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April 9, 2021

To Adapt or to Resist?

Three Case of Intellectual Reforms in the Early Period of the People's Republic of China

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Abstract

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Amidst waves of radical mass political campaigns brought by the transition from the Nationalist China to the Communist China, intellectuals from the “old society” who experienced incessant torments stood out as a vibrant example of how Chinese people reacted to the drastic change of social, political, and cultural environment. The thesis conducts a comparative case study on three intellectuals who experienced the early period of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1976 but responded differently—Fu Lei, Qian Zhongshu, and Shen Congwen. Through scrutinization of the intellectuals' self-accounts, letters, memoirs written by their friends, the intellectuals' experiences showed that the question of to adapt or to resist the historical tide did not only come up once but continuously throughout the era. The three intellectuals' answers to the question changed overtime yet they answered the question out of careful and painful considerations each time. Those who chose to resist took enormous courage and resoluteness to bid farewell to the people and things they loved. Those who choose to adapt, without exception, demonstrated their determinedness in making the decision, persistence in carrying it out, and endurance through the countless struggles.

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Hundreds of thousands of people gathered around the square. Some waved around their Little Red Book, or *Quotations of Mao Tse-tung*, some held up portraits of the great Chairman Mao, and some swung the Chinese national flags. It was a lively sea of red. Waves of calls—“Long Live Chairman Mao!” “Topple the anti-party anti-revolutionaries!” “Down with the reactionary academic authorities!”—inundated the “enemies of the people” on the stage. The enemies were made to stand on chairs and wear tall paper hats. Heavy placards with their names crossed out with a big black X followed by their political charges were hanged on the necks of the enemies, forcing them to lower their heads and to endure hours of verbal and mental abuses. This was a typical scene during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in People’s Republic of China (PRC).

While the main target of the Cultural Revolution was party officials who strayed onto the capitalist road,¹ such as Liu Shaoqi² and Deng Xiaoping; intellectuals were often targeted the most citing that they were the “bourgeois reactionary academic ‘authorities’ ” (资产阶级的反动学术“权威”).³ In fact, even before the establishment of PRC in 1949, intellectuals were the targets in multiple political movements, starting from the Yan’an Rectification Movement from 1942 to 1944, the Thought Reform Campaign in 1951, the Pluck White Flag Campaign in 1958, all the to the Cultural Revolution. The most notable campaign was the Anti-rightists Campaign

¹. Central Committee of Communist Party of China, “Zhongguo gongchan dang zhongyang weiyuan hui guanyu wuchan jieji wenhua da geming de jue ding” 中国共产党中央委员会关于无产阶级文化大革命的决定 [Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution], *People’s Daily*, August 9, 1966, 1, point 5.

² The writer decides to follow the Chinese convention of listing last name before first name for Chinese names of historical figures appeared in the thesis.

³. Central Committee of Communist Party of China, 1, point 1.

in 1958 when over 300,000 intellectuals had been labeled as “rightists” and subsequently sent to labor camps, jails, and exiles to countryside.⁴

Before the Communist Party of China (CPC) announced its victory against the Nationalist Party, or Guomindang (GMD), in the Chinese Civil War, the CPC invited many intellectuals to stay in mainland China and promised to treat them well. While the main goal of the CPC was to improve the livelihood of peasants and proletariats, the Party also needed the help of the intellectuals in state-building especially because China’s international standing as a weak and backward country. In “Report on Problems around Intellectuals” (关于知识分子问题的报告) in 1956, Premier Zhou Enlai indicated that as early as 1939 the Party recognized that to quicken the development of socialism, other than the proletariat and peasants, the Party also needed to rely on the work of intellectuals and the close cooperation between physical and mental labor. The Party needed scientists, engineers, technicians, teachers, doctors, and literary art workers to help with works in different fields.⁵

At the same time, the Party considered that the intellectuals from the old society, the Republic of China (ROC) under the GMD’s rule, were greatly influenced by landlords, imperialists, and reactionaries,⁶ all of these were deemed as the “enemy” of the Party and the people. Therefore, the Party took on the great task to help intellectuals transform their thoughts by hosting study sessions of Marxist-Leninism, organizing teams of land reform, planning trips to factories and rural areas, and carrying out extensive political campaigns to suppress counterrevolutionaries.⁷ For intellectuals, the process was painful because they had to abandon

⁴ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, Third edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 512.

⁵ Enlai Zhou 周恩来, “Guanyu zhishi fenzi wenti de baogao” 关于知识分子问题的报告 [Report on Problems around Intellectuals], *People’s Daily*, January 30, 1956.

⁶ Zhou.

⁷ Zhou.

liberalist ideas that they had believed in and changed to solely follow the lines of the party-state. In addition, they had to participate in campaigns that often ended up targeting against themselves, their family members, and friends. These campaigns consisted of both physical and mental violence dealt great damage to the intellectuals' self-esteem.

In the new China under the CPC, intellectuals encountered a starkly different environment from before, whether it was the old China or western countries if they had studied abroad. Translator Yang Jiang (杨绛) noted the changes in intellectuals besides in environment: “ ‘Intellectuals from the old society’ experienced different degrees of change: some can’t change fully, some attempted to change but failed, and there is perhaps another group who remained unchanged stealthily” (就连“旧社会过来的知识分子”也有不同程度的变：有的是变不透，有的要变又变不过来，也许还有一部分是偷偷儿不变).⁸ Those who could not change decided to leave mainland China, and resided in GMD controlled Taiwan, colonies Hong Kong and Macau, or foreign countries. For example, fiction writer Eileen Chang (张爱玲) first left to Hong Kong and later settled in the United States; May Fourth Intellectual Hu Shi (胡适) and Minister of Education Zhu Jiahua (朱家骅) fled to Taiwan. Almost all of the intellectuals who chose to stay were publicly denounced at some point. Intellectuals who already joined the CPC and actively attacked their peers and friends in political campaigns often were still subject to struggle sessions, such as historian Wu Han (吴晗), Ding Ling (丁玲), and Zhou Yang (周扬). Even the founding member of the CPC, Chen Duxiu (陈独秀) could not escape from censure for not being communist enough. Only a few of the intellectuals who were communist members

⁸. Jiang Yang 杨绛, *Wo men sa* 我们仨 [We Three], Di 3 ban (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhì sanlian shudian, 2018), 128.

survived without serious criticisms, such as literary scholar Guo Moruo (郭沫若). Joining the Party, however, did not mean that they could endure through the era. Many intellectuals, both party members and non-party members, could not bear the political climate and committed suicides, such as translator Fu Lei (傅雷), archeologist Chen Mengjia (陈梦家), and fiction writer Lao She (老舍). Some attempted the suicide but at the end survived like fiction writer Shen Congwen (沈从文). Some never had the thought of suicide and survived, such as literary scholar Qian Zhongshu (钱锺书), Yang Jiang, and writer Zhang Zhaohe (张兆和).

This thesis intends to explore intellectuals' experiences and their respective life choices during the early period of the PRC from 1949 to 1976, spanning from the transition from the Republican China to the Communist China in 1949 to the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976. What prompted the intellectuals' different ends? How the intellectuals responded to the drastic change of the social, political, and cultural environment? How did their experiences show the role of personal agency in front of the historical tide? The thesis tries to answer these questions through a comparative case study on three intellectuals at the time: Fu Lei (1908-1966), Qian Zhongshu (1910-1998), and Shen Congwen (1902-1988).

These three intellectuals had similar experiences before 1949 yet responded to the era very differently. They were close friends who shared similar world views and believed in liberalism. Both Fu and Qian were international students who had studied in western countries such as France and United Kingdoms and returned in late 1930s. All three intellectuals resided in Beijing and Shanghai engaged in the realm of literature arts before liberation. Fu wrote extensive literature, art, and music critics in addition to translating French literature. Qian published a couple of fiction stories, literature reviews, and poem annotations. Shen created many short stories and novels as well as literature comments. They were university professors: Fu had taught

art history in Shanghai Art College; both Qian and Shen had taught at National Southwestern Associated University. In addition, neither of them was close to either combatant of the Civil War. Despite their similar experiences, their endings starkly differed from one another: Fu Lei committed suicide; Shen Congwen survived after failed attempt of suicide; and Qian Zhongshu survived without ever having the thought of suicide.

Other than their different endings, the three intellectuals stood out from the many intellectuals who also experienced this era that made them worth a closer look. Fu Lei's suicide was one out of self-will. He could have survived through the era but chose not to. Qian Zhongshu was a rare case who expected what would happen beforehand and yet still determined to stay and live through. Shen Congwen had attempted to suicide but no longer had the thought after he was saved. Instead, he changed his career path from a novel writer to a researcher to survive amidst the chaotic decades.

Through scrutinization of these individuals' self-accounts, family correspondences, published articles, friends' memoirs of them, and newspapers and party documents at the time, I narrated their respective personal experience in the early period of the PRC from chapters 1 to 3. To enrich the stories and emphasize that what they been through were not only limited to themselves, but I also interspersed their stories with other intellectuals', such as their family members and friends, confrontations to the era. These chapters not only provided the historical background, but also thoughts running in these protagonists' minds at the time. In an intimate and powerful way, their mental activities demonstrated the situations they were in, the psychological impacts of the political campaigns on them, and the reasons behind their decisions. In the conclusion, I compared the three intellectuals' decisions through different historical stages and analyzed values they held that led to their respective ends. Their experiences showed that to

adapt or to resist the historical tide was not an easy question. Those who chose to resist, either by leaving the nation or by parting with the living world, took enormous courage and resoluteness to bid farewell to the people, writings, culture, and nation they loved in the world. Those who chose to adapt needed to reinforce their will to live every time a stronger wave of pressure and distress pounded on them.

