

# JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS

Autobiographical Stories by  
Modern Chinese Women Writers

*Edited by*  
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# About the Translators

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# Introduction

This collection of autobiographical narratives produced in China during World War II testifies to the diverse ways in which modern Chinese women writers tell the stories of their lives. It showcases the nine writers' extraordinary experiences included in Xie Bingying's (1906–2000) classic anthology entitled *Selected Autobiographies of Women Writers* (*Nü zuojia zizhuan xuanji*, 1945). Published at the initiative of Xie and the female editor Huang Baoxun, the original collection represents one of the rare concerted efforts to gather women's life stories in one volume in China in the first half of the twentieth century and for a long time to come. It is noteworthy particularly because the anthology came out when it had become increasingly difficult for women writers to make their personal voices heard. Highlighting the unconventionality of these narratives, the front cover of Xie's book features the portrait of a Western woman wearing long curly hair, earrings, and a low-neck dress. She looks half submissively and half defiantly to her lower right, with her right hand on her heart, as if full of stories that she hesitates and yet strongly desires to confide in the reader. This portrait gracing the cover of the book embodies the complicated connection between modern Chinese women's autobiographical practice and its Western "model" which I attempt to unfold in this introduction.

The narratives in the translated collection include: An E's (1905–1976) "How I Left My Mother" (*Wo zenyang likai de muqin*, 1944), Bai Wei's (1894–1987) "Jumping Through Hoops" (*Tiao guan ji*, 1944), Chu Wenjuan's (1907–?) "Imprints of Life" (*Shengming de yinhen*, 1943), Lin Beili's (1916–?) "A Journey of Twenty-Seven Years" (*Er shi qi nian de lücheng*, 1943), Peng Hui's (1907–68) "A Brief Autobiography" (*Jian dan de zizhuan*, 1943), Xie Bingying's "Midpoint of an Ordinary Life" (*Pingfan de ban sheng*, 1943), Ye Zhongyin's (1912–?) "My Autobiography" (*Wo*

de zizhuan, 1943), Zhao Qingge's (1914–99) "Can This Also Be Called an Autobiography?" (Ye suan zizhuan?, 1943), and Zi Gang's (1914–88) "Self-Criticism and Self-Encouragement" (Zi kui yu zi mian, 1943). Through the personal lives of the autobiographical subjects, these narratives index the historical and political turbulence in early twentieth-century China and during the War of Resistance against Japan. They are very seldom, if at all, found in other collections of Chinese women's writing that exist in Chinese or in English.

Instead of using the title of the original Chinese book, I call this anthology *Jumping Through Hoops: Autobiographical Stories by Modern Chinese Women Writers*. I employ Bai Wei's "Jumping Through Hoops" as part of the book title, because her metaphor brings to life all the female subjects' struggles for independence and the frustrations they had encountered as women in their careers and family life. Bai's vivid image of the hoops also clinches my argument about the tremendous cultural and political hurdles that stood in the way of autobiographical storytelling in China since the 1930s, as I will elaborate below.

It is my hope that this translated anthology will play multiple roles in promoting modern Chinese women's autobiography as a genre. Because many English editions of women's book-length autobiographies from the Republican period (1911–1949) have long been out of print, this book will help make up for the loss and expand the existing body of Chinese women's life stories in English. It is also intended to direct critical attention to modern Chinese women's autobiographical narratives and to add a new dimension to the current criticism and theorizing of autobiography in a global context. In the meantime, in spite that Chinese women's writings from most major periods in twentieth-century China have become available in English in recent years, self-representations during World War II remain severely underrepresented. This anthology will fill the gap. Furthermore, the book contributes to the rediscovery and rejuvenation of Xie's original book.

In order to help the reader better appreciate these narratives, I will give an overview of the Chinese autobiographical tradition in the pages that follow. I will first discuss the Chinese cultural inhibition against and the desire for self-representation through an examination of some examples of autobiographical writing in traditional times. Secondly, I will investigate the historical and intellectual circumstances in early twentieth-century China that compelled women writers to engage in life writing, identify the unique features that mark women's autobiography from traditional

biographies of women written by men, from women's fiction, from Chinese male writers' autobiographical narratives, and from women's autobiographies in the West. I will also discuss the anxiety women writers exhibited in their endeavors of self-expression. Lastly, by way of critically appraising the narratives included in the present anthology, I will try to show how they add to the existing gamut of Chinese women's life stories in English.

### The Inhibition of Early Chinese Autobiography

Georges Gusdorf (1956) insists that autobiography "expresses a concern peculiar to Western man" (p. 28) and that the genre "is not possible in a cultural landscape where consciousness of self does not, properly speaking, exist" (p. 30). Roy Pascal (1960) also holds that autobiography is "a distinctive product of Western, post-Romantic civilization, and only in modern times has it spread to other civilizations" (p. 180). Feminist critics of women's autobiography in the recent two decades have already successfully refuted these claims, so the genre is no longer considered an essentially Western, male phenomenon. Nevertheless, the ways in which Chinese writers over the centuries practiced, conceptualized, and re-conceptualized autobiography remain to be introduced to audiences and brought to critical attention outside China.

The Chinese term *zizhuan*, structurally and semantically equivalent to the English term "autobiography," appeared in China around AD 800 (Koozoo 1999, p. 6). But self-representation had various other nomenclatures before and after the appearance of the word *zizhuan*. Chinese scholar Guo Dengfeng (1965) organizes traditional autobiographical writing in China into the following categories: self-preface (*zixu*), self-written biography (*zizhuan*), self-written funerary inscription (*zizuo muzhiming*), epistolary self-narration (*shuduti zixu*), versified self-narration (*cifuti yu shigeti zixu*), elegiac and miscellaneous self-narration (*aijiti zajiti zixu*), self-written account of conduct (*zizhuang*), self-indictment (*zिसong*), and self-eulogy (*zizan*) (pp. 1–6). In Pei-yi Wu's (1990) analysis, likewise, traditional Chinese autobiography includes self-written biographies (*zizhuan*), autonecrologies, such as self-written tomb notices and inscriptions (*muzhiming*), grave notices (*kuangzhi*), dirges (*lei*), sepulchres (*shou cang zhi*), epitaphs (*bei*), and obituaries (*zhuang*), annalistic autobiographies (*zixu nianpu*), and authorial self-accounts and prefaces (*zixu*) (pp. 15–67).



Lexically, the Chinese word *zizhuan* is quite straightforward, *zi* meaning “self” and *zhuan* “biography.” Thus, *zizhuan*, or autobiography, is simply a self-written biography. The close affiliation with biography, a major form of historiography in traditional China, not only renders autobiography invisible as a genre but also imposes on it constraints of history writing, such as “impersonality of tone,” “suppression of an individual voice,” and “opacity as to the yearnings of heart or the inward workings of mind” (Wu 1990, p. 6). As a vehicle of didacticism, a biography in traditional times mostly commemorates the subject’s public deeds, moral virtues, and literary accomplishments. As autobiography eked out a precarious existence in the shadow of biography, writers experienced enormous formal and psychological difficulty in writing their lives. The formal obstacle is “the lack of a suitable literary form,” and the psychological hurdle the “inhibition” (p. 3) against self-disclosure. Consequently, biographical accounts were much more common than life stories written about and by the same subject. Hence perhaps the prevalent view that only a hero deserved to write an autobiography.

Now, such restraint might have derived from the problematic position of the individual in traditional Chinese society. In the Confucian system of thought, all persons were properly organized into the five basic human relationships: ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, brothers, and friends. A man’s value was determined by how well he played his designated social and familial roles. By the same token, a woman’s worth rested with the fulfillment of her duties as daughter, daughter-in-law, wife/widow, and mother. In the meantime, everyone’s well-being depended on the general state of the society at large, whether a country, a family, or an interpersonal relationship. This reciprocity created a mutually supportive and fostering relation between a person and the surrounding social network. Intertwinement with the society at large and contribution to one’s community define a person’s significance. Such interdependence between the self and other people can easily lead to the invalidation of the individual.<sup>1</sup> As the self was not considered a self-contained entity that defined its own importance, autobiography, a genre that apparently celebrates the achievement of the autonomous individual, was tantamount to unabashed self-exaltation. The interconnectedness between a person and society provides an angle from which we can understand why ancient Chinese writers experienced tremendous impediment in writing their life stories.

Paradoxically, I think it is because of, not in spite of, the cultural veto against the writing of autobiography that Chinese writers sometimes fell hopelessly into self-glorification once they overcame their cultural and psychological obstacle. After all, they had to set off their most shining qualities and catalogue all their accomplishments to prove worthy of an autobiographical account. A notable example is Qu Yuan's (ca. 343–277 BC) "Encountering Sorrow" (*Li sao*), a narrative poem in which the speaker extols his highborn ancestors, celebrates his birth, lauds his moral and personal integrity, laments his disfavor with King Huai of Chu, and vents the frustration of his political ambition. To someone not familiar with a traditional Chinese scholar official's sense of self-worth and his loyalty to the ruler, the amount of self-adoration that informs the work can turn into distasteful narcissism.

The impulse of self-representation persisted in other writers, too, who often tucked into larger texts their usually very sketchy self-portraits in the forms of prefaces and postfaces,<sup>2</sup> two common forms of autobiography in ancient China. "The Self-Account of the Grand Historian" (*Tai shi gong zixu*), the postface to Sima Qian's (145?–90? BC) *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shi ji*), for example, continued the autobiographical tradition established by Qu Yuan and was acclaimed as "Encountering Sorrow without rhyme" (*wu yun zhi Li sao*). In the narrative, Sima Qian refers to himself self-consciously as the Grand Historian instead of using the first person singular pronoun. His self-account gives a rather lengthy genealogy and works up to a self-vindication. It is a well-known fact that Sima Qian completed *Records of the Grand Historian* in prison. When General Li Ling was captured by the Huns, enemy of the Han empire, Sima Qian praised in front of the emperor Li's great deeds in defending the Han. However, when Li's treason was later revealed, Sima Qian was sentenced to death for deceiving the emperor. But Sima Qian chose castration and imprisonment in order to complete his work. It is not hard to see from this case that telling one's personal story needed justification not only by family history and official history, but also by a work of larger significance.

"Self-Record" (*Zi ji*), the last chapter in Wang Chong's *Critical Essays* (*Lun heng*, pp. 27–91) embodies overt and unabashed self-assertion. In this third-person narration, instead of praising his ancestors as contemporary cultural etiquette dictated, Wang commends his own personal virtues, such as careful choice of company, uprightness in office, and frequent, conscientious moral self-examination. Most importantly, he dwells on his

precocious talent for learning during childhood and proudly names the classics that he studied. Pei-yi Wu (1990) highly commends Wang's "freedom from historiography" and recognizes his work as "the first untrammelled autobiographical expression in China" (pp. 45–6). Breaking the pattern of ancestral eulogy, Wang's work fully exemplifies the tendency of self-aggrandizement in ancient Chinese autobiographical writing.

Self-narration in the first person did not occur in China until Cao Pi's (187–226) substantial autobiographical preface to his prose work *Heavenly Discussions* (*Tianlun*). Moving beyond Wang, Cao makes no mention of his book, includes no genealogy, and focuses exclusively on self-eulogy: his excellence in horsemanship, archery, swordsmanship, and even parlor games. His self-reference as "I" is the most notable innovation in distinguishing the personal voice in early Chinese autobiographical writing.

The above account demonstrates that autobiography was an age-old tradition in China in spite of the cultural etiquette of reserve and reticence. Undoubtedly, by preventing many from writing about themselves, the interdiction succeeded in stunting autobiography at large and keeping the genre in subservience to the respected biography. In certain situations, however, the taboo stimulated the desire for self-expression, effecting a dichotomy between humility on the one hand and self-glorification on the other. That explains why writers sometimes felt too humble to tell their life stories at all; yet once they broke the taboo, they could fall completely in love with their ego and become quite obsessed about their accomplishments.

