essays in the collections *Huagai Ji* 華蓋集 and *Zhun Fengyue Tan* 准風月談 being about them (pp. 50-51). Lu Xun even went so far as to attack Hu Shi in a disreputable way, flinging epithets such as “traitor” and “collaborator with the Japanese” -- *Han jian* 漢奸 and *maiguo zei* 賣國賊, according to Su (p. 51).<sup>39</sup>

Lu Xun, she continues, exhibited a character full of contradictions, becoming popular among the youth because of his Leftist leanings, but in fact himself remaining a nihilistic pessimist who thought the Chinese people unsalvageable and therefore styled himself a revolutionary, beckoning the youth on to join in the fray. Su claimed a couplet from his 12 February 1931 classical-style verse *Song O.E. Jun Xie Lan Gui Guo* 送 O.E. 君攜蘭歸國 (For Mr Obara Eijiroo on [ the Occasion of ] His Return [ to Japan ] with [ a Shipment of ] Orchids)<sup>40</sup>: *Qi xi fang xin wei yuan zhe, Guxiang ru zui you jingzhen* 豈惜芳心遺遠者, 故鄉如醉有荊榛 (“How can we feel reluctant to part with these fragrant scents for one from afar, When our own old home, as if drunk, has its brambles and thorns [ to prick and scar ]”) exhibited contempt for China and secret sympathies for Japan (p. 54). In fact the poem, which begins: *Jiao fen gui zhe jiaren lao, Du tuo you yan zhan suxin* 椒焚桂折佳人老, 獨托幽岩展素心 (Pepper plant aflame and flowering cassia broken, comely men grow old. Only consigned to secluded crags can pure hearts unfold……) was written to mourn the deaths of the dissident writer Rou Shi 柔石 and a number of young people who were secretly executed by the Kuomintang authorities at Shanghai’s Longhua 龍華 Garrison Headquarters on the night of 7 February 1931. It has nothing to do with the glorification of Japan.<sup>41</sup>

Su also spread the inaccurate characterization that although Lu Xun “styled

<sup>39</sup> In fact Lu Xun never used these terms in referring to Hu Shi; see Wang Xirong, p. 381. I think what Su Xuelin is referring to is Lu Xun’s implication that Hu Shi’s motives or at least judgment at times were questionable.

<sup>40</sup> *Lu Xun Quanjì* (1981) 7:143.

<sup>41</sup> See my treatment of the poem “For O.E.” in *The Lyrical Lu Xun: a study of his classical-style verse* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), pp. 142-146.

himself an anti-imperialist, he never cast even one barb at the Japanese imperialists, who are pressing us most severely,” (p.53) and the rumor that Uchiyama Kanzoo’s 內山完造 (1885-1959) bookstore in Shanghai, the Neishan Shudian or Uchiyama Shoten 內山書店, which Lu Xun frequented, was an “espionage organ operated by a [Japanese] *ronin* 浪人” (p.54).<sup>42</sup> To this she added the quip: “Li Dazhao revolted his way onto the gallows, Chen Duxiu revolted his way into prison, but Lu Xun revolted his way into Uchiyama Bookstore. This was his invention, his unique contribution to revolutionary lifestyles. Tee hee hee!” (李大釗革命革上絞台，陳獨秀革命革進牢獄，魯迅革命而入內山書店，此乃魯迅獨自發明之革命方式也。嘻！) She concludes “……in all the *Twenty-four Dynastic Histories* it is impossible to find so deceitful, mean and lowly a character……” (綜上，魯迅之劣跡，吾人誠不能不呼之為玷辱士林之衣冠敗類，二十四史儒林傳所無之奸惡小人……) (p.54) .