The thesis contributes to the academia in a few ways. First, there is a scare number of academic papers or monographs on the intellectual class' collective experience in persecutions in the early period of the PRC due to the topic's political sensitivity. Most of the studies revolved around the scholarship and literary contributions of individual intellectuals, biographies of individual intellectuals, the CPC political campaigns and policies on intellectuals, and experience of protagonists who are intellectuals in literary works. Thus, this thesis as a comparative case study of three intellectuals adds to the current academic discourse. Second, most of the sources used in the thesis had not been translated to English. My translation allows scholars who do not read Chinese to access these materials. Third, building on existent research on persecutions of intellectuals in other parts of the world, such as in the Armenian Genocide, the Spanish Civil War, and Nazi Germany; this thesis provides an additional perspective from China. Fourth, mimicking the approach in *A Literary History of Modern China* edited by David Der-wei Wang, the thesis aims to narrate history in a new way that focuses on personal agency. Contrary to the traditional approach of telling history from a macroscopic view, *A Literary History of Modern China* illustrates the history of China since the late 18th century to now through short essays on intellectuals and their works. Similarly, the thesis attempts to illustrate the social and political environment in the period by focusing on the intellectuals and their inner thoughts when they

were confronting the historical tide. As a result, it provided a more personal and immersive experience for readers to live through the era of turmoil with the protagonists.

Literature Review

There are rich academic researches on intellectuals' achievements and their contributions to both state-building and to the literary art world. Ye Liu wrote a comprehensive academic monograph on the relationship between Chinese intellectuals and state-building from imperial China to present, especially focusing on early modern China.⁹ Zhou (1960) examines on May Fourth Intellectuals' contribution to state-building as well as new thoughts they brought greatly reformed the society.¹⁰ Sleeboom-Faulkner (2007), on the other hand, looks into intellectuals' influences on academic reforms by examining closely on academic leaders in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.¹¹ Guan (2019) further elaborated how intellectuals who studied abroad greatly influenced the political system, social thought, cultural education, literary art in China; and as a result helped launch the new literature revolution and transformed Chinese literature.¹²

Meanwhile, a lot of works have been done on Fu Lei, Qian Zhongshu, and Shen Congwen's works and contributions. For Fu Lei, scholars explored Fu's contribution to expanding the realm of art history research and revolutionizing the writing of art history in China

⁹ Ye Liu 刘晔, *Zhi shi fen zi yu Zhongguo ge ming: jin dai Zhongguo guo jia jian she yan jiu* 知识分子与中国革命：近代中国国家建设研究 [Intellectuals and Chinese revolution : A Study on State-building of the Early Modern China], Di 1 ban, 880-07 Fu dan zheng zhi yu xing zheng yan jiu cong shu 8 (Tianjin: Tianjin ren min chu ban she, 2004).

¹⁰ Cezong Zhou, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China.*, Harvard East Asian Series 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

¹¹ Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner, *The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS): Shaping the Reforms, Academia and China (1977-2003)* (Boston: BRILL, 2007).

¹² Xinfu Guan 管新福, "Wan Qing minguo liuxue yundong yu zhongguo bijiao wenxue de shengcheng" 晚清民国留学运动与中国比较文学的生成 [Study Abroad in Late Qing and the Formation of Chinese Comparative Literature], *Zhongguo bijiao wenxue* 中国比较文学, no. 01 (2019): 115–31, <https://doi.org/10.16234/j.cnki.cn31-1694/i.2019.01.011>.

through his *Twenty Lectures on Famous World Artworks*;¹³ introducing new ways to maintain Chinese cultural confidence and advancing the field of comparative literature through his French translations.¹⁴ For Qian Zhongshu, studies have done on his research methods and academic studies that transformed the Chinese academia;¹⁵ his pioneering in the field of comparative literature surrounding his *magnum opus Limited Views*;¹⁶ his literary works such as the novel *Fortress Besieged* and collection of poems *Huai Ju Poems*.¹⁷ For Shen Congwen, many scholars have looked into his writing styles in regional novels, whether it is from the perspective of ethnic

¹³ Yang Gao 高阳, “Fu Lei *Shijie meishu mingzuo ershi jiang* dui shehui meishushi de xishou” 傅雷《世界美术名作二十讲》对社会美术史的吸收 [Fu Lei’s *Twenty Lectures on Famous World Artworks* and Its Absorption of Social Art History], *Meishu da guan* 美术大观, no. 09 (2019): 100–102.

¹⁴ Xin Zhao 赵忻 and Chunyan Liu 刘春燕, “Lun fa han fanyi celue zhong ruhe baochi wenhua zixin: Yi Fu Lei *Huan mie han yi ben wei li*” 论法汉翻译策略中如何保持文化自信——以傅雷《幻灭》汉译本为例 [On How to Maintain Cultural Confidence with French to Chinese Translation Strategies: Fu Lei’s Chinese Translation of *Les Illusions Perdues*], *Journal of Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication* 北京印刷学院学报 28, no. 1 (2020): 92–94, <https://doi.org/10.19461/j.cnki.1004-8626.2020.01.029>; Guan, “Wan Qing minguo liuxue yundong yu zhongguo bijiao wenxue de shengcheng.”

¹⁵ Sheng-hu Diao 刁生虎, “Chen Yinke yu Qian Zhongshu xueshu sixiang yi zhixue fangfa zhi bijiao” 陈寅恪与钱锺书学术思想及治学方法之比较 [A Comparison on the Academic Thought and Research Method between Chen Yinke and Qian Zhongshu], *Shi xue yue kan* 史学月刊, no. 2 (2007): 90–103.

¹⁶ Yongping Jin 金永平, “Guo nei Qian Zhongshu yanjiu zhuzuo shuping” 国内钱锺书研究著作述评 [China’s Domestic Research Works on Qian Zhongshu: A Review], *Journal of Lishui University* 丽水学院学报 41, no. 1 (2019): 64–71, <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.2095-3801.2019.01.010>; Daiyun Yue, “A New Beginning for China’s Comparative Literature: Qian Zhongshu’s *Limited Views*--The Establishment of the Chinese Comparative Literature Association,” in *China and the West at the Crossroads: Essays on Comparative Literature and Culture* (Singapore: Springer Singapore Pte. Limited, 2016), 65–74; Christopher G. Rea, ed., *China’s Literary Cosmopolitans: Qian Zhongshu, Yang Jiang, and the World of Letters*, *Sinica Leidensia* 125 (Leiden, Neatherlands: Brill, 2015).

¹⁷ Jin, “China’s Domestic Research Works on Qian Zhongshu”; Wensheng Zhang 张文胜, “*Huai ju shi cun jian zhu ji yanjiu*” 《槐聚诗存》笺注及研究 [Annotation and Research of *Huai Ju Poems*] (Ph.D. dissertation, Nanjing, Nanjing Normal University 南京师范大学, 2013); Rea, *China’s Literary Cosmopolitans*; Philip F. Williams, “Independent Writers: Shen Congwen, Xu Dishan, Qian Zhongshu,” in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Ming Dong Gu and Tao Feng (London: Routledge, 2018), 369–81, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315626994-30>.

minority,¹⁸ or from a comparative lens through western literature and Shen's own urban novels.¹⁹ There are also studies that focused on his post-1949 career as a researcher.²⁰

Other than their works, there were also many biographies written for the three intellectuals. Mei Jin's *Fu Lei: The Biography* (傅雷传) covered from his life from birth to death in details. Other than his experience, Jin also demonstrated Fu Lei's aestheticism through scrutinization Fu's art, literature, and music reviews.²¹ Yonglie Ye's *Portrait Biography of Fu Lei* (傅雷画传) added to Jin's biography by including the author's many personal interviews with Fu's friends and primary documents such as Fu's autopsy report and employment records Fu filled out.²² In addition, revolving Fu Lei, Ye also wrote about Fu's immediate family's experience in the early period of the PRC, especially Fu's oldest son Fou Ts'ong, which Ye elaborated more in *Fu Lei an Fou T'song* (傅雷与傅聪).²³ For Qian Zhongshu, his wife Yang

¹⁸ Wei Wei 魏巍, "Shaoshu minzu shiye xia de Shen Congwen yu Lao She bijiao yanjiu" 少数民族视野下的沈从文与老舍比较研究 [Comparative Study between Shen Congwen and Lao She with an Ethnic Minority's Perspective] (Ph.D. dissertation, Shaanxi Normal University 陕西师范大学, 2012).

¹⁹ Yuejie Liu, "Nature and Humanity: A Comparative Study Between the Regional Novels of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) and Shen Congwen 沈从文 (1902-1988)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southampton, England, University of Southampton, 2020); Jie Lu, "Critiquing the City, Envisioning the Country: Shen Congwen's Urban Fiction," *Neohelicon* 37, no. 2 (December 1, 2010): 359–72, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-009-0029-x>.