If the cultural milieu in traditional China did not encourage male writers' autobiographical practice, women encountered more formidable obstacles in writing their lives for the lack of education and the more demanding gender requirement of reticence. The majority of women conventionally remained objects of male representation in biographies rather than narrators of their own life stories. Biography had been an established genre since Sima Qian first employed it as an important technique in his *Records of the Grand Historian*. His style and format provided models for later historians writing biographical entries in the standard histories of each dynasty. Alongside public biographies, i.e., life accounts included in the *lie zhuan* (biographies) section in the standard histories, private biographies existed written by individual writers about their relatives often in the forms of birthday celebrations and funerary inscriptions. Women's biographies were called *lie nü zhuan*. Women's

biographies can also be divided into the public and the private. Han Confucian scholar Liu Xiang's (77 BC – 6 BC) *The Biographies of Women* (*Lie nü zhuan*)<sup>3</sup> contains the earliest life stories of women in the public form. Liu categorizes women into seven types as his chapter titles indicate: Biographies Illustrating the Correct Deportment of Mothers, Biographies of the Virtuous and Wise, Biographies of the Benign and Wise, Biographies of the Chaste and Obedient, Biographies of the Chaste and Righteous, Biographies of Those Able in Reasoning and Understanding, and Biographies of the Pernicious and Depraved. It is important to note the regulatory function of these categories, as they explicitly prescribe terms of ideal motherhood and womanhood by providing positive as well as negative role models. As gender norms that dominated women's lives, these representations were to shape the Confucian education of women for centuries to come.

Following Liu's example, all the later official histories contain a section called "Biographies of Women," which portray and eulogize women's excellence in moral behavior. However, historians continued to tighten the gender codes. As sexual chastity gradually became a predominant theme running through women's public biographies, standards of chastity grew increasingly demanding. For instance, in *History of the Jin Dynasty* (*Jin shu*), *History of the Northern Dynasty* (*Bei shi*), and *History of the Southern Dynasty* (*Nan shi*), women were included for a variety of virtues, such as filial piety, female chastity, reasonableness, courage, and even capability in leadership. Since *History of the Yuan Dynasty* (*Yuan shi*), however, the biographers not only almost exclusively emphasized female chastity, but also concentrated on, and therefore encouraged, increasingly violent physical demolition, such as disfiguring and cutting off body parts, as testimony of their determination to preserve their chastity. The demand for female chastity reached its peak in *History of the Ming Dynasty* (*Ming shi*), in which nothing short of gory self-immolation would satisfy the male historians.<sup>4</sup>

Private biographies also participated in the construction of women's images in traditional China. Here I cite a few composed by male writers in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). "The Epitaph of Fang Mu Zhang Ruren"<sup>5</sup> by Gui Youguang (1507–1571) portrays his widowed mother's devotion to his childhood education by evoking scenes of the mother weaving under the same light at night as the son studied and making the son kneel for doing a mediocre job in an exam. Wu Meicun (1609–1672) wrote "The Epitaph of Wang Mu Zhou

Taianren”<sup>6</sup> in memory of a good friend’s mother. The author remembers his own mother as a filial daughter-in-law, dedicated mother, and industrious wife. Zhang Xuecheng’s (1738–1801) mother in “The Epitaph of Pei Mu Cha Yiren”<sup>7</sup> resembles the selfless and public-spirited women portrayed in both Liu Xiang’s work and some of the earlier dynastic histories. The images of women in the official histories and private accounts all reflected and contributed to the formation of gender codes in traditional China. Most representations of women in the past came from the extensive body of women’s biographies written by male historians and writers.

Given the conventional status of women as objects of male imagination and portrayal, the culturally induced humility as virtue prohibited women more than it did men to expose themselves publicly. As a result, only a very small number of women had the opportunity to write the stories of their lives. The first existing self-narration written by a woman is allegedly Han scholar Ban Zhao’s (45–115) preface to *Admonitions to Women* (*Nü Jie Xu*). She makes three points in her self-account: apologizing for her worthlessness and obtuseness, describing the humility and piety with which she served her husband’s family, and stating her purpose for writing *Admonitions to Women* — to educate her young daughters and prepare them for married life. The self-image projected here fits neatly with the traditional roles of a woman. Representation of herself as a person would have been quite out of place here.

Existent literature shows that almost ten centuries elapsed before Song dynasty (960–1279) poet Li Qingzhao (1084–1151) told her story in the postscript to *A Catalogue of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions* (*Jin shi lu hou xu*). Both literary and art scholars, Li and her husband Zhao Mingcheng (1081–1129) collected books, paintings, and antiques with great enthusiasm and particularly enjoyed making rubbings of ancient stone or bronze inscriptions. The 1126 invasion of Kaifeng by the Jurchens from the north disrupted their idyllic life. The manuscript of *A Catalogue of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions*, a collaborative work of husband and wife, survived the turmoil. Writing the postscript to commemorate their conjugal happiness, their shared passion for art and books, and their work, Li had enough justification for her narrative act. In the text, she starts with her marriage and briefly introduces the financial status of her own and her husband families without making it a genealogy. She focuses on the vivid, and occasionally sensuous, details of life with her husband, such as perusing art works and eating fruit. She also describes a game they played of giving the exact textual locations

of literary allusions. Because of her excellent memory, she often won these games. Li shows little interest in the feminine virtues expected of her sex, economizing only to buy books, enjoying simple clothing, and avoiding jewelry and decorations. Although being a woman and a writer of *ci* (a genre quite permissive of uttering emotions) might have enabled her to reveal her private life, she conceals her autobiography surreptitiously in a postscript, an account of the much larger work that she mostly attributes to her husband.

These instances, out of the sundry varieties of autobiographical writing produced in traditional China, show that women's self-representations were largely void of the self-congratulatory tone that characterizes mostly autobiographical narratives written by men.

### The Inevitability of Modern Chinese Women's Autobiography

With Shen Fu's (1763–c.1808) *Six Records of a Floating Life* (*Fu sheng liu ji*)<sup>8</sup> standing out as one of the rare life stories, full-length autobiography as a genre did not appear in China until the twentieth century. Chinese women writers began to engage in autobiographical practice in the 1930s. Some of the prominent texts include *An Autobiography of Lu Yin* (*Lu Yin zixhuan*, 1934)<sup>9</sup> by Lu Yin (1898–1934), *Autobiography of A Female Soldier* (*Yi ge nü bing de zixhuan*, 1936)<sup>10</sup> by Xie Bingying, *My Tragic Life* (*Beiju shengya*, 1936)<sup>11</sup> by Bai Wei, and *My Life* (*Wo de shenghuo*, 1967)<sup>12</sup> and *Ninety-Four Years of a Floating Life* (*Fu sheng jiu si*, 1991) by Su Xuelin (1897–).<sup>13</sup> Other life stories were published in English, such as Chen Hengzhe's (1893–1976) *Autobiography of a Chinese Young Girl* (1935)<sup>14</sup> and Su Hua Ling Chen's (1904–1990) *Ancient Melodies* (1953).<sup>15</sup> Still others became accessible in English through translation, not the least of which is Xie Bingying's *Girl Rebel: The Autobiography of Hsieh Pingying* (1940) and Buwei Yang Chao's (1889–1981) *Autobiography of a Chinese Woman* (1947).<sup>16</sup> These by no means exhaust the list.

Prior to the twentieth century, writing was mostly a male endeavor. As shown abundantly clear in Dorothy Ko's study, only gentry women in the seventeenth century Jiangnan area had the privilege to publish their literary creations, facilitated by commercial print culture.<sup>17</sup> For all the traditional women's writings that exist today,<sup>18</sup> it remains true that most women then wrote for leisure and rarely made a living with the pen. Except

for increasing their desirability on the marriage market, women's literary accomplishment did not count in the real world. As Qing literary historian Zhang Xuecheng remarks:

In my opinion, wherever official honors are proffered, the wise and the talented will vie for them. In that sense, the scholar pursues learning for the same reason that the farmer tills his fields, and there is nothing at all unusual about it. But a woman's writing is not her vocation, and so when a woman happens to excel as a result of her own natural endowment, she needs not compete over style, nor be stirred by the promise of fame and reputation. (Quoted from Mann, 1992, pp. 44–5)

According to this view, women's writing amounted to nothing more than pastime, having no practical purpose to it. Nor was it a painstaking endeavor, as their natural endowment needed no cultivation. Therefore, women did not achieve worldly fortune and fame through writing.

In the early twentieth century, however, educated Chinese women began to write seriously for publication and pursue literature as a career. The autobiographical sentiment most saliently characterizes women's writing at that time. What, then, were the circumstances that compelled female writers to take up the writing of their life stories? How did autobiography fare in modern China? A brief account is in order here of the social, political, and intellectual context that provide a backdrop against which we can explore these issues. The first and foremost factor that enabled women to write was their access to modern education in the public space of school vis-à-vis traditional gender education in the private home. Missionary girls' schools were established in China toward the latter half of the nineteenth century, first in southern and then in the northern provinces. Western-style textbooks for liberal arts education combined with Confucian classics. These new educational institutions freed girls from the walled domain of the Confucian home and opened an avenue to literacy for them.<sup>19</sup> After secular Chinese girls' schools came into being during the first decade of the twentieth century, co-educational schools followed within the next ten years. Literacy empowered Chinese young women, liberated them from their traditional confines, and prepared them to take the new intellectual challenge in the 1920s.

The New Literature Movement, with the May Fourth Movement as its highpoint, most directly impacted the first generation of educated

Chinese women in their choice to write professionally. In 1915, Chen Duxiu (1880–1942) started in Shanghai a journal called *Youth Magazine* (Qingnian zazhi) which became *New Youth* (Xin qingnian) in 1916. *New Youth* condemned Confucianism and acclaimed Western thought as China's way to cultural, literary, and political modernity. The year 1917 saw the publication of Hu Shi's (1891–1962) famous essay "Some Modest Proposals for the Reform of Literature" (Wenxue gailiang chuyi) in *New Youth*. The eight guidelines of writing laid down in his essay include: 1) Writing should have substance, 2) Do not imitate the ancients, 3) Emphasize the technique of writing, 4) Do not moan without an illness, 5) Eliminate hackneyed and formal language, 6) Do not use allusions, 7) Do not use parallelism, 8) Do not avoid vulgar diction. The promotion of candid expression of one's true feelings without superfluous ornaments and formal constraint fostered a new literature more easily approachable by writers unversed in traditional learning and untrained in conventional forms of composition. In the meantime Hu Shi's Literary Revolution established the vernacular language (*baihua*), as opposed to classical language (*wenyan*), as the major form of literary discourse. Pushing beyond Hu Shi's ideas of reform, the more radical Chen Duxiu published "On Literary Revolution" (Wenxue geming lun) in *New Youth* in the same year. In the essay he unreservedly advocates "a plain and lyrical nationalist literature," "a fresh and sincere realist literature," and "a clear and common social literature" (pp. 140–45). In 1918, through Hu Shi's translation, the heroic Nora in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (Wan ou zhi jia) took China by storm for her rebellion against patriarchal oppression and confinement of the home. This act of self-assertion inspired many young women, as well as young men, to break away from parentally arranged marriage in search of the freedom to choose their own spouse. Thus, the stress on "substance" and "genuineness" in New Literature gave unprecedented sanction to self-expression in literature.

Under the auspices of the New Literature Movement, educated women began to make a living by writing. The establishment of the vernacular as a respectable means of written discourse, the ethos of individualism, and the creative space provided by literary journals, all led to a proliferation of women's autobiographical fiction. Notice, however, that educated women camouflaged their life stories as fiction during the May Fourth period (1917–1926). They made their interior experience, romantic love in particular, the major subject matter. For a while, writing one's personal life/love stories came into vogue and satisfied what Leo Ou-fan Lee calls the



“autobiographical mania” (1973, p. 285) of Chinese readers and writers. The legitimacy of women’s autobiographical fiction rested with its discursive power that endorsed the individual’s rebellion against diverse institutions of oppression, most characteristically, arranged marriage and conventional hierarchical human relationships in the family and society. Through the discourse of love and personal liberation, women writers joined forces with their male contemporaries in their strife against feudalism.