Despite the imaginative rhetoric and at times even comic nature of this abuse, perhaps what Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋 once referred to as *maren de yishu* 罵人的藝術 (the art of reviling people) , the crux of the letter is not here. It comes only in part three, on the next to last page of the letter, where she says “the use of Lu Xun by the Left as a potent symbol will prove a disaster for our Party-State” 左派利用魯迅為偶像，恣意宣傳，將為黨國之大患也 (p. 54) . She then ends with a personal appeal (or one might even call it a scare tactic) to Cai , saying: “[ If ] today we were to have Communism, then that would spell the end of [ Dr Sun Yat-sen’s ] Three Principles of the People. Were the Communists to usurp power, as a Founding Father of [ our ]

<sup>42</sup> Uchiyama was in fact a Christian pacifist with leftist sympathies who tried to remain politically neutral, in part out of consideration for his own safety. Christopher T. Keaveney addresses this charge squarely in his book *Beyond Brushtalk: Sino-Japanese Literary Exchange in the Interwar Period* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009) , pp. 23-43, concluding that the bookstore never served as a Japanese surveillance hub to oversee the activity of leftist writers (p. 42) . Paul Scott writes that Uchiyama was “highly critical of Japanese attitudes toward the Asian mainland” (p. 50) and that “Uchiyama’s major role in the prewar period was to facilitate the spread of information. If he was a *ronin*-type, I would have to call him a *tosho ronin* 圖書浪人 or bibliophile *ronin*.” (p 54) . See Scott’s paper “Uchiyama Kanzoo: A Case Study in Sino-Japanese Interaction” <http://chinajapan.org/article/02.2/02.47-55scott.pdf> .

Party-State, where, Sir, would you end up?” 今日有共產主義，則無三民主義，先生身為黨國元老，設共黨奪取政權成功，先生安歸？

Viewed as a whole, the letter is not so much about Lu Xun as it is about how his legacy will be used in future. In that sense, it is prophetic. But if Su Xuelin had been serious about critiquing Lu Xun, she would have started with his works and his ideas instead of launching a broadside, relying on the sort of invective and character assassination that ultimately weakened her case against him. She was certainly a talented enough scholar and literary critic to have done so from that other, more objective angle. But objectivity is seldom the language of politics when emotions run high and Su Xuelin proved a master of highly emotional rhetoric aimed at another target.

Just six days after the letter to Cai, she penned an open letter to Hu Shi, reiterating much of the abuse and a number of the half-truths she had written to Cai about Lu Xun. But the title of the letter to Hu Shi is telling: *Yu Hu Shizhi Xiansheng Lun Dangqian Wenhua Dongtai* (*Tongxin*) 與胡適之先生論當前文化動態(通信) (Discussing Current Cultural Trends with Mr Hu Shi — a letter). In fact less than 25% of the letter is aimed at Lu Xun. It is divided into four parts, aiming at four separate but related goals: 1) to urge Hu Shi to use his journal *Duli Pinglun* 獨立評論 (The Independent Critic) to take a tougher line with regard to the Leftist opposition to the government, 2) to impress on him the urgency of regaining control of the New Culture Movement, 3) to enlist him in debunking the call for national salvation (i.e. resistance to Japan) issued by Zou Taofen 鄒韜奮 (1895-1944), hardly a friend of Lu Xun, and others, and 4) to ask Hu Shi to allow his journal to become a mouthpiece for her own campaign against Lu Xun (she was having trouble getting published at the time).<sup>43</sup> In short, she sets out an extreme Nationalist position calling for Hu Shi to run articles which are less middle-of-the-road and decidedly more political. Lu Xun becomes simply an excuse for her to challenge Hu Shi's journal and any remaining independent media to turn toward

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<sup>43</sup> For instance, *Lishui he Chuguan* 理水和出關 (Curbing the Flood and Leaving the Pass), an article she wrote on Lu Xun's *Gushi Xinbian* 故事新編 (Old Tales Retold), dated 23 November 1936 was repeatedly rejected by periodicals at the time and remained unpublished until it came out in her book *Wo Lun Lu Xun* in Taiwan in 1967.

the Right.

At the outset she states this clearly by saying: “before we start wagging our pens we should decide what our ideology is. And this should be determined by following Chinese ways” 我們感覺到咬筆桿之前，應先決定思想態度。我們的思想態度又是應當跟著中國出路走的……（p. 58）。Over the past few years there has been an ascendancy of the Left here…… I have a sense of national self-respect, feeling that China’s problems should be solved by Chinese people. We do not need to follow fads or trends. But over the past few years the government’s attitude has not been clear — it does not quite give the impression that it is willing to resist [ the Left ] 前幾年，左派在中國很得勢，宣傳品也非常之多……我有一種民族自尊心，覺得中國問題應當由中國人自己解決，不必跟著時代潮流亂跑。但前幾年政府態度不甚明瞭，抵抗的決心也不充分顯露……（p. 58）。