²⁰ Qiang Gao 高强, "'Yuan xiang' shi shi taxiang, taxiang que wei 'meng xiang': Yi fushi shuxie wei zhongxin kaocha Shen Congwen yinmi de shenfen keqiu" "原乡" 实是他乡, 他乡却为 "梦乡" ——以服饰书写为中心考察沈从文隐秘的身份渴求 [The "Original Hometown" Turns Out to be a "Dreamland": Study of Shen Congwen's Secret Desire for Identity Centering on Costume Writing], *Academic Exploration* 学术探索, no. 11 (2019): 151–56; Fang Wang 王方, "Shen Congwen de gudai fushi yanjiu yu fushi kaogu: Chongdu Zhongguo gudai fushi yanjiu" 沈从文的古代服饰研究与服饰考古——重读《中国古代服饰研究》 [Shen Congwen's Studies on Ancient Costume and Costume Archaeology: Rereading *A Study of Ancient Chinese Costume*], *Journal of National Museum of China* 中国国家博物馆馆刊, no. 12 (2011): 140–47.

²¹ Mei Jin 金梅, *Fu Lei zhuan* 傅雷传 [Fu Lei: The Biography], Xiu ding ben, Da shi de bei ying cong shu (Bei jing hang kong hang tian da xue chu ban she, 2009).

²² Yonglie Ye 叶永烈, *Fu Lei hua zhuan* 傅雷画传 [Portrait Biography of Fu Lei], Di 1 ban (Shanghai: Fu dan da xue chu ban she, 2005).

²³ Yonglie Ye 叶永烈, *Fu Lei Yu Fu Cong* 傅雷与傅聪 [Fu Lei and Fou Ts'ong], Di 1 ban (Chengdu: Sichuan ren min chu ban she, 2018).

Jiang wrote extensive memoirs on his works and life.²⁴ Tang Yan's *Qian Zhongshu the Talented Scholar in This Generation* (一代才子钱锺书) filled in gaps of Yang's accounts and interspersed Qian's life with poems Qian wrote. In addition, it focused on Qian's literary works and made speculation on Qian's alternate life had the many political campaigns not taken place.²⁵ Jin (2019) provided a comprehensive list of other existing biographical accounts on Qian Zhongshu. For Shen Congwen, Jeffrey Kinkley's *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen* provided a concise biography that focused on Shen's past and literary style.²⁶ Xinying Zhang's *The Latter Half of Shen Congwen's Life: 1948-1988* (沈从文的后半生：一九四八~一九八八) both centered around the period Kinkley wrote about briefly and encapsulated Shen's mental struggles in this period very well through close examinations of Shen's self-accounts.²⁷

Extensive research have been done on the CPC's policies on the intellectuals and the numerous political campaigns, such as the Thought Reform Movement in 1951,²⁸ the Hu Shi Thought Criticism Campaign in 1954,²⁹ Campaign to Eliminate Counter Revolutionaries in

²⁴ Yang, *Wo men sa*; Jiang Yang 杨绛, "Ji Qian Zhongshu he *Wei cheng*" 记钱锺书和《围城》 [Accounting Qian Zhongshu and *Fortress Besieged*], in *Wei cheng* 围城 [Fortress Besieged], by Zhongshu Qian 钱锺书, Beijing di 2 ban (Beijing Shi: Ren min wen xue chu ban she, 2017), 353–77.

²⁵ Yan Tang 汤晏, *Yi dai caizi Qian Zhongshu* 一代才子钱锺书 [Qian Zhongshu the Talented Scholar in This Generation] (Shanghai: Shanghai ren min chu ban she, 2005).

²⁶ Jeffrey C. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

²⁷ Xinying Zhang 张新颖, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng: Yi jiu si ba- yi jiu ba ba* 沈从文的后半生：一九四八-一九八八 [The Latter Half of Shen Congwen's Life: 1948-1988], Zeng ding (Shanghai: Shanghai san lian shu dian, 2018).

²⁸ Yong Xie 谢泳, *Zhongguo xiandai zhishi fenzi de kunjing* 中国现代知识分子的困境 [The Dilemma of Chinese Modern Intellectuals], BOD 1 ban (Taipei: Xiu wei zi xun ke ji gu fen you xian gong si, 2008), 57–132; Zhihua Shen 沈志华, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Shi: Sikao Yu Xuanze: Cong Zhishi Fenzi Huiyi Dao Fan Youpai Yundong (1956-1957)* 中华人民共和国史·思考与选择——从知识分子会议到反右派运动 (1956-1957) [The History of People's Republic of China: Reflections and Choices: The Consciousness of the Chinese Intellectuals and the Anti-Rightist Movement (1956-1957)], vol. 3 (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2008).

²⁹ Xie, *Zhongguo xiandai zhishi fenzi de kunjing*, 189–206.

1955,³⁰ and the Anti-Rightists Movement.³¹ Most aimed to investigate the cause and effects from the blunt and objective perspective of administrators. Yong Xie joined the discussion with a more subjective view, arguing that Mao Zedong's distaste of intellectuals played a role in initiating these political campaigns.³² Rather than focusing on the Party's initiatives, Xie additionally studied on the collective experience of intellectuals amidst the campaigns. He looked into speeches intellectuals made in the 1950s,³³ and intellectuals' suicides from 1949 to 1976.³⁴ Lin (2014) also approached the political campaigns from the standpoints of the intellectuals by examining the spectrum of different choices intellectuals made during the Hu Shi Thought Criticism Campaign.³⁵ Other than Xie's research, studies on intellectuals that focused in one particular campaign, and non-fiction writings and memoirs on individual intellectuals, there are not a lot of literature on intellectuals' collective experience through the countless political campaigns.

The thesis attempts to build on existing research on the history of early modern China that takes the perspective of intellectuals. In addition, rather than focusing on one particular campaign and unconsciously underlining the passivity of intellectuals by plainly describing the impacts of the campaign on intellectuals; the thesis centers around the lives of the intellectuals and emphasizes their personal agency through their mental activities and decisions they made throughout the early period of the PRC. Through a comparative study, the thesis furthermore

³⁰ Xiaoping Wang 王小平, "Wushi nendai sufan yundong de lailongqumai tanjiu 五十年代肃反运动的来龙去脉探究" [An Examination on the Ins and Outs of the Campaign to Eliminate Counter-revolutionaries in the 1950s], *Xi bu xue kan* 西部学刊, Essays on History of the Party and Building of the Party 党史党建论丛, no. 04 (2014): 14–21, <https://doi.org/10.16721/j.cnki.cn61-1487/c.2014.04.009>.

³¹ Shen, *Sikao Yu Xuanze*; Xie, *Zhongguo xiandai zhishi fenzi de kunjing*, 247–84.

³² Xie, *Zhongguo xiandai zhishi fenzi de kunjing*, 57–131.

³³ Xie, 161–88.

³⁴ Xie, 1–56.

³⁵ Jiangang Lin 林建刚, "Pi Hu Shi yundong zhong zhishi fenzi de butong xuanze" 批胡适运动中知识分子的不同选择 [Different Decisions Made by Intellectuals in the Criticize Hu Shi Campaign], *Yue hai feng* 粤海风, no. 06 (2014): 22–25, <https://doi.org/10.16591/j.cnki.44-1332/i.2014.06.018>.

hopes to provide more insights into a spectrum of choices intellectuals were able to make in a time of turmoil.

Methodology

To closely examine the complicated historical scene and the range of responses intellectuals made amidst drastic changes, I conducted a comparative case study on the lives of three intellectuals who had similar experience in the early period of the PRC but responded to the era differently—Fu Lei, Shen Congwen, and Fu Lei. I followed David Der-wei Wang's approach in *A Literary History of China* and intended to portray the early modern Chinese history through essays on intellectuals and their works. To depict the historical scene, I used a wide range of both primary and secondary sources. For primary sources, I used contemporary newspaper articles found on the Party newspaper *People's Daily* and Party directives found in *References for History of Communist Party of China* (中国党史参考资料). For secondary sources, I relied on non-fiction writings, memoirs of intellectuals, and scholars' works on modern Chinese history, especially Wang's *A Literary History of China* and Jonathan Spence's *The Search of Modern China*. Moreover, I referred to different political dictionaries reviewed by the CPC to define ambiguous political terms such as the Middle Way, the *Modern Criticism* Clique, and etc. To further illustrate the scene, I also included excerpts of fiction writings that were based on the political campaigns at the time.

In my comparative study, I incorporated Xinying Zhang's method in *The Latter Half of Shen Congwen's Life* and analyzed the intellectuals' decisions by sorting through their mental activities from their personal accounts and letters to friends and family members. On Fu Lei, I relied mainly on his biographies by Mei Jin and Yonglie Ye, and his family correspondences with his son Fou Ts'ong. On Qian Zhongshu, I used his wife Yang Jiang's memoirs of him, such

as *We Three* (我们仨), and biographies of Qian and Yang, such as *Qian Zhongshu the Talented Scholar in This Generation* by Yan Tang and *Listening to the Past Told by Yang Jiang* (听杨绛谈往事) by Xuezhao Wu, the daughter of Qian's close teacher Wu Mi (吴宓). On Shen Congwen, I looked into Xinying Zhang and Jeffrey Kinley's biographies in addition to his self-accounts, his and his wife's letters to friends and families, his interviews, and his students' accounts of him.