Endorsement of the autobiographical sentiment, however, turned out to be transient. After the shaky coalition between the Nationalist and Communist Parties broke down with Jiang Jieshi’s (1887–1975) massive purging of leftist forces in 1927, most intellectuals, deeply disillusioned, turned to Marxist and Communist ideologies as a collective choice. Under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers (*Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng*) was formed in 1930 to promote proletarian literature. With leftist literature on the rise, women writing their lives even in the disguise of fiction became a risky affair, for the “autobiographical” had been divested of the discursive power that it had possessed during the May Fourth period and had come to be viewed as “bourgeois” and “self-indulgent.” In the 1930s, with increasing Japanese aggression, literature for national defense made it politically disabling for a writer if his or her work was labeled “autobiographical.” The ideal of individualism that prevailed during the May Fourth period yielded to a preoccupation with China’s internal political conflict and national survival. The leftist literary ideology, the new mainstream, demanded that writing represent social realities and the nation’s struggle in its crises, denouncing literature that centered around individual thought, emotion, and lifestyle. The subjective and the personal came to be severely criticized as lacking in social consciousness. The new literary ideal of social and political application took many women writers to task for their inability to move beyond their private concerns to a broader vision of social reality,<sup>20</sup> leading to what Wendy Larson calls the “demotion of gendered literature” (1993, p. 59). The suppression of a gender specific literature precluded the possibility of women’s continued self-articulation in fiction.

Paradoxically, however, full-length autobiography as a genre, *vis-à-vis* traditional Chinese short self-narrations appended to more important texts, emerged at the very historical juncture when individual expression yielded to collective action. I contend that the leftist literary ideology of social engagement and removal of private sentiments presented an opportunity

as well as crisis for women's writing. It channeled women's impulse toward self-representation into openly proclaimed autobiography without the mask of fiction. After all, autobiography was a genre still in the making and too marginalized to carry any critical weight and assume any social responsibility in the eyes of the intellectual mainstream. Therefore autobiographical storytelling provided a fissure, a space, in which women writers continued to articulate their personal concerns.

In the meantime, I challenge the assumption that the leftist ideology monolithically controlled the Chinese literary scene. At the height of leftism Western autobiography came to China through translation, which gave great impetus to Chinese women's autobiographical practice. Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782–1789) stands out as one of the most indisputable examples. Rendered into Chinese by Zhang Jingsheng<sup>21</sup> (1888–1969) for the first time in 1928 as *Chanhui lu*, Rousseau's unrestrained, unapologetic preoccupation with the growth of the individual self captured the imagination and set the trend for both female and male writers of China at the time. In the preface to *My Life*, for instance, Su Xuelin (1967) confirms the enormous impact of Rousseau's work in early twentieth-century China:

At that time, a French saying spread to China that the most beautiful literature in the world is autobiography. A part of Rousseau's *Confessions* was translated into Chinese. Under such influence, many writers started writing autobiographies or confessions. Urged by the trend of the time, I also took this path. (Preface, p. 3)

Western women's autobiographies were also rendered into Chinese and inspired Chinese women writers to pursue the same literary goal. Xie Bingying claims that when she wrote *Autobiography of a Female Soldier* (1936), she looked to Isadora Duncan's (1877–1927) *My Life* (1927) and Agnes Smedley's (1892–1950) *Daughter of the Earth* (1929); (1936, Preface, p. 4),<sup>22</sup> as sources of inspiration. Western autobiographies translated into Chinese rekindled the autobiographical desire in women's writing and helped prize open a space in which Chinese women writers continued to utter what mattered to them personally.

Under Western influence, liberal intellectuals in China strongly encouraged the writing of autobiography. Hu Shi, who promoted the individualistic ideal as well as the vernacular, urged people to write their

lives. Women writers responded to his call and began to come forth with their life stories. Su Xuelin remembers Hu Shi's support of (auto)biographical writing and regards his *Self-Narration at Forty* (Sishi zishu, 1933) as a role model in the preface to *My Life* (1967, p. 1). In "How I Came to Write My Autobiography," Buwei Yang Chao also attributes her autobiographical effort to Hu Shi's personal inspiration (1967, p. 1). Yuenren Chao points out that Hu Shi's "The Biography of Li Chao" (*Li Chao zhuan*, 1919)<sup>23</sup> and *Self-Narration at Forty* set examples for Buwei Yang Chao's autobiographical endeavor (1947, Foreword, i). Thus, we can see that the desire of self-representation, suppressed in fiction in the 1930s, found outlet in a different genre fanned by Western autobiographical culture and Chinese liberalism. As no other available means of representation permitted and contained women writers' impulse to tell their personal histories, the advent of full-length autobiography was a matter of necessity, a historical inevitability.

What did women writers accomplish in autobiography? My research shows that as the requirement of social and political application in literature compelled them to redirect their self-representational desire from mainstream fiction into the less noticeable autobiography, women writers did not just fill the new niche with the same plot of romantic love that had informed their fiction. In their fiction, the female protagonists often appear as lovers in a self-chosen relationship or wives in the modern, nuclear family, new identities vis-à-vis traditional gender roles in the conventional household. In their autobiographies, however, they changed their strategy of self-expression and emerged as writers, repressing and sublimating romantic love into literary creativity. Through the celebration of themselves as writing agents, pursuit of the freedom to love with their bodies gave way to aspiration to create with their intellect. They successfully established the unprecedented female identity unequivocally as writers.

The new female identity rendered women writers at least three services: it counteracted traditional portrayals of women as martyrs of male-defined, physically constituted virtues; it clearly marked the autobiographical subjects in terms of self-definition from the lovers and wives in women's (often their own) fiction; it also set them off from their contemporary male writers' autobiographies. The key to investigating this distinct identity pivots on intellectual disembodiment, a gesture to break away from women's conventional definition based on biology and to reinvent themselves through literary talent. As I remarked earlier, women's talent did not count

in the real world in traditional times. What did count for women was feminine virtue performed through the body, such as sexual chastity, foot-binding, self-mutilation, and widow suicide. For example, countless traditional biographies of women by male writers and historians focused narrowly on women's willingness to hurt and destroy their own bodies to earn a good name. Such representation defined women as nothing more than corporal beings. More often than not, female writers in the past accepted and complied with the gender norms imposed on them. In contrast, women writers in the 1930s celebrated themselves as tellers of their own stories and carved out a brand-new image away and against conventional views of women as somatic beings with little intellect. This new identity also obtained for women writers a subject position vis-à-vis traditional women's status as object of male representation.

The same cerebral turn clearly distinguished women's autobiography from their fiction. In fiction, female protagonists, lovers and wives so to speak, spill their grievances into the more private forms of diary and letter but never aspire to the status of the public writer, and writers are gendered as male rather than female. As Wendy Larson incisively points out, "Never did [women writers] depict women who are directly and unproblematically writers" (1998, p. 147).

In their autobiographies, however, women writers no longer accepted the positions of lovers and wives, but redefined themselves as professionals, most often as writers, without ambiguity. They often concentrated on their pursuit of education, their paths to independence, and their literary accomplishments, minimizing, and in some cases eliminating, details of marriage, sexuality, and childbearing. A professional image unencumbered by family relationships and household chores, this self-reinvention constituted a significant revision to the gendering of the writer as male in women's fiction.

It is worth noting that, quite unlike many of their contemporary male writers' self-representations, the newly refashioned self in women's autobiography by no means embraced the role imposed on writers by the leftist literary trend to represent contemporary practical issues and social realities since the 1930s. While male writers of the time portrayed literary work negatively and sought to apply themselves in socially and politically more significant ways in their autobiographies (Larson 1991, pp. 1–10), many women writers did not share this tendency. Instead, women writers held fast to their literary identity, as writing meant to them nothing less

than “an existential art of self-definition” (Feuerwerker 1975, p. 158). The difference in self-perception as writers between Chinese female and male writers finds a parallel in the way that some Western feminist critics of autobiography resisted the postmodern skepticism about self and authorizing. As Nancy K. Miller (1988) insists, “... the postmodern decision that the Author is Dead and the subject along with him does not ... necessarily hold for women, and prematurely forecloses the question of agency for them” (p. 106). By the same token, it was impossible for modern Chinese women writers to squander their new privilege as writers, simply because taking up writing as a profession and means of livelihood was an unprecedented accomplishment and an avenue to emancipation from traditional profiles and gender roles.

Placed in a global context, modern Chinese women’s life writing adds a different dimension to the current theorizing and study of women’s autobiography. Feminist theorists of women’s autobiography in the late 1970s, such as Mary G. Mason and Estelle C. Jelinek, already began to debunk the myth of autobiography as a linear narrative on the development of Western white male subjectivity (Smith & Watson 1998, pp. 8–10). In the years that followed, diverse new conceptions of women’s autobiography proliferated. Of reference value to Chinese women’s autobiography, Françoise Lionnet’s concept of “autoethnography” refers to “the defining of one’s subjective ethnicity as mediated through language, history and ethnographical analysis” (Smith & Watson, p. 177). Domna C. Stanton’s coinage “autogynography” draws attention to a whole spectrum of characteristics of some women’s autobiographical writing — narrative discontinuity, domestic details, female bodily desires, and what not (Smith & Watson, p. 137). To assist the reader in better understanding women’s self-representation as opposed to men’s, Sidonie Smith (1993) contrasts the traditional autobiographical male self, typically depicted as unencumbered by the body, with the ways in which many Western women writers take up the body in negotiating their gender, cultural, and racial identities (pp. 1–24). Feminist autobiography critics, such as Susan S. Friedman and Mary Mason, observe that Western women’s autobiographies typically feature female identity defined in relational terms (Smith & Watson, pp. 72–82, 321–24). The single-minded emphasis on intellectual pursuit and literary accomplishments in Chinese women’s autobiographies most conspicuously differs from the use of life writing as a means of achieving ethnic or sexual identity in the multi-cultural West. Chinese women writers

first and foremost avoided the rhetoric of embodiment and family relation as parameters of self-definition, a strategy sometimes employed by Western women writers. Still more intriguingly, modern Chinese women writers' self-conscious erasure of their marriage, family, and children in their autobiographies much resembled the physically unencumbered identity established in Western male writers' autobiographies, as remarked by Smith. Indeed, almost all the Chinese women autobiographers tended to deny their gender identity and tried to identify with male rather than female literary predecessors. With their salient feature of intellectual disembodiment, autobiographies by modern Chinese women contribute importantly to the rich tradition of women's life writing worldwide.

### The Anxiety of Modern Chinese Women Writers' Autobiography

So far, I have attempted to show how modern Chinese women's autobiography grew out of its historical circumstances and what women writers accomplished in the genre. I hasten to point out that they shared with Chinese ancients the sense of taboo about self-exposure, which revealed itself in the process of their storytelling. Most of them displayed a considerable amount of psychological hindrance in writing their personal history and usually resorted to prefaces or other means to rationalize, defend, and apologize for their autobiographical acts. For instance, Su Xuelin's life writing most clearly exhibits such tension. In the preface to *My Life*, Su invokes Hu Shi's appeal for autobiography in order to legitimize her act. She felt embarrassed about writing her life, because she thought she had little literary and academic attainment to deserve it (Preface, pp. 1–3). Su performs the same ritual of modesty in the preface to *Ninety-Four Years of a Floating Life*, where she insists that she was “compelled by circumstances” to write it. To the repeated invitations of the editor and publisher, she replied: “I have *Love for My Mother*<sup>24</sup> ... and *My Life* ... Besides, only a person of historical importance deserves to write an autobiography. I am an unworthy and unaccomplished person. If I do the same, wouldn't I be a laughingstock? Let's just forget about it” (Preface, p. 1). Su's misgiving confirms the Chinese historical notion that an autobiography should be an account of the subject's public deeds, not their private life, just as traditional biography focused on a person's

communal services, literary achievement, and moral virtue. The fact that she shared this idea sheds much light on the ways that her contemporary female writers chose to concentrate on their career and omit details of their family life.