In fact, the Kuomintang government had already instituted draconian censorship laws; writers had been shot and imprisoned. Lu Xun once remarked that no one could understand what was being written at the time without first understanding the severity of the censorship. As Harriet Mills points out:

On October 30, 1933 a secret order for the inspection of ‘proletarian literature’ opened a new era of ever more repressive censorship. On November 1, 1933 officials, publishers and editors met in Shanghai to explore new control measures. On November 11, 1933 hoodlums of the so-called Shanghai Cinema Anti-Communist Committee smashed the offices of important cinema, book and magazine companies. Theaters, newspaper, magazine and other publishers were warned not to handle works describing Soviet conditions or the work of ‘red authors’ like Lu Hsun, Mao Tun, and others.

In February, 1934 the Kuomintang headquarters in Shanghai conducted a publisher by publisher search and banned 149 books including translations of Dos Passos, Dreiser, Strindberg, Bertrand Russell, Sinclair, Maeterlinck, Romain Rolland and others. All of Lu Hsun’s post-1927 work was banned except for a volume of traditional woodcuts, which he had just cooperated in issuing and his collected correspondence with his wife [ *Liang di shu* 兩地書 ] . Even his own

selection of his pre-1927 creative work was forbidden.

In March, 1934 Chiang Kai-shek proclaimed a government cultural dictatorship to stop what he called the popularity of ‘proletarian culture and literature’ in China.

In 1935 censorship became even more onerous due largely to Japanese pressures……On June 10, 1935 the Kuomintang issued its ‘Goodwill Mandate’ specifically prohibiting anti-Japanese activities and all ‘provocative speeches or acts’ unfriendly to neighbouring states. The editor of *New Life* was imprisoned. In July the Inspection Committee was dismissed for lack of vigilance. The Press Law was revised and tightened. By the end of 1935 when popular indignation over the establishment of the North China Autonomous Region was running high, even the *Central Daily News* [中央日報] of Nanking declared: “Such an irrational system of censorship is completely demoralizing and if continued, the Chinese will become a nation of deaf and dumb people. How can a deaf and dumb nation organize a state and exist on earth ! ”<sup>44</sup>

It is obvious that the government was fighting back against the Left on the intellectual front through censorship, arrests and by promoting its own type of literature. But this was not enough in Su Xuelin’s estimation. Even liberal journals like that under the esteemed editorship of Hu Shi needed to be enlisted into the fight. This makes me wonder what Su Xuelin would have made of Habermas’ theories on the need for the growth of “civil society” to ensure the development of democracy.

Although she praises Hu Shi’s journal for pointing the way and keeping the youth from going off in the wrong direction, as well as for having a balanced approach to problems, Su Xuelin stresses that *The Independent Critic* is not partisan enough to galvanize the attention of young people. She urges him to run articles which are clearly more anti-Communist. This, of course, is a contradiction — but one which Su Xuelin deliberately ignores, since her intention is to draw *The Independent Critic* more and

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<sup>44</sup> Harriet Cornelia Mills, “Lu Hsun: The Years on the Left” (diss. Columbia University, 1963), pp. 268-270.

more directly into service as a government mouthpiece.

In part two she urges Hu to take back leadership of the New Culture movement, arguing that the Left now monopolizes woodcuts, cartoons, plays, movies, etc. They used to use slogans like “the proletariat has no fatherland,” but now they speak in terms of “Literature for National Defence” (*Guofang wenxue* 國防文學) and “National Liberation” (*Minzu jiefang* 民族解放) — the nation, the Chinese people, the race, etc. The Left, moreover, does not give Hu Shi the credit he deserves for launching the New Culture Movement in the first place.