There are several shortcomings in this thesis. First, there is limited access to research materials due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The thesis worked mostly with digital materials accessible to Emory's subscribed databases and journals in addition to limited physical materials available in New York's bookstores and public libraries. Thus, the thesis is not able to do an extensive literature review and present the complete portrayal of the three intellectuals' life. Second, the writer mainly read materials written in modern Chinese and English. Qian and Shen wrote many old-style poems and works in classical Chinese. Kinkley (1987) argues that Shen made many comments on the Party in his poems after 1949. Qian's *Limited Views* written in classical Chinese during the Cultural Revolution surely made strategic choices in inclusions of literary works and allusions to the contemporary political situations. The thesis might miss some key information lied in these classical Chinese materials that lead to a wrong interpretation of the intellectuals' thoughts at the time. Third, while Fu Lei, Qian Zhongshu, and Shen Congwen represented three different approaches to the political turmoil, there were certainly more choices intellectuals could make at the time. In addition, all three intellectuals worked in the literary art circle and their experiences differed vastly from scientists, engineers, and technicians who the Party valued more. Therefore, the thesis only demonstrated experience of one small group out of the larger intellectual class in the early period of the PRC.

Chapter 1: Fu Lei: A Smashed Jade

The morning of September 3, 1966 was an usual morning but one that would take away housemaid Zhou Judi's (周菊娣) job. Like her usual mornings, after she woke up, she bought groceries and cleaned translator Fu Lei's house. What was strange for her was that there had not been any sounds of waking up from her master's bedroom. It was already 9:45 am and the couple, Fu Lei and his wife Zhu Meifu, usually woke up around eight o'clock.¹

Zhou was suspicious, so she slightly opened the door of the couple's bedroom. No one was on the bed. She pushed the door even more and peeked through the larger crack of the door. Her masters Fu Lei and Zhu Meifu were dangling from the steel frame of their balcony window—Fu Lei on the right, and Zhu Meifu on the left.²

Thousands of people committed suicide or were tortured to death during the maniac decade of the Cultural Revolution, spanning from 1966 to 1976. Out of which, Fu Lei's suicide was a notable one. Zuo Anmin (左安民), the police who first arrived the scene, recalled in his talk with biography writer Ye Yonglie (叶永烈), "In that era, a lot of people committed suicide, people died almost every day. At that time, considering that Fu Lei was a very influential author in society, we specially requested forensic experts from the City Protectorate to perform an autopsy. If it was not an important case, forensic experts from the City won't come" (那时候,

¹. Yonglie Ye 叶永烈, *Fu Lei yu Fu Cong* 傅雷与傅聪 [Fu Lei and Fou Ts'ong], Di 1 ban (Sichuan ren min chu ban she, 2018), https://yuedu.163.com/source/0c3f8dec1061458593bf8d714ed19f52_4, chap. 2, sec. 1.

². Yonglie Ye 叶永烈, *Fu Lei hua zhuan* 傅雷画传 [Portrait Biography of Fu Lei], Di 1 ban (Shanghai: Fu dan da xue chu ban she, 2005), 183. According to the witness statement of Zhou Judi, she said that she saw Zhu Meifu lied on the ground and went to notify someone. But Zuo Anmin (左安民), the policeman who came to the scene, reported that he saw Fu Lei and Zhu Meifu's corpses were hanging from the window. He claimed that Zhou was very nervous and afraid to see the scene directly so she might misremember. The forensic report also proved that the married couple died from hanging.

自杀的很多，差不多天天有人死。当时，考虑到傅雷是社会上很有影响的作家，所以特地请市检察院的法医来验尸。不是重要的案件，市里的法医是不来的。).³

Fu Lei (1908-1966) grew up under the strict discipline of his mother. At the age of 4, his father was falsely put into jail and tortured for more than three months. His mother was busy trying to bail his father out. In exchange, due to the lack of care, Fu Lei's two frail brothers and a sister died one after another. After a stupendous amount of money was spent to bail out Fu Lei's father, Fu Lei's father soon died of tuberculosis, leaving only Fu Lei and his mother in straitened circumstances.⁴ His mother believed in "stick parenting," harshly punishing Fu Lei's misbehavior and overseeing his study. As a result, in a young age, Fu Lei became aloof, detached, sensitive, and surly.⁵ In his own account, he wrote, "I was very lonely, I did not long for worldly glory, including fame. My childhood was unhappy and nourished my pessimistic personality" (我非常孤独，不慕世俗虚荣，包括虚名在内。我的童年很不愉快，生成悲观的性格。).⁶

Witnessing the social unrest in China and other countries' discrimination against Chinese people and the state, the patriotic Fu Lei went to France to study at the Université de Paris with the wish to learn useful knowledge to prosper China and strengthen the position of China in the international world. In Paris, Fu Lei devoted his time in literature, art and music theory and appreciation.⁷ In 1931, at the age of 24, Fu Lei returned to Shanghai without receiving a degree.

³. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 187.

⁴. Mei Jin 金梅, *Fu Lei zhuan* 傅雷传 [Fu Lei: The Biography], Xiu ding ben, Da shi de bei ying cong shu (Bei jing hang kong hang tian da xue chu ban she, 2009), 3.

⁵. Jin, 6.

⁶. Danyang Wang 王丹阳, "Chizi gudu: Fu Lei de ao yu lie" 赤子孤独：傅雷的傲与烈 [The Loneliness of a Patriot: Fu Lei's Pride and Spirit], *Bao kan hui cui* 报刊荟萃, no. 11 (2016): 38.

⁷. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 61.

From 1930s to 1960s, Fu Lei seldom held a job at a workplace. In the employment record he filled out at the public security bureau in Shanghai, he only listed four jobs he held with an institution. The longest being teaching art history and French from 1931 to 1933 at the Shanghai Art College (上海美术专科学校), which was founded by his close friend Liu Haisu (刘海粟) whom he met in Paris. The employment time of the other three jobs did not even add up to eight months.⁸ Fu Lei's friend, translator Lou Shiyi (楼适夷) commented that Fu Lei was very knowledgeable in literature, art, and music from both China and the west, but he could not work with others due to his aloof personality: "He worked in the fields of art archaeology and art education after he returned to China, but the time span was often very short. He always could not conform to the surrounding environment, worked with others, and ended up leaving in the midway without showing his strengths. So in the end he chose the career of translating works behind closed doors" (回国以后曾从事过美术考古和美术教学的工作，但时间都非常短促，总是与流俗的气氛格格不能相入，无法与人共事，每次都在半途中绝裾而去，不能展其所长，于是最后给自己选择了闭门译述的事业。)⁹

Fu Lei was thus known for his translations done in his secluded study. In 2009, the French Embassy in China along with the support of several Chinese scholars of French language and literature established *Le Prix Fu Lei*, or the Fu Lei Translation and Publishing Award, to both memorialize Fu Lei as a great translator and promote Chinese translations and the spread of French literature.¹⁰ With the philosophy of "translat[ing] the 'spirit' rather than the 'appearance' of the original," Fu Lei translated more than 30 great works of the world, including 15 novels of

⁸. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 34.

⁹. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 34.

¹⁰. "Prix Fu Lei de la traduction et de l'édition," Prix Fu Lei 傅雷奖, accessed March 12, 2021, <http://prixfulei.faguowenhua.com/prod/pr%C3%A9sentation/>.

Honoré de Balzac and works by Voltaire, Prosper Mérimée, Romain Rolland, Bertrand Russell, and Edgar Snow.¹¹ He was a freelancer and depended on remuneration for his translations from publishers. When he did not have enough money, he sold some of the land he inherited from his parents.¹² Outside of his brilliant translating career, he was also a very vocal critic of literature, art, and music.

But at the same time, Fu Lei kept an eye on the political situations and was very aware of international affairs. For example, from 1944 to 1948, amid the second Sino-Japanese War, Fu Lei organized biweekly tea parties at his house with 10 other cultural elites residing in the Japanese occupied Shanghai including Qian Zhongshu. At the tea parties, they exchanged thoughts on the current political situations and reinforced each other's will of believing in China.¹³ He also published more than 10 political essays on the biweekly magazine *Xin Yu* (新语), which he co-edited with Zhou Xuliang (周煦良), and other journals including *Zhou Bao* (周报), *Democracy* (民主), *Wenhui Bao* (文汇报). In these essays, he criticized international and national responses to Japanese imperialism and advocated ideas such as anti-oppression, anti-Civil War, pro-democracy, and pro-freedom.¹⁴

In the verge of the establishment of new China in 1949, Fu Lei faced one of the greatest decisions in his life—to leave, or to stay in mainland China. By June, large cities like Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai were already liberated by the Communist Party of China (CPC). His attitude toward the CPC was ambiguous. On one hand, he was not particularly fond of the

¹¹. Guangchen Chen, “Fu Lei and Fou Ts’ong: Cultural Cosmopolitanism and Its Price,” in *A New Literary History of Modern China*, ed. David Der-wei Wang (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), 652; Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 103–4.

¹². Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 85.

¹³. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 173; Jiang Yang 杨绛, “Yi Fu Lei” 忆傅雷 [Recalling Fu Lei], in *Fu Lei yu ta de shijie* 傅雷与他的世界 [Fu Lei and His World], ed. Shenghua Jin 金圣华 (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1996), 13.