In Xie Bingying's case, her foreword to the 1936 edition of *Autobiography of a Female Soldier* reveals that writing her autobiography also proved to be a difficult process. Although by 1930 she had completed the narration of her life in elementary and middle schools, she would not have thought of publishing it but for the urging of a publisher. At the end of the foreword, she acknowledges her debt to Western role models that she found in modern dancer Isadora Duncan's *My Life* (1927) and leftist journalist Agnes Smedley's *Daughter of the Earth* (1929). It was due to the inspiration she found in these two women's courageous acts to write their life experiences that Xie's determination prevailed over psychological hurdle and cultural etiquette (Foreword, pp. 1–5). By this, however, I do not intend to create a binary opposition between Chinese reserve and Western candor, for many Western women writers also tried to rationalize their autobiographical acts, even Isadora Duncan and Agnes Smedley who inspired for women writers in China.

Chen Hengzhe's *Autobiography of a Chinese Young Girl*, an account of the young female subject's unbending will in pursuing education against the odds of her time, was written in English and published in 1935 in the United States under the name of Chen Nan-hua. According to her own explanation, she concealed her real identity so that the story "might be taken as a kind of specimen" of her generation of women who struggled in the "whirlpool of cultural and social conflicts" of China and "attempted to shape their own lives from that whirling current" (Foreword, p. vi). Here the writer's individual history embodies the untold stories of numerous women in China's agonies and convulsions of modernization. In spite of her explanation, the writer's decision not to use her real name in this narrative of outspoken feminism insinuates a need for invisibility that resonates with the traditional Chinese dilemma created by the desire for and the taboo against self-representation.

Unlike many of its contemporary works, Lu Yin's autobiography does not depend on a self-written preface to justify its existence. However, it took repeated efforts on the writer's part to eventually come forth with her story. According to Lu Yin's biographer Xiao Feng (1982), Lu Yin started writing her life story entitled *A Brief Biography of a Girl Named Yin* (Yin

*niang xiao zhuan*) in 1919 while she was at college. Instead of publishing it, however, Lu Yin destroyed it (p. 25). In her autobiography, Lu Yin (1934) recalls how anxious she felt in the writing process:

But this kind of experimental work should be kept as quiet as possible. Otherwise, if it came out bad, I would be a laughingstock. Therefore, I stayed away from everybody everyday, hiding in a corner in the library and writing secretly. A few days later I read over my writing and found it disorganized and unsystematic. Discouraged, I put it away at the bottom of my suitcase. This unfinished draft was never completed. Two years ago I burned it. It is nothing now but a trace of memory in my writing career. (p. 80)

The secrecy and shame might well have derived from a pang of conscience against acting as one's own historian. Her figurative self-destruction might also be a manifestation of guilt about the "immodest" project of self-commemoration. She imagines writing another autobiography at an older age and hopes to earn the right to it with "one or two literary masterpieces" (p. 88).

However, modern Chinese women writers' self-representational complex compelled them to tell their individual stories despite the repressive literary ideology of their time and cultural disapproval in general. Leaving behind the images of romantic lovers and frustrated wives in their fiction, women writers adopted textual work as the term of self-definition and portrayed themselves as the first generation of women writers and other professionals in the space of autobiography.

## The Variety of Modern Chinese Women's Autobiography

Given the tremendous amount of cultural, historical, and political difficulty, Chinese women writers performed feats in pouring out the stories of their lives at a time when China could least afford to foster the writing of autobiography. These stories told in the unique voices of the writers during the war years will throw new light on the Chinese autobiographical tradition and play a vital role in enriching and redefining the study of Chinese autobiography. In the following pages, I will briefly discuss the writers and their narratives represented in this volume.



Set in Beijing during the May Fourth period, An E's "How I Left My Mother" plays out the silent psychological drama between the female subject and her mother in the daughter's struggle to leave the confines of home and become an active patriot. The daughter was a college student actively involved in the May Fourth Movement. One day she was shocked and humiliated to find that her mother had personally come to school to take her home. When they reached home, she lost freedom. Mother and daughter never confronted each other, each reading the other's mind exactly. They possessed equally strong wills, so neither gave in to the other. In this mental, unspoken enmity, their mutual love became mingled with frustration and hatred. The mother felt that she would rather see her daughter die than let her trespass traditional rules of propriety, and no one knew better than the daughter what the mother was thinking. In the end, the daughter seized the opportunity of her mother's short absence and left home to seek a life of independence in society. The story fully demonstrates the generational differences between the mother and the daughter and young women's struggle at the time to escape from the shackle of the family.

Bai Wei's "Jumping Through Hoops" reenacts the subject Huang Zhang's narrow escape from family and institutional imprisonment in the early 1920s. In the story, Huang Zhang and her two younger sisters all studied at Hunan First Female Normal School in Changsha. Their father, a wealthy and influential man in their hometown on the border of Hunan and Guangdong, expected to marry off the two younger girls to his local connections and force Huang Zhang back to her abusive husband and mother-in-law. Huang Zhang secretly made arrangements to travel to Changsha, Hankou, Tokyo, and eventually to Paris. However, her plan was discovered. Her father had bribed the school authorities, so they had the whole campus surrounded to keep watch on her. After repeated trials and failures, she eventually got away from a usually closed, unused entrance to an old lavatory with the help of her school friends. They called that little entrance their Arch of Triumph. "Jumping Through Hoops" also strongly critiques sex discrimination in China in the 1940s from an outspoken feminist point of view, which marks Bai's autobiography from many of her contemporaries' writings.

Chu Wenjuan's "Imprints of Life" tells of the subject's childhood misery and career struggle during the war years. The seventh daughter in a late Qing official's family in Zhejiang, the young girl was unwanted, neglected, misunderstood, and often depressed. She found comfort in poetry and

history, which continued in her adulthood. As an adult she participated in the May Fourth Movement and later became a teacher, writer, wife, and mother. The narrative offers a detailed description of her frustration with family life and the negative effect it had on her literary career. Particularly interesting is the portrayal of her stress and eventual success as a female editor of a literary journal in the Nationalist army where most officers harbored serious doubts about the competence of women.

Lin Beili's "A Journey of Twenty-Seven Years" offers a positive picture of mother-daughter relationship and shows the direct influence of the mother on the daughter's path to independence. Much of the narrative describes the subject's parents, especially the mother, Xu Yunhua, a unique woman active in her career pursuits. The narrator recounts how the mother transformed into a revolutionary from a young lady in the boudoir of a conventional, wealthy home and the hardship she experienced as a wife, mother, and widow. The mother's inner conflicts anticipated the double burden of career and family of modern Chinese women that was to persist for generations to come. In contrast to other women writers' representations of their mothers as surrogate oppressors on behalf of the patriarchal society, Lin portrays her mother as a role model and source of inspiration. What also gives the story texture is the portrayal of the mother's interference with the daughter's first love, the scar it left on the mother-daughter relationship, and their reconciliation during the war years.

Peng Hui's "A Brief Autobiography" begins with the subject's early life. The little girl's father died, leaving behind four young daughters and their widowed mother. Living with the sexism of the family and society, mother and daughters kept to themselves on their limited financial resources after the father's property was divided among his relatives. The gifted mother gave her daughters a good literary education at home through telling them stories from the rich repertoire of Chinese folk literature. After the mother died, the four orphaned girls paid for their school education with their dowries. Literary preparation at home and at school helped pave the way for the subject's later career as writer and translator. As an adult, the subject married and had children. Her writing career was continually disrupted by childcare and by the war. But she managed to read, write, translate, and publish.

Xie Bingying was an internationally acclaimed writer and feminist. "Midpoint of an Ordinary Life" recalls the young Bingying's fight to resist foot-binding and arranged marriage, her patriotic passion, her experience

as a soldier, writer, and editor, and life as a mother determined to bring up her children for China. Her personal story was closely bound up with the history of China during the turbulence of the 1920s and throughout the War of Resistance against Japan. At the conclusion of the narrative she apologizes for her “unworthiness” and resolves to work harder to make herself a more useful person in society.

Ye Zhongyin’s “My Autobiography” begins with the heroine’s lonesome childhood and the the new self she found in singing, dancing, and acting after entering school. As acting was not open to women and was considered a lowly occupation then, the subject’s pursuit of acting as her life’s work reveals much about her personality as well as the changing gender norms in her time. As a professional actor, she participated in “drama for national defense” together with eminent dramatists during the War of Resistance against Japan. Performing numerous Chinese and foreign plays on resistance themes around China, she did her part for her country and improved steadily as an actor.

Zhao Qingge’s “Can This Also Be Called an Autobiography?” touches the reader’s heart with the young girl’s love for crickets in her solitude and the tragic loss of her loved ones during the Japanese occupation. The narrative begins with a nostalgic recollection of the North where the subject grew up. Abused by her father and stepmother, she had no one but her grandmother to turn to for love and comfort. Having no companions to spend time with, she found consolation in and fell in love with songs of crickets. When her pet cricket died, she placed it in a match box, buried it under an osmanthus tree she had planted with her own hands, and offered chrysanthemums at its grave. Upon graduation from high school at seventeen, she worked in the same school while preparing for college entrance examinations. She became friends with a young male staff member named Little Mahu who shared her passion for crickets. With the elapse of many years, the end of the story laments the loss of the subject’s homeland and lovingly remembers her grandmother and Little Mahu, who were among the countless people who had lost their lives during the war. Through reminiscences of the two people who touched the young girl’s life, the narrative gives a glimpse of her inner life and tangentially reflects the historical context of the time.

Zi Gang’s “Self-Criticism and Self-Encouragement” presents the challenge faced by a female journalist during the War of Resistance against Japan. Zi Gang wrote this short autobiographical account upon the request

of young women interested in pursuing journalism as a career. She reflects on her responsibility and questions her position to speak adequately for the wounded soldiers who fought for their country and female factories workers who toiled long hours to support their families, being aware of how her privileged status set her apart from the people who depended on her for representation. She also calls attention to the evils and corruption of high society that she as a journalist witnessed but lacked the power to expose. Gender issues constitute another area of the Zi Gang's concern in the narrative, particularly the conflict between career and family for women. Uneasy about focusing on herself, she declares at the end that the narrative only serves the purpose of self-motivation and does not provide a role model for other women.

For readers accustomed to book-length autobiographies that narrate lives in a more extended manner, it is crucial to note the scope of these narratives and how they helped construct and define the genre of autobiography in the historical context of the 1940s. As the narratives here demonstrate, any given moment in the writers' life deserves remembering. An autobiographical narrative can begin *in medias res* and capture a critical juncture in a subject's life as exemplified by An E's "How I Left My Mother" and Bai Wei's "Jumping Through Hoops." It can tell one's childhood trauma and give a detailed account of one's career path, such as Chu Wenjuan's "Imprints of Life," Peng Hui's "A Brief Autobiography," and Ye Zhongyin's "My Autobiography." It can focus entirely on reflections of one's professional life as Zi Gang's "Self-Criticism and Self-Encouragement." It can give a chronological account of family genealogy in addition to one's own life in the manner of Lin Beili's "A Journey of Twenty-Seven Years." It can also summarize one's life and career experiences up to the point of writing as does Xie Bingying's "Midpoint of an Ordinary Life." And it can certainly be a heart-warming, nostalgic as well as implicitly tragic tale like Zhao Qingge's "Can This Also Be Called an Autobiography?"