In part three she applauds Zou Taofen’s 鄒韜奮 opposition to Lu Xun and Mao Dun in the Battle of the Slogans, but says he ultimately proved stupid, allowing himself to get sucked in again by the Left in Shanghai and this is tragic because through his magazine *Shenghuo Zhoukan* 生活週報 (Life Weekly) Zou exercises an inordinate amount of influence over large numbers of youth. Moreover, the magazine keeps calling for resistance to Japan, which is a Leftist strategy to push China into war too early.<sup>45</sup>

Part four is titled “Concerning the Suppression of the Cult of Lu Xun”. This is the part of the letter that is supposedly concerned with Lu Xun directly. She begins by telling Hu Shi that Lu Xun was at base a nihilist, so his adoption of Leftism was insincere — he did it because Leftism was in vogue and used this to sell more books, amassing royalties and increasing his notoriety.<sup>46</sup> The Left now plans to use the cult of Lu Xun to influence the youth and make propaganda for Communism. Young people fall for the assertions of his saintliness; they then read his works and become saturated with his perverse ideas. But that is basically the end of her treatment of Lu Xun. She goes on to say that although everyone thought he was wrong to advocate “beating dogs that have fallen into the water,” she intends to do just that with him: “not only to beat a dog in the water but even to beat a dead dog” (魯迅平時主張打落水狗，這是他極端偏狹心理的表現，誰都反對，現在魯迅死了，我來罵他，不但是打落水狗，竟是打死狗了)。<sup>47</sup> She styles herself a Don Quixote out to strike the first javelin blow in this

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<sup>45</sup> Su, *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 62.

<sup>46</sup> Lu Xun’s fame as a writer in fact preceded the proliferation of Communist ideas in China.

<sup>47</sup> Su, *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 63.

unpopular but necessary mission and notes that periodicals keep rejecting her articles, so she hopes that Hu Shi will let her use his journal as an anti-Lu forum. She ends by noting that she encloses her letter to Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) and asks that Hu Shi publish it if he sees fit. He did *not* do so.

Hu Shi had been abroad at the time the letter arrived and only got back to China on December 1, 1936. On December 14 he hastened to respond to her letter, which he had first seen on the 11<sup>th</sup>, in a measured, concerned tone. He begins by saying that one goal of *The Independent Critic* has always been to get the Chinese to engage in level-headed discussion (*shuo pingshi hua, ting pingshi hua* 說平實話, 聽平實話), so for that reason he can not accept her suggestion that his journal needs to become more partisan. Hu Shi did not see Leftist opposition in and of itself as a problem. It makes perfect sense, he suggests, tongue-in-cheek, that young people become Leftists: who else would? Then, in a more serious tone, he assures her all the government needs to do is maintain social order. “From what I’ve seen in the north,” he maintains, “only a tiny number of people oppose the government.” He says Su Xuelin overestimates the power of Leftist literature, asking “How could Zou Taofen possibly control ‘hundreds of thousands’ of people? I think you have been taken in by *their* propaganda. His [i.e. Zou’s] magazine, even at the height of its popularity, only had 20,000 readers.” Hu Shi then gives the following example:

This year in the American election, when the Republicans nominated Governor Landon to run against Roosevelt, someone said: ‘You can’t beat somebody with nobody.’ We could also tell the Leftists: ‘You can’t beat something with nothing.’ As long as we have something, we need not fear being attacked with nothing. As for Lu Xun, I have read your letter to Mr Cai…… I sympathize with your righteous anger, but I feel there is no need to attack his private life. Lu Xun attacked us ferociously, but in the end did this actually harm us even one iota? Now that he is dead we can overlook all those small things and talk about topics such as what his thought boils down to, what parts were of value and what parts were not. Criticizing him in this way will definitely prove effective. Other points like those you raised in your letter to Mr. Cai such as “he [Lu Xun] is an old

money-bags,” or “whenever he fell ill he would seek the care of Nipponese doctors or plan to recuperate in a sanatorium in Kamakura” are really beneath us. When you write ‘this poor excuse for a scholar sullies his entire class and within the *Twenty Four Dynastic Histories* there was none so lowly as the likes of him’ the second clause is ill-conceived and the whole sentence smacks of provocation. This invokes the tones that characterized the old-style writing, which we should be making a strenuous effort to avoid today.

No matter whom we evaluate, we need to keep a balance. If we love them, we should still be aware of their faults and if we hate them, we should still recognize their positive side, only thus can we ensure balance. Lu Xun had his good side — like his literary works of the earlier period, like his research on the history of Chinese fiction — these were all top quality work. Mr Tong Bo [Chen Yuan] mistakenly believed the words of a perfidious person and made the charge that Lu Xun’s history of Chinese fiction was plagiarized from Shionoya On. This made Lu Xun hate him for the rest of his life! Now Shionoya On’s history of Chinese literature [*Shina Bungaku Gairon*] has been translated by Sun Lianggong and its bibliography is so outdated that it is a joke — obviously he had had no access to many of the later sources that both Lu Xun and I consulted. Saying that Lu Xun was copying from Shionoya On is a great injustice. We should set the record on the Shionoya On case straight, actually it would be best if Chen Yuan himself wrote a short piece [apologizing] to, as Lu Xun might put it, at least ‘put on the stinking airs of a gentleman,’ which would be worth putting on here. By putting our arguments in this way we could make our adversaries [lit. “the enemy party”] realize the error in their ways.