¹⁴. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 174.

Guomindang (GMD, the Nationalist's Party). After the December 1st Incident (一二·一惨案) in 1945, in which the GMD government cruelly suppressed students protest in Kunming (昆明), Yunnan, he immediately submitted photographs and first-hand accounts from his friend to the *Zhou Bao* and exposed the GMD's violence to the public.¹⁵ In his own accounts, Fu Lei criticized the corruption and authoritarian rule associated with the GMD.¹⁶ On the other hand, he was expressed skepticism to CPC's rule. While many of his intimate friends, such as Ke Ling (柯灵), his brother-in-law Zhu Renxiu (朱人秀), and Lou Shiyi, had already joined the CPC and encouraged him to do so as well,¹⁷ he was an empiricist who only believed in facts. He heard insider stories about how the Soviets liquidated their own communist members in the 1930s and the ongoing land reform movement in CPC liberated areas in northern Jiangsu.¹⁸ So he was a little reserved regarding to the new China under the CPC. Eventually, he sold the rest of the land he owned and moved to Kunming with his family with the intention of observing the ongoing Civil War and the political climate. Soon, he departed to Hong Kong, an English colony at the time.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Fu Lei returned to mainland China after living in Hong Kong for half a year in December 1949. According to Zhu Renxiu, the CPC advised Fu Lei to come back to mainland China.²⁰ In addition, he did not find a job with stable income in Hong Kong could not get used to living in a colony.²¹ Even with his doubts about the CPC, Fu Lei nonetheless said, "I am Chinese, and my root is in China. Even if I die, I want to die on the soil of my country" (我是

¹⁵. Jin, 179.

¹⁶. Jin, 179.

¹⁷. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 85.

¹⁸. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 185; Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 85.

¹⁹. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 85.

²⁰. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 85.

²¹. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 185; Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 85.

中国人，我的根在中国。我死也要死在自己的国土上。），and took a ship to Beijing.²² His decision to return to mainland China inevitably led him to his tragic end.

By contrast, Eileen Chang (张爱玲), whose novels Fu Lei wrote many literature critiques on, took another route. The fashionable novelist stayed in Shanghai even after it was liberated. She even attended the inaugural All-China Congress of Literary and Art Representatives (中华全国文学艺术工作者代表大会) held by the CPC.²³ Chang, however, was still not used to living under the Communist regime. Thus, she sought all possible ways to leave Shanghai and went to Hong Kong in July 1952.²⁴ Unlike Fu Lei, Chang never returned to mainland China; and after a few years in Hong Kong, she moved to the United States. Had she chosen to stay, she would have suffered even more compared to Fu Lei considering that her eye-dazzling dressing style and how her novels would have been considered “bourgeois.” But since she did not, she escaped from the endless accusations faced by her peers.

After rejecting his friends Qian Zhongshu and Yang Jiang’s request of staying in Tsinghua University to teach in Beijing, Fu Lei returned to his study in Shanghai and continued his translation work. In theory, out of the many intellectuals at the time, Fu Lei should have been the one with the least possibility to associate with the CPC. As mentioned, his personality made it difficult for him to work with other. As a result, he was a freelancer and translated works on his own. He was one of the few whose name was not under any organizations and thus not part of any groups. The only connection Fu Lei might have with the CPC was his friends who already were party members. For example, in the Labor Force Questionnaire Form he filled out in 1958,

²². Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 185.

²³. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 85.

²⁴. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 85.

two out of the three closest friends his listed in the “social connections”—Zhu Renxiu and Lou Shiyi—were both CPC party members.²⁵

In front of Qian Zhongshu and Yang Jiang, Fu Lei often compared himself to a “little mouse from the hole in the wall” (墙洞里的小老鼠) rather than the “aloof crane in the clouds” (孤傲如云间鹤) people described.²⁶ In “Recalling Fu Lei,” Yang Jiang wrote, “The only ‘hole’ he could take shelter in, was his own study; he was also like a mouse who peeps at the outside world from his hole. He was not like the crane in the sky, who sees beyond the clouds and dismisses the muds below” (他可以安身的“洞穴”，只有自己的书斋；他也像老鼠那样，只在洞口窥望外面的大世界。他并不像天上的鹤，翘首云外，不屑顾视地下的泥淖。).²⁷ While staying in his “hole,” Fu Lei was not unaware of what had been going on outside of his study, because he “peeped at the outside world from his hole.” In addition, unlike the “crane,” despite working on translations people considered “beyond the clouds,” he was concerned with the “muds below.” But Fu Lei knew his bluntness did not work well with the complex interpersonal relationship in society. So even with opinions, he simply retreated into his study and did not participate in the political movements. Secluded in his study and focused in the world of literature and art, how then did the “little mouse from the hole in the wall” end up walking out of his study and become a political “activist” in the 1950s?

Aside from Fu Lei’s translations and art criticisms, he was also known for his *Fu Lei jia shu* (傅雷家书), or *Family Correspondences of Fu Lei*, between his oldest son Fou Ts’ong (傅

²⁵. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 92–93. Filling out this questionnaire also showed that Fu Lei did not work under any institutions because usually only “idle labor force” (闲散劳动力) fills out this form. In the form, Fu Lei wrote his working place is China Writers Association (CWA). But CWA was only his workplace by name. He was not an employee in the system and his document was not found in the Shanghai branch of CWA.

²⁶. Yang, “Yi Fu Lei,” 15.

²⁷. Yang, “Yi Fu Lei,” 15.

聰) and him.²⁸ Fu Lei was famed, or “infamized” in the 1960s, for raising the worldly-celebrated pianist Fou Ts’ong. Fou Ts’ong’s achievements indirectly played a role in pulling Fu Lei out of his study. In March 1955, Fou Ts’ong became the first Chinese national to achieve international recognition for his piano skills, winning the third place and the Polish Radio Prize for the best performance of mazurkas in the Fifth International Chopin Piano Competition.²⁹

Fou Ts’ong’s success brought the spotlight to his father Fu Lei as well, enhancing his reputation and social status. Two months later, in May 1955, Fu Lei was chosen to be a member of the Shanghai Political Consultative Conference (PCC) and became the associate team leader of the PCC Literature-News-Publication Team. In the following years, Fu Lei was put onto different positions. In August 1956, he was appointed as the Head of the Foreign Literature Team by the Shanghai Branch of China Writers Association (CWA). In May 1957, he was named the Secretary of the Secretariat of the Shanghai Branch.³⁰ Fu Lei had walked out of his study.

As Fu Lei took on more roles connected with the CPC, his attitude to the Party gradually changed. Letters Fu Lei wrote to his son studying in Poland before Fu became a member of the PCC showed his patriotism immensely. In almost every letter, he asked his son to not forget what the mother country had done for him, to pay back the country by playing the piano competently,

²⁸. *Fu Lei jia shu* contains mostly Fu Lei and Zhu Meifu’s letters to Fou Ts’ong. There are only two letters from Fu Lei to his second son Fu Min (傅敏). To prevent the family correspondences from turning into “reactionary” evidences of his father, Fu Min had burnt all the letters before the Red Guards raided his house. The surviving two letters are his mother Zhu Meifu’s copies of Fu Lei’s letters found in the confiscated items from his parents’ house returned to Fu Min. Similarly, only a few letters from Fou T’song are compiled in the collection due to the Red Guards’ raid that led to Fu Lei and Zhu Meifu’s suicides. See Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 192. The pinyin spelling for Fou Ts’ong’s name is Fu Cong, which is less well known in the English speaking world.

²⁹. Ye, *Fu Lei Yu Fu Cong*, chap. 3, sec. 4; “Di wu jie guoji Xiaobang gangqin bisai jieshu wo guo gangqinjia Fu Cong de di san ming” 第五届国际萧邦钢琴比赛结束 我国钢琴家傅聪得第三名 [The Fifth International Chopin Piano Competition Has Ended Our Country’s Pianist Fou T’song Won the Third Place], *People’s Daily*, March 21, 1955, 1.

³⁰. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 226.

to represent China well in a foreign country, and to read classical Chinese poetry and literature he sent to his son. But his attitude toward the CPC was two-sided. On the one hand, he acknowledged the greatness of the Party at times; such as when the Party mobilized people to struggle against the floods along the banks of the Yangtze River and the Huai River in August 1954.³¹ On the other hand, in October of the same year, he criticized the thought reforms the Party initiated. He claimed that the thought reforms “did not address the key of thought problems” (没有击中思想问题的要害) and should also look beyond politics.³²

Starting from December 1955, however, Fu Lei seemed to go on a thought reform himself as names of important texts of the CPC began appearing in his letters to Fou Ts'ong. He urged his son to read “On Contradiction” (矛盾论) and “On Practice” (实践论) from *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (毛泽东选集),³³ which he called “the foundation of any theory” (一切理论的根底). He said that this kind of book was easy to understand and was interesting for him because he had been living his life using Marx-Leninist dialectic all along.³⁴ He told Fou Ts'ong that one cannot be anti-scientific and anti-Marx-Leninist, because in order to live well and contribute to the society, one needs to engage in scientific and Marx-Leninist way to analyze and do things ranging from daily life to love relationship.³⁵ Fu Lei valued the teachings of the CPC greatly and sincerely. He identified criticism and self-criticism as the most powerful weapon one should possess, and that one has to be brave to assess oneself or else the criticisms will not be thorough.³⁶ We see later that he indeed took his self-criticisms seriously. He disapproved of

³¹. Lei Fu 傅雷, *Fu Lei jia shu* 傅雷家书 [Family Correspondences of Fu Lei], ed. Min Fu 傅敏 (Shenyang shi: Liaoning jiao yu chu ban she, 2004), 58.