These autobiographical narratives, unique in their own ways, share common themes. They all portray the subjects' efforts to break out of the sex discrimination and oppression in the traditional home from which the only avenue to liberation was the pursuit of education and participation in the revolutionary tides of their time. Written during the War of Resistance against Japan, these stories all reveal the impact of the war on the personal lives and careers of the subjects and the ways in which they tried to help their country. Following the convention of full-length

autobiographies by women writers of the 1930s, these stories demonstrate the tendency to focus on the subjects' professional lives, most often their literary endeavors. Written in the early stage of the writers' careers, most of these narratives assume a forward-looking position at the end, moving beyond the integration of the present with the past. The drive to direct their stories toward the future and work harder for greater prospects in life invokes what Elizabeth N. Evasdaughter calls "futuristic women's autobiographies" (1995, p. 131). The narrators in the stories here envision not only a better future for themselves but also equality for all women and prosperity for their country.

Carefully annotated, these stories bring out sparkling points in the rich cultural and literary heritage of China, such as folktales, historical legends, musical drama, poetry, fiction, storytelling, and music. They also showcase a multitude of literary journals and newspapers that promoted the New Literature and contributed to China's modernization. Of these narratives, Ye Zhongyin's self-representation is particularly noteworthy, because it depicts the significant role that spoken drama played in China's struggle for national survival during the War of Resistance against Japan. The notes to her story offer rare information about modern Chinese drama and dramatists, information that cannot be found in any single sourcebook. All of these elements add to the value and usability of this collection as a textbook.

The translation and annotation took long hours of intensive work, but all the effort will be made worthwhile if this book contributes to the corpus of Chinese women's autobiographical narratives in English, fills the gap of women's life stories during the War of Resistance against Japan, and offers new perspectives to the study of women's autobiography in a global context, which are goals that I stated at the opening of these introductory remarks.

Jing M. Wang

# Notes

## *Introduction*

- 1 Tu Wei-ming has convincingly refuted this assumption. He envisions the Confucian individual self as “a series of constantly expanding concentric circles,” “an open system,” and “a dynamic process” that reach out to the external human world and to the entire cosmos. See Tu 1985, p. 133; Roger T. Ames, et al., 1994, pp. 180–3.
- 2 Using a section separate from the main body of the text as a way of inserting authorial self-account was practiced in the West as well. See Georg Misch pp. 307–25.
- 3 A complete translation of the biographies included in Liu Xiang’s compilation is found in Albert R. O’Hara, 1971.
- 4 Recent scholarship has examined how laudatory accounts of women’s lives in some of the histories served social functions. See Katherine Carlitz and T’ien Ju-k’ang.
- 5 See Gui Youguang, pp. 267–8.
- 6 See Wu Meicun, pp. 1014–7.
- 7 See Zhang Xuecheng, pp. 56–8.
- 8 Allegedly written around 1809, an incomplete version of the book was first published in 1870. The World Book Company claimed to have published it in its entirety in the 1930s. It is an account of the joys and sorrows in Shen Fu’s romantic and artistic life with his wife. Leonard Pratt and Chiang Su-hui observe that, instead of writing chronologically, Shen “takes particular topics and follows them each through his life, one at a time ...” They describe his six separate narratives as “layers” that Shen maps onto his “floating life.” See Introduction to Shen Fu, p. 14.
- 9 Lu Yin’s autobiography narrates the abuse the subject suffers as a child and her growth and achievement as a writer.
- 10 *Autobiography of A Female Soldier* tells the story of the young Bingying’s pursuit of education, struggle against foot-binding and arranged marriage, and

- experience in the Nationalist army. It was first translated into English by Adet Lin and Anor Lin as *Girl Rebel: The Autobiography of Hsieh Pingying* in 1940. Tsui Chi's version, *Autobiography of a Chinese Girl*, came out in 1943. The most recent translation is *A Woman Soldier's Own Story: The Autobiography of Xie Bingying* by Lily Chia Brissman and Barry Brissman published in 2001.
- 11 *My Tragic Life* focuses on the subject's battle to survive a destructive relationship and sexually transmitted disease while trying to pursue a career in literature.
  - 12 *My Life* includes sixteen previously published autobiographical narratives that remember the young Su Xuelin's childhood, path to education, achievement as a writer and literary scholar, and political antagonism with communism.
  - 13 *Ninety-Four Years* devotes a chapter to the subject's family genealogy with a focus on her mother and narrates at great length her research on Qu Yuan's poetry, while replaying many of the themes treated in *My Life*.
  - 14 *Autobiography of a Chinese Young Girl* concentrates on the subject's pursuit of education from childhood to her departure for the United States as a student.
  - 15 Encouraged by Virginia Woolf, *Ancient Melodies* presents the delights and difficulties of growing up in an upper-class extended family in Beijing with her father's wives, children, and servants.
  - 16 *Autobiography of A Chinese Woman* was Yuenren Chao's (1892–1982) English translation of his wife Buwei Yang Chao's original Chinese text (she published under the name Yang Buwei in Chinese). The publication of the English translation preceded that of the Chinese version by two decades. When the autobiography eventually came out in Chinese, it became two books — *Autobiography of a Woman* (*Yi ge nüren de zizhuan*, 1967) and *Miscellaneous Accounts of the Chaos* (*Zaji Zhao jia*, 1972).
  - 17 See Dorothy Ko, pp. 29–67.
  - 18 See Tan Zhengbi; Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang; and Kang-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy.
  - 19 See Ida Belle Lewis; Jane Hunter; and Pui-lan Kwok.
  - 20 See Yi-tsi Feuerwerker, p. 159; Wendy Larson 1998, pp. 177–88.
  - 21 Zhang has been rediscovered in recent years as one of the forerunners of the New Culture Movement. His approach to modernize China was sexual liberation and family planning. He studied in France in the 1910s and was among the first Chinese students to have earned a doctoral degree from a Western educational institution. A partial translation of *Confessions* was published in May 1928 in Shanghai, and a complete translation in September the following year, reprinted in February 1931. See Yang Qun.
  - 22 Lin Yutang first introduced Duncan's autobiography to China through a book review. Several different translations were published in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Yu Xijian's translation, *Wo de sheng huo*, was published in Shanghai in

1934. It was the only complete rendition at the time. Lin Yisheng rendered *Daughter of the Earth* into Chinese as *Da di de nüer*, which came out in 1932.
- 23 Hu Shi wrote “The Biography of Li Chao” in 1919 to promote women’s rights to education and inheritance of property. Li Chao died of sickness and depression at college at the age of 24, for her family had not only pressured her to quit school and marry but also disowned her financially.
- 24 This novella contains the female protagonist Xingqiu’s education in France, conversion to the Catholic Church, and submission to arranged marriage, closely intertwined with the narrator’s nostalgic portrayal of her mother. In *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1971), C. T. Hsia renders this title as *Bitter Heart*. In *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Women’s Autobiographical Writing* (1998) Lingzhen Wang translates it as *A Pricked Heart*. I base my translation on this semantic explanation: “‘Ji xin’ is taken from a line in *The Book of Poetry* (Shi jing). ‘Ji’ is a tree that survives very rarely. When ‘ji’ is young, it is called ‘ji xin.’ People sometimes compare themselves to tender trees in need of a loving mother’s nurture in order to grow. For this reason, love for one’s mother is called ‘ji xin.’” See Shen Hui, in *Celebrating the Ninety-fifth Anniversary of Professor Su Xuelin* (Qingzhu Su Xuelin jiaoshou jiu zhi jin wu huadan, 1995).

### How I Left My Mother

- 1 The Northern Expedition was a coalition between the Nationalist and Communist forces to wipe out imperialism and warlordism. They took Wuchang, Hubei, in October 1926 and fought all the way to Nanjing and Shanghai, ending with Jiang Jieshi’s (1887–1975) campaign to wipe out communists starting in April 1927.
- 2 One *li* equals about one third of a mile.
- 3 *Qipao* was a gown worn in the early Qing by Manchus of both sexes and all ages. Because Manchus are *Qiren* (Bannerman), the gown is called *qipao* (banner gown). By the 18th century, *qipao* came to refer exclusively to women’s gowns, usually long, body hugging, sleeveless, and laced. When *qipao* became fashionable all over China after the Nationalist Revolution in 1911, it embodied modernity and liberation, as wearing one-piece gowns had been men’s privilege previously. Eliminated in the 1950s through the 1970s, *qipao* revived in China since the 1980s.
- 4 This is more often known as Zhongshan Incident (Zhongshan jian shijian). On March 18, 1926, Jiang Jieshi had a gunboat named Zhongshan dispatched to the Huangpu Military Academy (Huangpu junxiao) in Guangzhou. Upon its arrival, Jiang began to purge communist members affiliated with the



academy and the Northern Expedition Army, suspecting they were plotting against him with the aid of Zhongshan and its crew.

- 5 A *Dream of the Red Chamber* (1791), one of the great novels in China, is a 120-chapter work, with the first 80 written by Cao Xueqin (1717–1763) and the last 40 by Gao E (1738–1815). Revolving around the star-crossed love between the talented, beautiful, and sentimental Lin Daiyu and her cousin Jia Baoyu, the novel portrays the fall of a feudal family. Baoyu is very afraid of his father, as his father often resorts to violence in disciplining Baoyu.

### *Jumping Through Hoops*

- 1 An important part of Confucian gender ethics, Three Followings dictate that a woman follow her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son(s) after losing her husband.
- 2 Ban Zhao, a female moralist and historian in the Han dynasty (260 BC – 220 AD), composed *Admonitions to Women*, the first work of feminine ethics in China. See Introduction, p. 8.
- 3 See note 1.
- 4 Four Virtues include feminine conduct, discourse, appearance, and work, respectively referring to preservation of chastity, humility in speech, propriety in dressing and deportment, and expertise in household chores.
- 5 Big World is the oldest entertainment venue in Shanghai, opened in July 1917. For its movie houses, theaters, dance halls, variety show rooms, and other amusement places, it is known as “China’s Broadway.”
- 6 Guan Daosheng (1262–1319) was a female calligrapher and painter in the Yuan dynasty (1206–1368).

### *Imprints of Life*

- 1 *Peach Blossom Fan* (1699), a musical drama by Kong Shangren (1648–1718), treats the fall of the Hongguang reign (1644–45) of Southern Ming (see note 4), with the famous love story between Hou Fangyu (1618–55) and Li Xiangjun as the nexus.
- 2 *Ci*, or song lyric, is a poetic genre that originated in the Tang dynasty (618–907). *Xiaoling* is the shorter form of *ci*, the more extended form being *manci*. Because *ci* titles point to set tune patterns, the practice of *ci* composition is called *tianci* or filling in lyrics.
- 3 *Song Lyrics of Ming Ke* is a collection of short lyrics by the Qing poet Zhang Huiyan (1761–1802). Contrary to his emphasis on representation of social

realities, the compositions in this collection are mostly nostalgic, sentimental, and romantic.