The above sounds like I am rebuking you, but it is actually written out of respect for you. I hope you will forgive me.

(first published in the first issue of “*Ben Tao*” [Surging Waves] fortnightly)

今年美國大選時，共和黨提出 Governor Landon 來打 Roosevelt，有人說：「You can’t beat somebody with nobody」。我們對左派也可以說：「You can’t beat



something with nothing.」只要我們有東西，不怕人家拿沒有東西來打我們。關於魯迅，我看了你給蔡先生的信……我很同情與你的憤慨，但我以為不必攻擊其私人行為。魯迅狃狃攻擊我們，其實何損於我們一絲一毫？他死了，我們盡可以撇開一切小節不談，專討論他的思想究竟有些什麼，有些什麼是有價值的，有些什麼是無價值的。如此批評，一定可以發生效果。餘如你上蔡公書中所舉「腰纏久已累累」，「病則謁日醫，療養則欲赴鎌倉」……皆不值得我輩提及。至於書中所云「誠玷辱士林之衣冠敗類，二十四史儒林傳所無之奸惡小人」——下半句尤不成話——一類字句，未免太動火氣，此是舊文字的惡腔調，我們應該深戒。

凡論一人，總須持平。愛而知其惡，惡而知其美，方是持平。魯迅自有他的長處。如他的早年文學作品，如他的小說史研究，皆是上等工作。通伯（陳源）先生當日誤信一個小人之言，說魯迅之小說史是抄襲鹽谷溫的，就使魯迅終身不忘此仇恨！現今鹽谷溫的文學史已由孫良工譯出了，其書是未見我和魯迅之小說研究以前的作品，其考據部分淺陋可笑。說魯迅抄鹽谷溫，真是萬分的冤枉。鹽谷溫一案，我們應該為魯迅洗刷明白，最好是由通伯先生寫一篇短文，此是「gentleman的臭架子」，值得擺的。如此立論，然後能使敵黨俯首心服。

此段似是責備你，但出於敬愛之私，想能蒙原諒……

（原刊《奔濤》半月刊創刊號）

Despite Hu Shi urging her against doing so, Su Xuelin published this and her letter to Cai Yuanpei, adding her own afterword (*ba* 跋) in reply to Hu Shi. Of course, by so doing she was using Hu Shi to gain notoriety for her own cause and also compromising him at the same time by drawing him into a debate, the perimeters of which were being set by her and perhaps also certain right-wing factions in the government.<sup>48</sup> In the interim, Hu Shi's journal had been banned by the governmental authorities in Hebei 冀 and Chahar 察 (p. 68). She ignores the logical implications of this ban (that

<sup>48</sup> This was in fact disrespectful to Hu Shi, for whom she professed a life-long admiration. The letter exchange was published in the rightist *Ben Tao* 奔濤 (Surging Waves) fortnightly, 1937. vol. 1, no. 2.

government censorship was too tight already) and quickly returns to her old tirade about Hu Shi underestimating the power of the Left over young people: “although Leftism in and of itself may not be such a horrible thing, when it is combined with treasonous motives, it becomes fearsome……In China there is a lamentable phenomenon — a minority can manipulate the majority…… Campuses are stirred up by a few rabble-rousers……” (p. 68). Hu Shi has been out of the country for too long, so he fails to realize the extent of the reach of the “popular front”. *Da Gong Bao* 大公報 noted the extent of their influence over the Xi’an 西安 Incident (p. 69). The Chinese tend to be like ostriches — ignoring situations until they flare up. Su says she knows it is not right to resort to personal attacks on Lu Xun. But she has done so because his followers are now holding him up as an unparalleled ethical model (p. 70). “Hu Shi said that my statement about there being no one as low as Lu Xun in the biographies of the scholars in all the 24 *Dynastic Histories* ‘makes no sense’ — that’s right, I should have said ‘in the biographies of the writers’ instead. That way it would have made sense.” This is typical of Su Xuelin’s cultivated naiveté — she ignores the import of the authorities banning Hu Shi’s journal and she pretends Hu Shi was criticizing her word choice: “I should have said *wenxue zhuan* 文學傳 instead of *rulin zhuan* 儒林傳!” (p. 70). Again, I think the import lies beyond the words. Su Xuelin is not attempting to engage in serious dialogue with Hu Shi about Lu Xun. In fact, she admits as much. Her agenda lies elsewhere.