³². Fu, 77.

³³. Mao Tse-tung was another way of romanizing Mao Zedong. The writer follows the English translation of the book titles on the cover of the books and uses Mao Tse-tung in book titles.

³⁴. Fu, *Fu Lei jia shu*, 140.

³⁵. Fu, 141.

³⁶. Fu, 141.

some of the Communist cadres' way of learning and handling matters, saying that they are well versed in theories but "once they encounter practical matters, once they sit in front of the office desk, or arrive in factories, in villages, they forget all the theories" (一遇到实际事情, 一坐到办公桌前面, 或是到了工厂里, 农村里, 就把一切理论忘得干干净净。).³⁷ He even went as far as denouncing their learning attitudes as anti-Marx-Leninist and was disappointed that people were chanting the materialistic dialectic, what he considered the "most practical science" (最实际的科学), as "pet phrases" (口头禅) rather than implementing them in real life and in self-cultivation.³⁸

By April 1956, Fu Lei acknowledged that he misunderstood the Party and greatly admired how the mass following the lead of the Party had gone through blood, sweat, and tears in resisting against Japanese, opposing feudalism, collaborators, and Chiang Kai-shek. He essentially did a self-criticism in his private letter to Fu Ts'ong. He called his anti-imperialistic and anti-feudalistic thoughts in the past "childish" and thought that they would not suffice on the road to revolution.³⁹ Furthermore, he admitted that his pessimistic working attitude had been wrong and that he should hold a firmer, more optimistic view about the future.⁴⁰ In addition, he thought that his criticisms to the different measures the government took were sarcastic, raised from the perspective of an "objective liberalist" (客观的自由主义者) rather than a participant of building socialism.⁴¹ On the contrary, he believed that he should provide more constructive suggestions to the government. The fact that this thorough self-criticism was written in his letter to his son has to be reiterated. One can argue that people wrote self-criticisms to please the party

³⁷. Fu, 144.

³⁸. Fu, 144–45.

³⁹. Fu, 180.

⁴⁰. Fu, 181.

⁴¹. Fu, 181.

or to put on a show, but why would anyone do that in a private letter, which would not be surveilled by the government, to his son who was in Poland. The self-reflection embedded in the letter only further proves his genuineness in supporting the government and believing in the teachings of the CPC.

Fu Lei's insights regarding *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* and Marx-Leninism that he shared with his son showed his personal trait of honesty and seriousness. If he was going to read something or do something, he would not palter with the tasks even if he did not want to do them at the first place. In his letter to Fou Ts'ong on July 23, 1956, after he was appointed multiple positions in institutions associated with the CPC, he complained about how these social activities took up all his time:

From the beginning of April, I have not done any translations after I finished the novel of Voltaire; now four months are gone, and I am anxious. I had numerous meetings within the four months...PCC's Literature-News-Publication Team appointed me as the associate team leader; recently CWA's Foreign Literature Team also appointed me as the head; I refused multiple times but they would not accept it; it was truly frustrating. One's energy is limited, and time will not be more than twenty-four hours, how can I cope with this? I do not want to have the titles without doing anything either.⁴²

从四月初旬起，结束了服尔德的小说，就停到现在，一晃四个月，想想真着急。四个月中开了无数的会.....政协的文学—新闻—出版组派了我副组长；最近作协的外国文学组又派我当组长；推来推去推不掉，想想实在腻烦。一个人的精力有限，时间也不会多于二十四小时，怎么应付呢？挂挂名的事又不愿意干。

As he pointed out in the letter that he declined these positions many times, Fu Lei did not voluntarily take on these tasks. In addition, he was anxious about these social activities, such as the meetings, taking up his time of academic research and translations. Nevertheless, he was not willing to “have the titles without doing anything.” He now spent time he used previously for translation to talk with his friends and read articles on order to understand outside situations, so he could provide helpful opinions to the government.

⁴². Fu, 193.

Fu Lei became very involved with his work in the PCC and CWA. Like he said, he attended numerous meetings and frequently submitted several pages of written opinions. On December 27, 1955, he mentioned when CPC leaders asked for his opinions on “reform and rearrange high-level intellectuals,” a task CPC planned to focus on in 1956, he first thought for a few days and on top of discussing with them, he wrote up a written opinion of 9,000 characters for seven hours.⁴³ In total, he submitted seven written opinions when he was engaging in the PCC.⁴⁴ On February 8, 1956, he wrote that he was again nominated to be the representative of his team, and had to prepare speeches for the four-day PCC conference. He had to practice a couple of times to correct his Shanghai accent because his Mandarin was not as good.⁴⁵ On April 14, he wrote that he attended all the meetings in the five-day the Second Shanghai PCC Conference, including group discussions.⁴⁶ He was rather sentimental in the meeting and shed tears in the conference hall when he heard about warm welcomes Chinese people in Hong Kong and Macau gave to the folk art performance groups mainland China sent.⁴⁷ His diligence showed that he was indeed very concerned with the work of the CPC and tried to contribute as much as he could—he was certainly not a “team leader” and member of PCC only in name.

One of the problems Fu Lei paid special attention to and actively tried to solve was the question on intellectuals, because he himself was a literatus. Fu Lei stated that, “I really want to help with the reform to intellectuals as an intellectual, such as to write some essays, and to criticize shortcomings of intellectuals. Since the government already put in so much effort to help us, we should put in twice as much effort to cooperate with the government” (我很想以知

⁴³. Fu, 156.

⁴⁴. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 134.

⁴⁵. Fu, *Fu Lei jia shu*, 163.

⁴⁶. Fu, 177.

⁴⁷. Fu, 177.

识分子的身份，对知识分子的改造做一些工作。比如写些文章，批评知识分子的缺点等等。政府既然已经做了这样大的努力帮助我们，我们自当加倍努力来配合政府。).⁴⁸

Indeed, Fu Lei tried very hard to ameliorate the relationship between the CPC and the literati. He was overall very hopeful and optimistic about the prospect.

In his written opinion in December 1955, he divided the high-level intellectuals into backward element and people who were punished for what they had spoken. Fu Lei said, people from the latter category had a profound understanding that “misfortune comes out of one’s mouth” (祸从口出) especially after the Anti-Hu Feng Campaign (反胡风运动) and the Campaign to Eliminate Counterrevolutionaries (肃反运动).⁴⁹ The Anti-Hu Feng Campaign was part of the numerous mass mobilized movements initiated by the CPC in the 1950s and it revolved around the literary theorist and critic Hu Feng (1902-1985). His views on literature that it should be written subjectively were condemned by the leftists who believed literature should serve politics and depict class struggles.⁵⁰ Accusations against Hu Feng started from ideological deviator to counterrevolutionary to a spy of the GMD.⁵¹ The mass used this campaign and the Campaign to Eliminate Counterrevolutionaries to struggle against other groups in the country who were identified as “counterrevolutionaries.”⁵² Many of the intellectuals who spoke up during the campaigns were subjected to criticisms and attacks. Fu Lei interpreted that the state’s

⁴⁸. Fu, 178.

⁴⁹. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 228.

⁵⁰. Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, “Hu Feng,” in *Britannica Online Academic Edition* (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc, July 22, 2005), <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Hu-Feng/104393>.

⁵¹. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 508.

⁵². Xiaoping Wang 王小平, “Wushi nendai sufan yundong de lailongqumai tanjiu” 五十年代肃反运动的来龙去脉探究 [An Examination on the Ins and Outs of the Campaign to Eliminate Counter-revolutionaries in the 1950s], *Xi bu xue kan* 西部学刊, Essays on History of the Party and Building of the Party 党史党建论丛, no. 04 (2014): 14, <https://doi.org/10.16721/j.cnki.cn61-1487/c.2014.04.009>.

unwelcoming attitude to the intellectuals' opinions caused the intellectuals to stay quiet and commit themselves in thought reforms.⁵³

In his written opinions, Fu Lei laid out in detail objective and practical suggestions to the framework of reforming intellectuals. He asked the Party to be patient and tolerant with the intellectuals: (1) understand the personality, strengths and weaknesses of intellectuals; (2) study attitudes and ways to treat intellectuals, such as fostering shame in intellectuals and restoring their self-esteem and confidence in their career; (3) do not expect that thought reform can be done in a short time; (4) prove to the intellectuals that the government cares about and respects their academic works; (5) ask party officials who are not professional in the fields to avoid intervention; (6) improve party officials' attitudes of accepting criticisms; and (7) ask people who lead the study groups to think about their learning experience and relate to the intellectuals.⁵⁴ At the same time, in the written speech he wrote for the April PCC conference, he urged the intellectuals not to hold back what they want to say and not be disgruntled with the party in the back.⁵⁵

Following the Director of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee Lu Dingyi's (陆定一) speech, "Let Flowers of Many Kinds Blossom, Diverse Schools of Thought Contend!" (百花齐放, 百家争鸣) on May 26, 1956,⁵⁶ the Hundred Flowers Campaign was initiated. Representing the Party, Lu called for a careful opening to dissents and more freedom of creation for intellectuals working in all fields. It was not until when the Party Chairman Mao

⁵³. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 228.