- 4 Southern Ming (1644–1662) is a general designation for the reigns established in southern China by the defeated Ming court after the Manchus took over.
- 5 *The Fungus Shrines* is a poetic drama by Dong Rong (1711–60). Set in the reigns of Wanli (1573–1620), Tianqi (1621–28), and Chongzhen (1628–44), it describes the heroic deeds of two female generals, Shen Yunying and Qin Liangyu, in defense of the late Ming court. In the final act, when they meet at a local temple, a divine fungus (lingzhi) sprouts in a bamboo grove. With the plant they make two small shrines where they place tablets of their loved ones who died in the historical turmoil. The play derives its title from this particular detail.
- 6 Emperor Hongguang, Zhu Yousong (?– 1646), reigned from 1644–1645 in Nanjing after the fall of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). He was captured in Wuhu in 1645 by Manchu troops and was executed in Beijing the following year.
- 7 Emperor Yongli, named Zhu Youlang (1623–62), was the last emperor of the Southern Ming. He was captured and executed by Manchu troops in southern Yunnan.
- 8 Qin Liangyu (1574–1648) and Shen Yunying (1623–1660) were both female military generals known for their heroic deeds in defense of the late Ming court against the Jurgens and later the Manchus. See note 5.
- 9 Double Nine, the ninth day of the ninth month in the lunar calendar, was a traditional Chinese festival. On that day people climbed hills or ascended heights to picnic and enjoy natural scenery. In 1930 the Nationalist government decreed that Double Nine should be September 9th in the solar calendar. The number “nine” was believed to be the extreme of longevity. Ironically, however, the subject’s mother died on a Double Nine holiday.
- 10 Vasily Yakovlevich Eroshenko (1889–1952) was a Russian writer. Lu Xun (1881–1936) translated some of his fairy tales into Chinese in the 1920s.
- 11 At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the Chinese delegation demanded that privileges enjoyed by Germany and later seized by Japan in Shangdong province be restored to China. When the conference turned down the demand, strong opposition occurred all over China. On May 4, students in Beijing held a demonstration in Tian’anmen Square. Along with workers’ strikes and boycott of Japanese goods, anti-imperialism and anti-warlordism reached a climax.
- 12 It is a temple dedicated to Emperor Wu of Han. During his reign (140–194 BC), one of the most splendid in the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), he enthusiastically patronized literature and Confucian learning.
- 13 A chamberlain of Emperor Wu of Han, Su Wu was sent in 100 BC on a mission

- to the Hun court. There, he sought to assassinate Wei Lü, a Chinese renegade in favor with the Hun ruler. Su Wu was imprisoned and called upon to abjure his allegiance to the Han court. As he refused to comply, he was sent to the deserts surrounding Lake Balkash, where he tended the flocks for the Huns for nineteen years. When he at last returned to the Han court in 81 BC, he had become a grey haired old man.
- 14 *Women's Star Weekly* was published in Tianjin from April 1923 to October 1924 under the supervision of Deng Yingchao (1903–91).
  - 15 Li Zhishan (1896–?) graduated from The First Female Normal School in Hubei in 1918. She became a member of the Nationalist Party in 1923 and worked for the Communist Party after 1949. At different times she was an editor of *Women's Star Weekly* and *Tianjin Women's Daily*.
  - 16 *Minguo Daily* existed in Shanghai from January 1916 to December 1931. In 1924 it was made the official organ of the Nationalist Party, superceded later by *The Central Daily News* (Zhongyang ribao).
  - 17 The supplement became a standard adjunct of Chinese daily newspapers early in the 20th century. At first it was a page reserved for chitchat and jokes. Since the Literary Revolution in 1917, editors began to use it as a space to discuss Western literature, social problems, and political theories for the propagation of modern ideas and practical knowledge.
  - 18 This implies that she planned to go to Wuhan to participate in the War of Resistance against Japan, Wuhan being located in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River in relation to Shanghai.
  - 19 *The Central Daily News* was established in Hankou in March, 1927. It was based in Shanghai from 1927 to 1929 and in Nanjing from 1931 to 1948. Official organ to the Nationalist Party General Committee, it continued publication in Taipei after 1949.
  - 20 Sun Fuyuan (1894–1966) was actively involved in the promotion of New Literature in the 1920s. At different times he was editor-in-chief to several major newspaper supplements.
  - 21 *Shanghai Journal* was founded by the British entrepreneur Ernest Major (1830–1908). Issued from 1872 to 1949, it is often quoted as an “encyclopedia” of modern Chinese history.
  - 22 *Reading* was founded in 1936 with Reading Publishing House (Dushu chubanshe), which became part of Three-Associations Book Store (San lian shudian) in 1948.
  - 23 On January 28, 1932, Japanese forces invaded Shanghai, where they were held at bay by the Cantonese Nineteenth Route army and Nanjing Fifth army for more than a month before the Chinese defenses crumbled. On May 5, 1932, a truce was arranged through international mediation, by which the Japanese agreed to evacuate the occupied areas of Shanghai and Wusong.

*A Journey of Twenty-Seven Years*

- 1 Sun Zhongshan, alternatively called Sun Yat-sen or Sun Wen, was the founder of the Nationalist Party and the Republic of China (1911–1949). The Three Principles of the People (San min zhu yi), nationalism (minzu), democracy (min quan), livelihood (min sheng), represent his major political ideal.
- 2 Li Yuanhong (1864–1928), a general serving under the Manchu rule, joined the Nationalist Revolution and was later made president of the Republic.  
Yuan Shikai (1859–1916), the first President of the Republic of China, died shortly after he proclaimed himself emperor.  
In the early years of the Republic, warlords fought among themselves for power in northern China.
- 3 *Zhuang yuan* was a designation of the candidate who stood first on the list of passers of the final examination in the civil service recruitment examination sequence. In the Song dynasty (960–1279) the top three passers were sometimes all called *zhuang yuan*. In the Yuan dynasty two candidates came out *zhuang yuan* from each examination. Highly coveted and esteemed, the designation usually led to a prestigious initial appointment and subsequent career in the civil service.
- 4 Formed in 1905 by Sun Zhongshan, the Revolutionary Alliance became the Nationalist Party in 1912.
- 5 Qiu Jin (1875–1907), alternatively named “Female Knight of Jianhu” (*Jianhu nǚxia*), was a poet and revolutionary. She insisted on women’s rights to financial independence and education. Convinced that a better future for women lay with a Western-type government, she joined her contemporary revolutionaries in overthrowing the Manchu government, for which she was executed in 1907.
- 6 Song Jiaoren (1882–1913) was a revolutionary in modern China. He assumed political position within the Nationalist government in 1912 and was assassinated on Yuan Shikai’s order the following year.
- 7 *The China Times* was established in Shanghai in 1907. It moved to Chongqing in 1937 and was discontinued in 1949. It was the major rival of *Shanghai Journal* (*Shen bao*). *Ed.*
- 8 *Hao* refers to one’s alternative name other than given name and style.
- 9 The Garden of Grand Vision is a garden in *A Dream of the Red Chamber*.
- 10 *Dao tai* was a quasi-official designation of an official in charge of a circuit (*dao*) in the hierarchy of territorial administration.
- 11 Jia Baoyu is the male protagonist in *A Dream of the Red Chamber*. See “How I Left My Mother,” note 5 (p. 206).
- 12 *Kun qu* is a kind of musical drama once popular in Southern Jiangsu, Beijing, and Hebei. *Ed.*

- 13 Daiyu happens to be the name of the female protagonist in *A Dream of the Red Chamber*.
- 14 Xu Zihua (1874–1936) was a well-known poet. She met and became friends with Qiu Jin in 1906. After Qiu was executed, Xu risked her life to bury Qiu and wrote eulogies for her.
- 15 Cai Juemin (1868–1940), or Cai Yuanpei, was an important educator in modern China. Along with other reform-minded intellectuals of his day, he promoted women’s education as well as co-education. He served as president of Beijing University from 1916 to 1926.
- 16 Xishi, a famous beauty in the early Spring and Autumn Period (722–468 BC), was presented by the King of Yue as a gift to the King of Wu to bewitch the latter and help bring down his kingdom.
- 17 On January 18th, 1915, the Japanese government presented the “Twenty-one Demands” to Yuan Shikai insisting on control of Shandong, Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, the southeast coast, the Yangtze river valley, joint operation of China’s iron and steel industries, and command of several important domestic administrations. After four months of unsuccessful negotiations, Japan issued an ultimatum to Yuan demanding his signature on the treaty on May 7, 1915, deleting Article 5 but retaining demands in regard to Fujian. On May 9, 1915, Yuan accepted the demands and illegally endorsed the treaty on May 25, 1919. On this account, May 7 and May 9 were both designated as National Shame Day. *Ed.*
- 18 This refers to the purging of left-wing members within the Nationalist Party in 1927.
- 19 In Chinese, “*Hao han bu chi yan qian kui*,” a common saying implying that it is unwise to strike back when one has no equal stand in defense.
- 20 Liu Dabai (1880–1932) was a poet from Zhejiang.
- 21 Liu Gongquan (778–865) was a calligrapher in the Tang dynasty. His calligraphy became very influential in later times.
- 22 On the night of September 18, 1931, Japanese forces launched a surprise attack on the Chinese army stationed in Shenyang, marking the beginning of Japanese invasion of China’s northeast.
- 23 See “Imprints of Life,” note 23 (p. 208). *Ed.*
- 24 This refers to Japan, as the Japanese national flower is cherry blossom.
- 25 On July 7, 1937 Japanese troops entered Beijing by way of Marco Polo Bridge (Lu gou qiao), which marked the beginning of Japan’s all-out war of aggression against China.
- 26 Yin is the young man’s last name, which happens to have the same pronunciation as the subject’s first name.
- 27 *Gong, shang, gongchi* are traditional Chinese music notes.
- 28 Autumn Society was founded to commemorate Qiu Jin, *qiu* meaning “autumn.”

- 29 *Rudiments of Music* (1864), compiled by Zhang He (?–?) of late Qing, contains twenty melodies. *Ed.*
- 30 “Three Repetitions of the Yangguan Tune” is a classic farewell song in the Tang dynasty. It consists of three verses, based on Wang Wei’s (669–759 or 701–761) poem “Seeing Official Yuan Er off to Xi’an” (Song Yuan Er shi Xi’an). Other poetic lines evoking sentimental feelings were later added to the song as refrains. The earliest music score dates back to the Ming dynasty. While there are many versions of the music score, Zhang He’s *Rudiments of Music* contains the version still in use today. *Ed.*
- 31 These are lines from Wang Wei’s “Seeing Official Yuan Er off to Xi’an.” See also note 30. *Ed.*
- 32 This is the last line in the third verse of “Three Repetitions of the Yangguan Tune.” See also note 30. *Ed.*
- 33 On August 13, 1937, Japanese forces attacked Shanghai.
- 34 Here, the author uses “the devils” to refer to the Japanese soldiers.
- 35 *Fabi*, the legal currency, was introduced by the Nationalist government on November 4, 1935. It was replaced after serious depreciation by *jinyuan quan*, the gold dollar coupons, on August 19, 1948.

### A Brief Autobiography

- 1 One *mu* equals to 0.0667 hectares.
- 2 *Biao tong* is a military title in the late Qing, a *biao* being the equivalent of a regiment. An officer commanding a *biao* is called a *biao tong*, *tong* meaning “to govern” or “a governor.”
- 3 Dating back to the Tang dynasty, “The Legend of the White Serpent” tells the story of Bai Niangzi, a woman who metamorphoses from a white serpent who longs for life in the human world. She takes her servant girl Xiao Qing, once a black serpent, and together they travel to Hangzhou. Bai Niangzi falls in love with and marries Xu Xian. When monk Fa Hai discovers their conjugal relationship, he uses his magic and imprisons Bai Niangzi under the Lei Feng Tower.
- 4 The legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai originated in the Tang dynasty. Zhu goes to school away from home disguised as a young man. She falls secretly in love with her classmate Liang Shanbo. Sometime after graduation Liang learns about Zhu’s real identity and her love for him, but then Zhu’s parents have promised her in marriage to another man. Liang dies heartbroken. On her wedding day, Zhu asks to stop at Liang’s grave to pay respects. The grave gapes open at her approach and shuts after she leaps into it. The lovers transform into a pair of butterflies and take off on their beautiful wings.