After her migration to Taiwan in the 1950s she clearly took this agenda up again in an article published in *Wentan* 文壇 (The Literary World) titled “Dui Zhandou Wenyi de Wo Jian” 對戰鬥文藝的我見 (My Views on the Literary Front):

Now Free China has tightened its defenses to the degree that the Communist bandits have no room left to operate in, but hidden Red cells lie in wait for the opportune moment to arrive when they can ride in on the wind and the waves or perhaps use other’s reputations or the cover of darkness to carry out their insidious plot to overthrow the nation. Those of us who have the responsibility to carry on the struggle in the world of letters should station guards all over and carry out patrols and investigations to apprehend subversives, flush them out and

make them show their true colors. This is not aimed at stifling dissent but rather guarding against unforeseen circumstances. Neither is it a violation of freedom of speech, for freedom has its limits. Tying one's own hands and feet while giving the enemy a free field is extremely foolish. Unfortunately in the past we made just such stupid errors and, regret it as we now do, we can never have the chance to do it over again, so how can we let ourselves be duped by the Communist bandits yet again?

現在自由中國防範嚴密，已無共匪活動餘地，但潛伏的赤色細胞於機會到來之時，仍可乘風作浪，或利用其他名義，或借黑色黃色為掩護，進行其大盜覆國的奸謀，我們負有戰鬥文藝責任的人，應該廣派哨兵，巡邏搜查，捉住奸細，定必逼持出他們的原形，這並不是排除異己，而是防患未然。也不是侵犯言論自由，要知自由是有限度的，捆住了自己的手足，而讓敵人自由宰割，那是極端愚蠢的行為，不幸過去我們竟幹了這種愚蠢的事，現在悔也悔不及了，還能再上共匪的當嗎？<sup>49</sup>

Here it is obvious she is calling again for a tightening of controls, if not the stifling of dissent. She put this more specifically in relation to Lu Xun in November 1966, but the motivation and the conclusion are even clearer (to prevent a plurality of views from re-emerging in the Republic of China) :

I have witnessed the gradual rise of pro-Lu Xun sentiment among the circles of public intellectuals in Taiwan in recent years: there have already been calls to reprint Lu Xun's works in Taiwan. Of course these are all unwitting. But I am concerned that the Lu Xun idol will again be propped up in Taiwan and Lu Xun worship will proliferate, which would be an extremely dangerous turn of events. No matter what happens, I can not simply sit by and watch this unfold.

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<sup>49</sup> This article is reprinted in Su, *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 139-143, with no date or volume no. of *Wentan* given. The quote is on p. 141-2.

我見了臺灣論壇近年「捧魯」有漸成風氣之勢，已有人呼喊在臺灣重印魯迅的著作了。這些當然都是無心的。但我擔心魯迅偶像又將在臺灣豎立起來，魯迅崇拜也將在臺灣日益推廣，卻是非常危險的事，無論如何，不容坐視。

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#### IV. “My role was pre-ordained.”

Despite seeming to be a quirky person, Su Xuelin was at base an intellectual, and interacted with Lu Xun as a polemicist, not as a scorned lover. She understood Lu Xun first and foremost as a polemicist, as did many (if not most) of her countrymen. To her, his literary and scholarly achievements took a back seat to his role as a public figure. This may in part have been due to her exposure to Western academia which demands more creative output from a creative writer, but for the larger part it was due to public perception of Lu Xun in the China of the 1930s, which saw him as a polemicist. My own conclusion is that her views were representative of the right-wing of the Kuomintang and were linked directly to governmental policy, or at least the policies advocated or endorsed by the right-wing faction in government, i.e the Chiang Kai-shek clique. The evidence is both chronological and qualitative. She did not express these views in the 1920s, for example. Indeed, her opinion of Lu Xun was quite different then, as has been shown above.