⁵⁴. Jin, 229.

⁵⁵. Jin, 232.

⁵⁶. Dingyi Lu 陆定一, "Baihua Qifang, Baijia Zhengming -- Yi Jiu Wu Liu Nian Wu Yue Er Shi Liu Ri Zai Huairen Tang de Jianghua" 百花齐放, 百家争鸣——一九五六年五月二十六日在怀仁堂的讲话 [Let Flowers of Many Kinds Blossom, Diverse Schools of Thought Contend: Speech at Huairen Hall on May 26, 1956], *People's Daily*, June 13, 1956.

Zedong came out in 1957 to encourage criticisms that the campaign took off. Fu Lei was able to attend one of the conferences at which Mao was present, and he greatly praised Chairman Mao's approachability, humor, and knowledge.⁵⁷ In response to Mao's mobilization, many intellectuals launched sharp attacks against the Party across the five-week span from May 1 to June 7, 1957, some even challenged the fundamental aspects of Communist rule.⁵⁸ Driving with enthusiasm, Fu Lei published a total of 12 articles on *Wenhui Bao* regarding problems on intellectuals, rectification, the literature and art circle, and the publication circle.⁵⁹

Little did Fu Lei know that the Party would soon launch the Anti-rightists Campaign to hunt down those same intellectuals who took the opportunity to vent out all their criticisms against the Party and the state. Seeing the situation was getting out of control, hard-liners in the Party who originally did not support Mao's Hundred Flowers movement prevailed and Mao subsequently altered his speech "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People" (关于正确处理人民内部矛盾的问题) to make it sound more like a censure of intellectuals rather than encouragement of public criticisms.⁶⁰ In the Anti-rightists Campaign that began in July 1957, over 300,000 intellectuals had been labeled as "rightists" and they were thereafter sent to labor camps, jails, and exiles to countryside.⁶¹ The Anti-rightists Campaign was so well-reasoned and quickly enacted by the Party that it almost made the Hundred Flowers Campaign seem like a trap for intellectuals to jump in.

Fu Lei was not able to escape from the arbitrary branding of "rightist." On July 6, he had just published an article on "Difficulty to Identify Rightist Elements" (识别右派分子之不易) on

⁵⁷. Fu, *Fu Lei jia shu*, 208–9.

⁵⁸. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 510.

⁵⁹. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 135.

⁶⁰. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 512.

⁶¹. Spence, 512.

Wenhui Bao.⁶² Yet on August 24, both *Wenhui Bao* and *Liberation Daily* (解放日报) called him out as a rightist,⁶³ claiming that he was a “middle roader” (中间路线) who disagrees with both the rule of GMD and CPC, and essentially support British and American capitalism.⁶⁴ He was further accused of being anti-party, anti-socialism, and apparently called out for his pro-imperialism and anti-Soviet positions based on an article he published ten years ago.⁶⁵

After newspapers and publications set the target, struggle sessions closely followed. In the letter Zhu Meifu wrote to Fou Ts'ong on December 23, 1957, she described her husband Fu Lei's condition to her son:

CWA held a total of ten sessions criticizing your father, and he did three self-reflections. He said his last self-reflection improved, but we do not know whether this will be the end. Through the test this time, your father finally gained some insights, but others' opinions were too acute or untrue. He is more or less upset and nervous. He is much thinner, often has insomnia, and lost seven pounds... Your father said...he lived for fifty years and had not known that judging others was not that easy. Old friends would sell out their friends, raise slanderous comments for their benefits.⁶⁶

作协批判爸爸的会，一共开了十次，前后作了三次检讨，最后一次说是进步了，算是结束，还不知道。爸爸经过这次考验，总算有些收获，就是人家的意见太尖锐了或与事实不符，多少有些难受，神经也紧张，人也瘦了许多，常常失眠，掉了七磅.....爸爸说.....活到五十岁了，才知道看人不是那么简单，老朋友为了自己的利害关系，会出卖好友，提意见可以乱提，甚至造谣。

The criticism sessions certainly inflicted much mental damage to Fu Lei and worsened his health. Signs of insomnia and nervousness were first mentioned in this letter. By April 1960, in addition to asthenia and insomnia, something went wrong with his eyes, head, and teeth. The ophthalmologist diagnosed that because he used his brain and eyes too much, he had damaged his optic nerve. The doctor advised him to not to use his brain and eyes for three to four months

⁶². Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 137.

⁶³. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 242.

⁶⁴. Zhengnong Xia 夏征农 and Zhili Chen 陈至立, eds., “Zhongjian luxian” 中间路线 [Middle Way], in *Da ci hai* 大辞海 (Shanghai: Shanghai ci shu chu ban she, 2013).

⁶⁵. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 242.

⁶⁶. Fu, *Fu Lei jia shu*, 221.

or else Fu Lei would be at risk for blindness.⁶⁷ In addition, he was diagnosed with trigeminal neuralgia, causing him to have multiple headaches in a day, a single headache sometimes lasting for more than ten hours.⁶⁸

Zhu Meifu wrote that there were instances of friends betraying Fu Lei. Fu Lei also mentioned that to Qian Zhongshu and Yang Jiang: “Fu Lei once told us: so and so ‘friend’ was having dinner at his house only yesterday, and yet attacking him on the newspaper today. This kind of matter does not only happen once” (傅雷曾告诉我们: 某某“朋友”昨天还在他家吃饭, 今天却在报纸上骂他。这种事不止一遭。).⁶⁹ Indeed, these matters were not uncommon. One way to show one’s thought had been fully reformed was to follow the Party and the people’s rhetoric and actively participate in movements. Being labeled as a rightist was disastrous, causing one to lose one’s job, suffer mentally and physically from endless struggle sessions, and sent to jail, labor camp, or the countryside. So if one could get promoted and avoid being branded as a rightist by drawing a clear line between oneself and the “rightists,” even if these rightists were once one’s classmates, friends, or colleagues, why not?

At this time, while he was called out as a “middle roader,” Fu Lei was not officially a “rightist” announced by the Party yet. Director of the Propaganda Department of the Shanghai CPC Committee Shi Ximin (石西民), who was a fan of Fu Lei’s translations, wanted to help Fu Lei. Shi Ximin hinted to Fu Lei to acknowledge his “anti-Party and anti-socialism” and said, “Let’s write the self-reflection to pass the ‘test.’ Self-reflection does not cost money anyway!” (检讨一下, 过一下‘关’吧, 反正检讨是不花钱的!).⁷⁰ Fu Lei, however, coldly replied,

⁶⁷. Fu, 241.

⁶⁸. Fu, 241.

⁶⁹. Yang, “Yi Fu Lei,” 15.

⁷⁰. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 139.

“There is no cheap self-reflections. Character is more precious than anything else! I was not anti-Party and anti-socialist, I could not do that kind of ‘profound self-reflection’” (没有廉价的检讨。人格比任何东西都可贵！我没有反党反社会主义，我无法作那样的‘深刻检查’！)。⁷¹ Furthermore, he told the party leaders that if he is guilty, he is willing to face the punishment, but he will never attend any meetings anymore.⁷² Fu Lei was very true to himself and was not willing to lie. According to Fu Lei’s brother-in-law Zhu Renxiu, who was a bureau cadre within the Shanghai CPC committee, Fu Lei was one of the two people Shanghai CPC Committee aimed to protect from being labeled as rightist.⁷³ Writer Ke Ling confirmed the intention of the CPC and convinced his friend Fu Lei to adopt some changes to his self-reflection.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, on April 30, 1958, citing previously mentioned reasons stated by *Wenhui Bao* and *Liberation Daily*, the CPC labeled Fu Lei as a rightist. It was pathetic to think back on how he especially warned the Party to “not put a label on discontented people arbitrarily, furthermore not indulge them regularly and tally up all their past bad deeds in movements, to prevent ‘punishing others without educating them at the first place’” (切忌对怀有不满情绪的人随便扣帽子，更不宜平日放任，到运动中算总账，以免“不教而诛”) in his written opinion in December 1955.⁷⁵ The Party disregarded all his warnings by first arbitrarily labeling him, who was not even someone who was “discontented” with the party, as a rightist; second they held him accountable for views he held ten years ago. Fu Lei’s active engagement with all the PCC conferences, self-reflection in his letter to his son, and sincere suggestion to the Party in the hope

⁷¹. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 139.

⁷². Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 243.

⁷³. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 139.

⁷⁴. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 261.

⁷⁵. Jin, 229.

of mitigating tensions between the Party and the intellectuals all demonstrated that the accusations were falsely made.

That night when the groundless label fell on him, Fu Lei did not return home until very late. He was not able to say anything to his wife. After a long time, he sighed.

“If it were not for the fact that Min is still too young, still going to school, today I would...[commit suicide]” (如果不是因为阿敏还太小，还在念书，今天我就.....) Fu Lei bitterly remarked.⁷⁶ His words showed that he was unafraid of death and he valued his dignity above his life—he would choose to die if his dignity was to be stained and humiliated.