- 5 Xu Xilin (1873–1907) was an anti-Manchu revolutionary along with Cai Yuanpei and Qiu Jin. He joined the Restoration Society in 1904 and participated in the planning of the 1907 rebellion with Qiu Jin respectively in Anhui and Zhejiang. Upon discovery, they took action ahead of schedule, and Xu shot and killed Enming (?–1907), governor of Anhui. Both Xu and Qiu were executed.
- 6 The story concerns Emperor Zhenzong of Song (998–1022), his two concubines, Li and Liu, and Li's son. Zhenzong decreed that the concubine who gave birth to a son first would become empress. Li delivered her son first. Liu conspired to have the heir apparent exchanged for a leopard cat. She convinced the Emperor that the baby was a demon, and Li was banished to the “cold palace.” Liu also arranged to have the baby put to death, a task not executed. Li escaped and lived in the countryside in anonymity. The baby grew up to succeed Zhenzong as Renzong (1023–1056) at the age of eighteen. Renzong restored his mother in the palace and brought her persecutors to justice.
- 7 *Tanci*, or plucking rhymes, is a storytelling form composed of singing accompanied by instrumental music. It appeared in commercial cities of southern China during the Ming dynasty. By the early Qing, the genre had become extremely popular, particularly with women. Women not only read but also engaged in writing *tanci* scripts. The stories usually concentrated on romantic love and women's education.
- 8 *Heaven Rains Flowers*, composed in early Qing, is attributed to a woman named Tao Zhenhuai (1640?–1655?). Set in the reigns of Wanli (1573–1620) through Tianqi (1621–28), the story treats the political struggle within the court. Loyalty to the Ming dynasty informs the work.
- 9 *Twice Destined in Marriage* was authored by the female poet Chen Duansheng (1751–97). It depicts the love story of Meng Lijun and Huangfu Shaohua, both from prominent families serving the Yuan court. When Huangfu's father is executed for alleged treason, Huangfu runs away disguised as a commoner. Meng also escapes. Passing as a young man, she takes imperial examinations and becomes a military official. Meanwhile, Huangfu also obtains a military post in the court. After many setbacks the lovers reunite. In Liang Desheng's (1771–1845) reworking, Huangfu marries three women, which undermines the feminist position in the original story. Hou Zhi's (1764–1829) version, *Exemplary Women in the Golden Boudoir* (Jin gui jie), further curbs the feminist leanings in the work.
- 10 *Green Peony* attributed to Jin Yicheng (?–?) is a brilliant comedy of errors that ridicules the pseudo-intellectuals of the day. Two wealthy but mediocre students implore a talented friend to compose poetry for them, so that they could woo beautiful women, but the women outwit them and find better husbands.

- 11 *Flowers Born of the Pen* was written by the female *tanci* writer Qiu Xinru (1805–73). The female protagonist Jiang Dehua and her cousin Wen Shaoxia are betrothed lovers. When the court searches for beautiful women of the area, the enemy of Jiang’s father volunteers Jiang. Jiang runs away and becomes a prominent official in male disguise. In frustration, Wen leaves home and marries another woman. Later, Wen also serves as an official. When the truth of Jiang’s identity is revealed, the lovers reunite, but Wen keeps the other woman as a concubine.
- 12 During the Ming and Qing dynasties, *xiu cai* were those who had passed the elementary civil service examination and qualified to take the examination at the province level held every three years. *Ju ren* are scholars who had passed the latter examination.
- 13 See “How I Left My Mother,” note 5 (p. 206).
- 14 The basic Confucian classics include Four Books and Five Classics. The Four Books are *Great Learning* (Da xue), *Doctrine of the Mean* (Zhong yong), *The Analects* (Lun yu), and *Mencius* (Meng zi). The Five Classics refer to *Book of Poetry* (Shi jing), *Book of Documents* (Shu jing), *Book of Changes* (Yi jing), *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun qiu), and *Book of Rites* (Li ji).
- 15 Tang dynasty poet Bai Juyi (772–846) was styled Xiangshan.
- 16 *Song Lyrics Composed at Shuyu* by Li Qingzhao (1081–1141) was named after a spring called Shuyu in front of her residence.
- 17 *A Collection of Writings from the Ice-Drinking Studio* contains works of Liang Qichao (1873–1929), one of the most important political and literary reformers in the late Qing and Republican China. “Ice-Drinking Studio” is the name of his study.
- 18 Launched in Shanghai in September 1915 as *Youth Magazine*, it was renamed *New Youth* in 1916. Edited by progressive thinkers such as Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi, it propagated Western ideas, particularly science and democracy, and attacked all aspects of Chinese traditional culture. It ceased publication in 1926.
- 19 *New Tide* was founded on January 1, 1919 and discontinued in 1922. Its editor-in-chief were at different times Fu Sinian (1896–1950), Luo Jialun (1895–1969), and Zhou Zuoren (1885–1967).
- 20 *New China* existed from May 1919 to August 1920. Hu Shi, Cai Yuanpei, and Qu Qiubai (1899–1935) served both as editors and regular contributors.
- 21 The Literary Revolution, launched by Hu Shi in 1917, established the vernacular as the official means of writing. Under its auspices, women’s writing flourished.
- 22 On May 30, 1935, soldiers under British command shot several striking workers in some foreign cotton mills in Shanghai. This event led to the May 30 anti-imperialist mass movement.
- 23 See “A Journey of Twenty-Seven Years,” note 22 (p. 210).



- 24 *The Big Dipper* was the organ of the Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers. This monthly journal was first published in September 1931 in Shanghai with Ding Ling (1904–86) as editor-in-chief. It was closed down in July 1932.
- 25 See “Imprints of Life,” note 23 (p. 208).
- 26 Nikolai Alekseevich Nekrasov (1821–77) was a Russian poet. Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860–1904) was a Russian short story writer and playwright. Both writers were highly influential in China in the twentieth century.
- 27 See “Self-Criticism and Self-Encouragement,” for biographical information of Zi Gang.
- 28 Song Yuan (1917– ), originally named Song Deyi, is a female writer from Xiangyin, Hunan.
- 29 Shao Lizi (1882–67) wrote on women’s issues and served as vice-president of Shanghai University and director of the political department of the Huangpu Academy in Guangzhou at different times. He joined the Revolutionary Alliance in 1908 and the Nationalist Party in 1919. After 1949, he held high-level official posts in China.

### *Midpoint of an Ordinary Life*

- 1 See “A Brief Autobiography,” note 12 (p. 213).
- 2 *Kangxi Dictionary*, completed in 1716, was compiled under the order of Emperor Kangxi (1662–1722) in the Qing dynasty. *Ed.*
- 3 See “How I Left My Mother,” note 1 (p. 205). *Ed.*
- 4 The Sui Garden was Qing poet Yuan Mei’s (1716–98) garden home, where he fostered the literary talents of young women. He stressed the importance of personal feelings and technical perfection in poetry, as expressed in *Poetry Talks from the Sui Garden* (Sui yuan shi hua).
- 5 *Three Hundred Poems of the Tang* (1763 or 1764) is a collection of Tang poems compiled by Sun Zhu (1711–78) of the Qing dynasty. Of some 130 anthologies of Tang poetry, it is by far the most widely read. Since its original publication, it has served in China as children’s first introduction to the Chinese poetic tradition, while enjoying immense popularity among adult readers. *Ed.*
- 6 See “A Brief Autobiography,” note 14 (p. 213). *Ed.*
- 7 Sima Qian’s (145–86 BC?) *Records of the Grand Historian* is a comprehensive history of China from the reign of the mythical Yellow Emperor (2697–2599 BC) to that of Emperor Wu of the Han (140–87 BC). It is the first of *The Twenty-Five Histories* (Ershiwu shi).
- 8 See “A Brief Autobiography,” note 14 (p. 213). *Ed.*
- 9 See “A Brief Autobiography,” note 21 (p. 213). *Ed.*

- 10 Volume I of *A Collection of Short Stories* was first published in 1919, Volume II in 1933. They contain stories by European, American, French, and Russian writers that Hu Shi rendered into Chinese. *Ed.*
- 11 “On the Short Story,” first published in *New Youth* Vol. 4 No. 5 (1918), defines the short story as a genre and briefly reviews its origins in China. It is appended to Volume I of *A Collection of Short Stories*. *Ed.*
- 12 See “How I Left My Mother,” note 2 (p. 205).
- 13 See “A Journey of Twenty-Seven Years,” note 17 (p. 210). *Ed.*
- 14 *Water Margin* is a novel of banditry set in the Song dynasty by Shi Nai'an (1290–1365).
- 15 *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (1494?), attributed to Luo Guanzhong (1330–1400), is a historical novel about the political events during the period of Three Kingdoms (220–280).
- 16 See “How I Left My Mother,” note 5 (p. 206). *Ed.*
- 17 Lin Daiyu and Jia Baoyu are the female and male protagonists in *A Dream of the Red Chamber*.
- 18 This is a famous episode in *Water Margin*.
- 19 Pan Jinlian and Wu Song are the main female and male protagonists in *Water Margin*.
- 20 Su Manshu (1884–1918) was a poet, novelist, and painter. *Records of the Scattered Wild Geese* is one of his famous stories on tragic love.
- 21 Zhu Shuzhen (1095–1131) is a female poet, calligrapher, and musician. Based on her own marriage, she wrote about women's grievances in the boudoir. *Heart-Break Poems* is a collection of such poetry.
- 22 Established in Tianjin in 1902, *L'Impartial* had editorial offices at different times in Shanghai, Hankou, Hong Kong, Guilin, and Chongqing. Discontinued in Shanghai in 1966, it exists today in Hong Kong. It is an important source on the 1920s and 1930s. *Ed.*
- 23 See “Imprints of My Life,” note 20 (p. 208). *Ed.*
- 24 See “Imprints of My Life,” note 19 (p. 208). *Ed.*
- 25 Lin Yutang (1895–76), a renowned essayist and novelist, was known for promoting the familiar essay (*xiao pin wen*). He played a role in introducing Chinese culture to the West.
- 26 The Eight Great Prose Masters of Tang and Song include Han Yu (768–824), Liu Zongyuan (773–819), Ouyang Xiu (1007–72), Zeng Gong (1019–83), Wang Anshi (1021–86), Su Xun (1009–66), Shu Shi (1037–1101), and Su Che (1039–1112). *Ed.*
- 27 Xie Daoyun (330?–402?) was a female poet in the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420).
- 28 See “Jumping Through Hoops,” note 2 (p. 206). *Ed.*
- 29 See “How I Left My Mother,” note 1 (p. 205). *Ed.*

- 30 In many parts of the countryside then and until recent years, doors could be removed quite easily from the frames and used for various purposes. *Ed.*
- 31 See “Imprints of My Life,” note 20 (p. 208). *Ed.*
- 32 Established sometime in the 1920s, *Hebei Republican Daily* was published by Hebei Republican Daily Press until May 1929. *Ed.*
- 33 See “Imprints of My Life,” note 23 (p. 208). *Ed.*
- 34 All-China Association of Literary Resistance was a cultural coalition formed under the auspices of the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party. It existed from 1938 to 1946.
- 35 No further information has been found. *Ed.*
- 36 *Lighthouse* was founded in 1934 by the Communist Party branch at Xiamen University. *Ed.*
- 37 Liu Yazi (1887–1958) was a Chinese poet.
- 38 See “A Journey of Twenty-Seven Years,” note 25 (p. 210). *Ed.*
- 39 *Yellow River Literary Journal* existed from February 1940 to April 1944. It resumed publication in March 1948 and discontinued in August the same year. *Ed.*

### *My Autobiography*

- 1 “The long hair” is a disrespectful name given by the Manchu government to soldiers in the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64). They fought against Manchu rule and disobeyed the imperial regulation of retaining a pigtail at the back of the head. They chose to grow their hair long and wear it loose.
- 2 Li Jinhui (1891–1967) started his music career in the 1920s. He is chiefly remembered for his dramatic compositions for children.
- 3 Ying Fengzhen (1918–44), or Ying Yin, was a drama and film actor. After her lover was killed by the Japanese secret service, she suffered a major depression and took her own life.
- 4 No information has been found.
- 5 *The Revived Rose* (1924), written by Hou Yao (1900–45), dramatizes the main characters’ fight for freedom to choose their own spouses. The female protagonist repeatedly attempts suicide to escape from her arranged marriage. In the end saved by her lover, they begin a new life.
- 6 *Comrades in Arms* (1932), written by Tian Han (1898–1968), focuses on the patriotic passion of educated youths during the War of Resistance against Japan.
- 7 No information has been found.
- 8 China Travel Drama Troupe was founded by Tang Huaiqiu (1898–1954) in 1933 in Shanghai. Staging both Chinese and foreign plays around the country in support of national defense during the War of Resistance against Japan, it