In the 1930s there had been increasing censorship and Lu Xun in fact once wrote that no one could understand the literary scene in China in those days without understanding the fact of ever-tightening censorship. By the time of his death and funeral, the din of protest had grown so loud that something needed to be said in response and for Su Xuelin the timing was right to come forth to fill this “pre-ordained role” as she herself called it. Throughout the 1940s she inexplicably fell silent (of course this was again in response to a political cue because the Kuomintang government wanted to promote, at least ostensibly, adherence to the idea of a “united front” with the

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<sup>50</sup> Su, author’s preface to *Wo Lun Lu Xun*, p. 2.

Communists against the Japanese) . She re-emerged in Taiwan, but did not become vocal again until the mid-to-late 1950s, coinciding with another governmental crackdown on dissent and the 1958 Quemoy 金門 Crisis,<sup>51</sup> when the Kuomintang told its people and the world that Taiwan was being threatened with invasion. Her next major outburst came in 1966-7, as the Vietnam War was escalating and the Cultural Revolution broke out in mainland China, with Lu Xun being touted by Mao and Chen Boda 陳伯達 (1904-1989) as its “supreme commander” — its main ideological and cultural forerunner and the justifier of the idea of the necessity of “continuing revolution,” which Mao had embraced, whether it originated independently in his mind or with Lu Xun or Haeckel.<sup>52</sup>

This was also the period when Taiwan writers like Chen Yingzhen 陳映真 (b. 1937)<sup>53</sup> and Bo Yang 柏楊 (1920-2008)<sup>54</sup> were being arrested and imprisoned, when

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<sup>51</sup> The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, known in Taiwan as the Ba-er-san Paozhan 八二三炮戰 (8 / 23 Artillery Battle) began on August 23, 1958 and lasted 44 days. It was in fact a continuation of the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, which began in 1954. Su Xuelin’s reemergence on the Lu Xun front straddled the two.

<sup>52</sup> Lu Xun owned copies of Ernst Haeckel’s *Die Weltraethsel* (1899) and *Die Lebenswunder* (1906) . See Lydia H. Liu, “Life as Form: How Biomimesis Encountered Buddhism in Lu Xun” in *The Journal of East Asian Studies*, 68:1, February 2009, pp. 28-29. According to a talk titled “The Two Hegels” given by Klaus Mehnert (November 1977) at the Universities Service Centre on Argyle Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong which I attended, Mehnert recalled that he overheard Mao tell the German Prime Minister during a meeting in the early 1970s that he had been profoundly influenced by two German thinkers: Hegel and Haeckel.

<sup>53</sup> Lucien Miller writes: “First of all, for the record, I should state that the exact accusations which led to Ch’ en Ying-chen’s arrest were never made public, although rumors abound. The author was charged with ‘subversive’ activities by the Taiwanese Garrison Command in a secret military trial. His original ten-year sentence.....began in June 1968.....” in the introduction to *Exiles at Home: Stories by Ch’ en Ying-chen*, trans. by Lucien Miller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 2002) , p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Reynolds tells us: “On March 7, 1968, he [ Bo Yang ] was arrested on charges brought by the Nationalist-Party government of having undermined the affections between the people and the government. While his prosecutors had demanded the death sentence in his case, he instead was sentenced to a term of twelve years... He was imprisoned on Green Island, or

the words Huoshao Dao 火燒島 (the prison isle officially known as Lü Dao 綠島 “Green Island”) were sending shivers down the collective spine of Taiwan intelligentsia. Su Xuelin was essentially at the vanguard of the Kuomintang’s crackdown on cultural dissent<sup>55</sup> and being a member of Lu Xun’s generation, or at least one of his contemporaries, she was well-positioned to challenge his reputation in Taiwan and among the overseas Chinese. This did not go unnoticed by the authorities. At home, other well-placed writers and academicians such as Peng Ge 彭歌 and Yu Guangzhong 余光中 (b. 1928), would continue in her footsteps, to attack the authors of the emerging *xiangtu wenxue* 鄉土文學 (local-color literature) with the cry: “the wolves are at our door” (*lang lai le!* 狼來了!).<sup>56</sup> Her final volley at Lu Xun was

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‘Fire-Scorched Island’ as it is called, off the southeastern coast of Taiwan.” See Bo Yang, *A Farewell: a Collection of Short Stories* trans. by Robert Reynolds (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1988), p.v.