- played an important role in the development of Chinese spoken drama. It was disbanded in 1947.
- 9 National Drama Training School was founded in 1935 by Chen Lifu (1900–2001) and Zhang Daofan (1897–1968) in Nanjing, both cultural figures representing the Nationalist Party. During its fourteen years of operation, it staged many plays against Japanese aggression. In 1949, it merged with China Central Drama College (Zhongyang xiju xueyuan).
  - 10 *Mutiny* (1925), a satirical play written by Yu Shangyuan (1897–1970) in America, depicts two young lovers' escape from family oppression in the midst of a false alarm of a mutiny.
  - 11 In *The Artist* (1928), written by Xiong Foxi (1900–65), the impoverished artist Lin Kemei is persuaded to feign death by his greedy wife and brother to increase the market value of his paintings. It portrays the conflict between devotion to art and materialistic temptations.
  - 12 Also called *Xun An* in Chinese, *An Inspector* is adapted by Zhang Pengchun (1892–1957) into Chinese, based on Gogol's original play in Russian.
  - 13 This refers to playwright and director Yu Shangyuan.
  - 14 The English dramatist Henry A. Jones (1851–1929) wrote a play called *The Liars* (1897). Zhu Duanjun (1907–78) adapted the play into Chinese (n.d.). It is also called *Yuan huang ji* in Chinese.
  - 15 Ma Yanxiang (1907–88) was a playwright, director, and drama theorist.
  - 16 *La Tisbe* (1939?) was adapted by Zhang Daofan from Victor Hugo's (1802–85) *Angelo, Tyran de Padoue* (1835) which treats the actress and courtesan La Tisbe's love affairs. The adaptation was based on Zeng Pu's (1872–1935) translation published between 1906 and 1907.
  - 17 A director and playwright, Wang Jiaqi (?–?) was one of the first teaching faculty members at the National Drama Training School.
  - 18 Zhang Daofan, a playwright, educator, and essayist, studied fine arts in London University and returned to China in 1926. In 1935 he participated in the founding of the National Drama Training School. He was among those who established All-China Association of Literary Resistance in Wuhan in 1938. For information on the association, see "Midpoint of an Ordinary Life," note 33 (p. 216).
  - 19 No further information has been found.
  - 20 Chen Zhice (1894–1954) was a drama educator, director, and playwright.
  - 21 Ying Yunwei (1904–67) was a drama and film director.
  - 22 *Roar China* (1926) was originally a play written by Soviet writer Sergei Tretyakov (1892–1939), based on the Wanxian Incident in Sichuan in 1926 when the British navy opened fired on Chinese citizens. The Chinese version, translated by Ouyang Yuqian (1889–1962), was first staged in China in 1930. Ying Yunwei directed the play in 1933 and staged it in Shanghai on the second anniversary of the September 18 Incident.

- 23 No information has been found.
- 24 *Saving Oneself* (1935) was the first play written by Zhang Daofan.
- 25 *Wukui Bridge* (Wu kui qiao, 1930), *Fragrant Rice* (Xiang dao mi, 1931), and *Blue Dragon Pool* (*Qing long tan*, 1936) constitute *A Village Trilogy* (Nongcun san bu qu) written by Hong Shen (1894–1955). *Blue Dragon Pool* addresses issues of economic growth and religious belief in the course of the villagers' resistance to the building of a road through their cherry orchard and their quest for water during a severe drought.
- 26 *An Enemy of the People* (1927) was adapted by Zhang Pengchun from Henrik Ibsen's (1828–1908) play of the same title.
- 27 *Sunrise* (1935), written by Cao Yu (1910–96), is one of the masterpieces of modern Chinese drama. It revolves around the tragic life of Chen Bailu, a famous prostitute in Shanghai who witnesses all kinds of social evils. At the end of the play, she takes her own life in despair.
- 28 Liang Shiqiu (1902–87) translated *The Merchant of Venice* and all the other plays by Shakespeare into Chinese.
- 29 See "A Journey of Twenty-Seven Years," note 25 (p. 210).
- 30 Based in Wuhan, Raging Tide Drama Society was among many of the drama organizations founded in 1938 to engage in war propaganda by way of drama performance.
- 31 Founded in 1935, Xingying became China Film Studio in 1938 led by Yang Hansheng (1902–93). At different times it was based in Chongqing, Hongkong, Nanjing, and it moved to Taiwan in 1948.
- 32 Wang Ruilin (1905–56) graduated from the Drama Department of Beiping Art Training School in 1931. He became a film actor and held official posts in drama troupes and film studios
- 33 *The Night Before* (1937) is a play written by Yang Hansheng.
- 34 A song in the film *Children of Troubled Times* (Fengyun ernü), "The March of the Volunteers" (1935) was composed by Nie Er (1912–35), with lyrics by Tian Han. It is recognized as a classic in the history of Chinese music for its patriotism and mobilizing effect during the War of Resistance against Japan. China's acting national anthem since 1949, it was officially pronounced the national anthem in 1982.
- 35 Collaborated between Chen Liting (1910–) and Cui Wei (1912–79) in 1931, *Put Down Your Whip* (1936) is a famous street drama (jietou ju) produced during the War of Resistance against Japan. In the play the female protagonist describes atrocities inflicted on her homeland in the Northeast by Japanese troops.
- 36 No information has been found.
- 37 Scripted by Yu Ling (1907–1997), *Luminous Wine Glass* (1937) represents the patriotic deeds of a dance-hostess during the War of Resistance against Japan.

- 38 *Final Victory* (1938) was a play written by Tian Han on the theme of anti-Japanese aggression.
- 39 On the New Year's Eve of 1939, the drama circle in Chongqing staged a series of plays on the theme of national defense to commemorate the one-year anniversary of All-China Association of Dramatic Resistance (Zhonghua quanguo xijujie kangdi xiehui), one of many such organizations in support of China's war efforts. The plays performed include *Roar China*, *Demons Dancing in Revelry*, and *Fighting for Freedom and Peace*.
- 40 The "star system" refers to the making and the use of idols to increase box-office value.
- 41 Huang Zuolin (1906–94) studied drama at Cambridge University in the 1930s. As a celebrated director and theorist, he enjoyed a career of over thirty years teaching and directing Chinese and Western plays. He was a pioneer in combining Chinese and Western dramatic traditions.
- 42 Jin Yunzhi (1912–), pen name Dan Ni, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia University in 1935. She went to London to study drama in 1937. After returning to China, she became an actor and professor of drama. See note 27.
- 43 Wan Jiabao, or Cao Yu, was a celebrated playwright in modern China.
- 44 *Long Live China* (1938) was a play written by Tang Na (1914–88) about how people in the occupied areas mobilized themselves to fight Japanese aggression.
- 45 Long Live China Drama Troupe, with Wang Ruilin as head, was affiliated with China Film Studio.
- 46 See note 32.
- 47 Sichuan Province Drama School was founded in 1938 by Xiong Foxi. It was disbanded in 1941. Biao Zheng Drama Troupe was affiliated to this school, with Wang Ruilin as the head.
- 48 *Qin Liangyu* is a historical play written by Yang Cunbin (1911–89). See also "Imprints of Life," note 5 and note 8 (p. 207).
- 49 *Death of a Famous Actor* (1929), written by Tian Han, tells how actor Liu Zhensheng gives his life trying to keep his female protégé Liu Fengxian's faith in performance art and save her from temptations of the world.
- 50 No information has been found.
- 51 *Demons Dancing in Revelry* was first staged around 1936, with Shen Fu (1905–1994) as director. See also note 39.
- 52 Xiong Foxi was one of the earliest promoters of the Chinese spoken drama. He earned a Master's degree in drama from Columbia University in 1926 and returned to China to become a playwright, educator, and drama theorist.
- 53 Established by Xiong Foxi, *Drama Post* existed from April 1939 to May 1942. It published performance theories as well as literary works by both Chinese

- and foreign writers. It also carried plays, including those that promoted resistance against Japanese aggression.
- 54 Stressing the theme of national defense, *Sai Jinhua* (1936), scripted by Xia Yan, stages the patriotism of the titular heroine Sai Jinhua (1872–1936), a famous Qing courtesan. Xiong Foxi wrote a play on the same theme in 1937.
  - 55 No information has been found.
  - 56 *Christmas Eve* (1940), also called *The Evil Member of the Herd* (Hai qun zhi ma), was a play written by Xiong Foxi.
  - 57 Hong Shen adapted *Parasitic Grass* (1940) from Hubert H. Davis' (1869–1917) play *The Mollusc* (1907). Seeing the idle wives of some officials, Hong used the play to encourage women to do their part for their country. Xiong Foxi also adapted the play the same year. There is another rendition by Zhu Duanjun.
  - 58 China Art and Drama Society was established in Chongqing in December 1942 by Xia Yan, Yu Ling, Yang Hansheng and other drama professionals at the suggestion of Communist leader Zhou Enlai (1898–1976). It played an active role in promoting spoken drama as an art form and in rallying people's efforts to fight Japanese invasion. It was disbanded in 1946.
  - 59 Emphasizing themes of defiance and opposition during the War of Resistance against Japan, *Sorrow for the Fall of the Ming* (1940) by A Ying (1900–77) recounts the struggle of the Ming against the Qing. Zhou Xinfang (1895–1975) adapted the play to attack by innuendo the corruption of the Nationalist government through portraying the dissipation of late Ming court. In Zhou's version, when Emperor Chongzhen (1611–44) woke up to the reality, the peasant soldiers led by Li Zicheng (1606–45) had already surrounded Beijing. Chongzhen hanged himself.
  - 60 *Laura Murdock* (n.d.) was a play adapted by Gu Zhongyi (1904–65) from American writer Eugene Walter's (1874–1941) *The Easiest Way* (1908), in which Laura Murdock is a beautiful theatrical entertainer. Named Mei Luoxiang in Chinese, she depends on a man for a living and fails to win independence. When Qu Baiyin (1910–79) adapted the play, he called it *The New Laura Murdock* (1941). Xiong Foxi directed Qu's adaptation.
  - 61 Written by Cao Yu, *Peking Man* (1941) depicts three generations of parasitic men in a declining feudal family and envisions a better society composed of the working class and the modern educated.
  - 62 No information has been found.
  - 63 A play written by Hong Shen, *Cherry Blossom Dinner* (1942) exposes the corruption and non-resistance of the Nationalist government.
  - 64 No information has been found.
  - 65 *This Is Just Spring* (1934), a comedy by Li Jianwu (1906–82), tells how a police chief's wife, a social butterfly, helps a revolutionary to run away in spite of her unrequited love for him.

- 66 *The Spring and Autumn of the Heavenly Kingdom* (1941), written by Yang Hansheng, treats the internal political rivalry of the Heavenly Kingdom of the Great Peace (the Taipings). Proclaimed by the Hong Xiuquan (1814–64) in 1851, the Heavenly Kingdom started from Guangxi, marched through Wuhan, and settled in Nanjing in 1853. In 1856, power struggle within the leadership motivated Wei Changhui (1823–56) to assassinate Yang Xiuqing (1820–56). Hong issued an order to have Wei's entire family executed. Written and staged in 1941, the political significance of the play was obvious. Throughout the War of Resistance against Japan, Jiang Jieshi's priority was to wipe out the Communists. On January 4, 1941, 80,000 Nationalist soldiers ambushed a section of the Communist New Fourth Army of about 9,000 led by Ye Ting (1896–1946) and Xiang Ying (1898–1941), of whom 8,000 were killed. This is referred to as the Southern Anhui Incident (Wan nan shibian).
- 67 *Nation First* (1940) by Lao She (1899–1966) and Song Zhidi (1914–56) treats the tension between the Muslim and Han communities in north China and their concerted effort to fight Japanese aggression.

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- 1 The Children's Theatrical Troupe of Xi'an, was founded in 1935. After Japanese occupation in 1937, Shanghai saw the establishment of its own Children's Theatrical Troupe which consisted of orphans deprived of home and education. In other cities appeared similar organizations that traveled around the country to perform plays on resistance themes. All such troupes were disbanded in September 1942.
- 2 See "How I Left My Mother," note 3 (p. 205).