<sup>55</sup> As she herself put it at the age of 94, her motivation was ideological, that is to say, it lay in her intellectual belief system, not in some personal grudge: “I have made it my business during the second half of my life to oppose Lu Xun and to oppose Communism. This cost me my position in the world of letters and almost cost me my life. As my numerous writings and [now] my reminiscences have related, my motivation stems solely from a sense of justice and a love of truth. I have no other motives.” 我的後半生事業是反魯反共，為這事不但弄得文壇無立腳之地，性命也幾乎不保，已備見我許多文字及這本回憶錄所述，我之所為完全出於正義感與真理愛，別無所圖。See Su Xuelin, *Fusheng Jiushi: Xuelin Huiyilu* 浮生九四：雪林回憶錄 [A Floating Life at Ninety-Four: Reminiscences of Su Xuelin] (Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 1991), p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> The *Xiangtu wenxue lunzhan* 鄉土文學論戰 (Debate on ‘local color’ literature) took place in 1977-8, launched by the chief writer for the Kuomintang party-mouthpiece *Zhongyang Ribao* 中央日報 (The Central Daily News), Peng Ge, in his article “Bu tan renxing, he you wenxue” 不談人性，何有文學？ (Without speaking of human nature, how can there be literature?). This was followed quickly by Yu Guangzhong’s “Lang lai le!” (The wolves are at the door), which Red-baited writer / critics Wang Tuo 王拓, Chen Yingzhen and Wei Tiancong 尉天聰, quoting from Mao Zedong’s “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” and arguing that Taiwan “local color” artists had already brought Gong-nong-bing wenyi 工農兵的文藝 (i.e. the “worker, peasant, and soldier art” that Mao advocated) to Taiwan. On this closely followed the “Meili Dao Incident” (美麗島事件) in Kaohsiung, resulting in

not fired until 1988, but this time not in Taiwan, which had by then ended martial law and embarked on the road to democracy, rather it came in the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong, where middle-class Chinese had grown restless and apprehensive about the territory's imminent return to mainland China. Again, in this instance, Lu Xun, depicted as a boldfaced drunken whore-monger, becomes a straw man to make a statement about the potential for corruption and decadence among Hong Kong's future rulers. Su Xuelin brought her quarrel with Lu Xun over with her from the mainland. Perhaps in the end it was most fitting that it returned there.

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the arrest of more dissidents. Thus what was presented to the public as a debate in the world of literary criticism in fact presaged a political purge under the Kuomintang Party-State, much the same as what we have seen numerous times on the mainland. For more details, see the article Yu Guangzhong: "Zishou" shijian de lailong qu mai 余光中的「自首」事件的來龍去脈 ( The story of Yu Guangzhong's recantation from beginning to end ) at <http://club.6park.com/tea/messages/32625.html>.

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The author wishes to express his thanks to the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange.

## 蘇雪林「論魯迅」之謎

寇致銘\*

〔摘要〕

阿英早在三十年代已評蘇雪林為中國「女性作家中最優秀的散文者」。蘇雪林又是留學法國，在學術界有地位的教授，但她那麼溫柔的作者一旦突然那樣激烈地反對魯迅，而且潑婦罵街似的給他鞭屍，「幾乎成了（她的）伴生事業」，甚至於對她自己的名譽和職業都有損失。更棘手的是魯迅還在的時候，蘇雪林對他的著作一直予以很高的評價。所以她為什麼後來要這樣反對變成了魯迅研究界以及現代中國文學研究界裡的一個「謎」。中國大陸若干學者推測蘇雪林與魯迅有個人恩怨，可是他們找不到證據。因此這個謎至今還沒有得到一個有說服力的解。本論文的美國澳洲作者曾在戒嚴時期的臺灣留學，目前試圖從歷史角度重新評論蘇雪林在臺灣海峽兩邊知識與輿論界裡扮的角色，以便解這個謎。

關鍵詞：現代中國文學、中國思想史、國民黨、臺灣歷史（戒嚴）、蘇雪林、魯迅

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