As if bad news were not enough, Fu Lei’s close friend Zhou Xuliang brought him another one. Hearing that Fu Lei was labelled as a rightist, Fou Ts’ong was afraid that if he returned to China, father and son would have to criticize each other.⁷⁷ Considering that both his father and he would not commit such act, Fou Ts’ong decided to flee to London to prevent such possibility from forming at all. Now, Fu Lei was not only a rightist but also the father of traitor Fou Ts’ong.⁷⁸

The little mouse Fu Lei who bravely walked out of his hole ran into a wall. He was to return to his mouse hole—his study to translate. In the eight years between 1958 and 1966, he translated *Philosophie de l’Art* by Hippolyte Taine, five works of Honoré de Balzac, and revised his earlier translation of *Le Père Goriot*.⁷⁹ His salary still depended on remuneration for his translations. Yet when he submitted his translation of *César Birotteau* to People’s Literature Publishing House, the novel was turned down because Fu Lei was now identified as a rightist.⁸⁰

⁷⁶. Jin, 244.

⁷⁷. Jin, 145.

⁷⁸. It is worthy to note that Fou Ts’ong never said anything against China even though he fled to London and stayed there for half a century.

⁷⁹. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 250.

⁸⁰. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 145–46.

But his translation was such a fine piece and the publisher thought it would be pitiful to not let the public access the work.

The publisher suggested, “What about using a pseudonym to have the book published?”

Fu Lei found the suggestion incredible. First, he thought the Party was wrong for labeling him as a rightist. Second, adopting a pseudonym due to the false label was even more scandalous for him.

He starkly replied, “No! Either publish the book with the name ‘Fu Lei,’ or do not publish my translations at all!” (不! 要么还是署名傅雷, 要么不印我的译本!).⁸¹

The publisher had an internal meeting and decided to ask Fu Lei to continue translating and they would publish his works after his rightist label was taken off him. In the meantime, they would still pay his remuneration in advance.⁸²

Political movements interrupting the publication of academic works were not uncommon. As shown in Fu Lei’s case, rightists were not allowed to publish any books. Some works followed the publisher’s suggestions and used pseudonyms. Some works by rightists were simply too influential in the academic field that they had to be published. Take the case of the paleographer and poet Chen Mengjia (陈梦家). Similar to Fu Lei, he was labelled as a rightist for being too outspoken during the Hundred Flowers Campaign. While he was not permitted to publish, the Institute of Archaeology used Chen Mengjia’s photographs and descriptions of 850 bronze vessels he recorded in his travels in the United States and issued *Our Country’s Shang and Zhou Bronzes Looted by American Imperialists* (美帝国主义劫掠的我国殷周铜器集录) in

⁸¹. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 250.

⁸². Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 158.

1962.⁸³ The title itself already showed that the academic work was turned into a political statement to criticize the evil imperialist United States. In addition, the book did not credit Chen Mengjia for his work and even criticized him in the introduction.⁸⁴

Fu Lei's case was more fortunate than other rightists because he was valued for his talents by the Party. He was able to stay in Shanghai and not subject to forced labor or exile to countryside like others. On September 30, 1961, the Party cleared his charge and declared Fu Lei not a rightist.

Revolutionary fervor among the people, however, only grew stronger. The young new nation, only two decades in creation, was bound to face waves of turmoil in figuring its identity and role. On June 1, 1966, *People's Daily* (人民日报), the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the CPC, published an editorial titled "Sweep Away All Ox Demons and Snake Spirits" (横扫一切牛鬼蛇神) and urged people to arm themselves up with Mao Zedong Thought and attack the bourgeois "specialists," "scholars," "authorities," and "venerable masters" (祖师爷).⁸⁵ The editorial beat the first sound of war drums and started the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (无产阶级文化大革命), or the Cultural Revolution in short. Hundreds of thousands of adolescent students let out their long resentment toward their family members, teachers, and authorities for suppressing them and controlling their lives.⁸⁶ With their "Little Red Book," or *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (毛泽东语录) in hand, they idolized Mao and named

⁸³. Peter Hessler, *Oracle Bones: A Journey Through Time in China* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 248.

⁸⁴. Hessler, 248.

⁸⁵. "Heng sao yiqie niu gui she shen" 横扫一切牛鬼蛇神 [Sweep Away All Cow Demons and Snakes Spirits], *People's Daily*, June 1, 1966.

⁸⁶. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 545. The cause of the Cultural Revolution was much more complicated, involving the building tension between two opposing factions within the Party, Mao's suspicion of being shunt aside in the Party, and even the Sino-Soviet split. See Spence, 541–48; Richard Curt Kraus, *The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 20–23.

themselves the “Red Guards” (红卫兵). The Red Guards vigorously carried out campaigns such as raiding the houses of those they considered counterrevolutionary and anti-Party.

Fu Lei’s old friend Liu Haisu was one of the victims.⁸⁷ Hearing that news and witnessing the Red Guards’ unreasonable, Fu Lei had a bad feeling. He said to Zhou Xuliang when Zhou visited him, “If something like 1957 would happen again, I made my mind to not live anymore” (如果再来一次 1957 年那样的情况, 我是不准备再活的。).⁸⁸ His word turned out to be a prophecy.

On August 30, 1966, the storm had come.

A team from the Bureau of Housing Management first came to Fu Lei’s house in the afternoon to search through the house and left around 7 pm.⁸⁹ Another wave came at 11 pm. This time, it was the Red Guards from Shanghai Conservatory of Music (上海音乐学院). What made it even more astonishing was that the group was led by the piano teacher Li Mingqiang (李名强), who was a friend of Fou Ts’ong and a honored guest at Fu Lei’s house.⁹⁰

But this case was very strange as there seemed to be no connections between Fu Lei’s family and Shanghai Conservatory of Music—Fu Lei never worked there and Fou Ts’ong never studied there.⁹¹ The registrar police of the region Zuo Anmin recalled, “Those who do not have a warrant to search the house, were not allowed to do so. Later, more people raided other people’s houses, without even reporting to the police station, and the society became more and more chaotic; I could not keep track of them [the raids] either...At the time, in the district I monitored, there were a lot of people from the cultural circle, around two hundred families out of five

⁸⁷. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 170.

⁸⁸. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 290.

⁸⁹. Jin, 291.

⁹⁰. Wang, “Chizi gudu,” 37.

⁹¹. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 170.

hundred were raided” (没有抄家证明的，就是不给抄。后来，抄家的越来越多，根本不跟派出所打招呼，社会上越来越乱，我也顾不上……当时，我管的地段，文化界的人很多，五百多户中有二百多户被抄家。).⁹²

It turned out it was because Fu Lei had replied a letter in 1959 sent by the Chairman of Piano Major Li Cuizhen (李翠贞) at the Conservatory, who was also Zhu Meifu’s classmate in middle school.⁹³ Fu Lei advised Li who was in Hong Kong at the time to come back to mainland China. During the Cultural Revolution, because she came from Hong Kong, the Red Guards “logically” assumed she was a spy from overseas. Seizing Fu Lei’s letter at her house, the Red Guards rightfully marched toward Fu Lei’s house to investigate his relationship with the “spy.”⁹⁴

The raid at Fu Lei’s house continued for four days and three nights.⁹⁵ The Red Guards went through all Fu Lei and Zhu Meifu’s belongings to find evidences that could be used to charge Fu Lei with anti-Party activity. They trampled on and eventually pulled out the Chinese roses carefully tended by the couple; dug through the soil and levered the flooring up, imagining that they could excavate the so-called evidences.⁹⁶ Searching through boxes deposited at Fu Lei’s house, they finally found something that could count as evidences: a small portrait of GMD’s Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek inside a small mirror, an old poster of Song Meiling, Chiang’s wife, and an old certificate before liberation that had the flag of Republic of China printed.⁹⁷ In fact, these were items in the box deposited at Fu Lei’s house by Zhu Meifu’s older sister.⁹⁸ The

⁹². Ye, 185.

⁹³. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 290.

⁹⁴. Jin, 291.

⁹⁵. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 170.

⁹⁶. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 291. Six days after the suicides of Fu Couple, Li Cuizhen also committed suicide on September 8, 1966.

⁹⁷. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 172.

⁹⁸. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 172.

couple kept denying that these were their belongings but were unwilling to let out the name of the true owner.

In the morning of September 2, the couple was pulled to the front of their gate by the Red Guards. The students made Fu Lei and Zhu Meifu stand on the bench and wear tall paper-made hats to receive criticisms.⁹⁹ People filled up the alleys. Some were pure bystanders, and some joined the Red Guards to struggle against the Fus. Big character posters were pasted everywhere surrounding the couple. They read:

“Topple Fu Lei!” (打倒傅雷！)

“The Great Rightist Fu Lei Was Not Honest!” (大右派傅雷不老实！)

“Fu Lei Needs to Lower His Head and Admit His Wrongs!”¹⁰⁰ (傅雷必须低头认罪！)

After the Red Guards at last left their house with a mess, the couple first chose to apologize and comfort their housemaid for the chaos.¹⁰¹

That night, like what Fu Lei said to Zhou Xuliang earlier, he determined to commit suicide and his wife decided to follow in suit. They wrote in their suicide note addressed to Zhu Renxiu:

Even if we had thousands of guilts, we never thought of a regime change. We also know that the ferreted out incriminating evidence, while we find it hard to defend ourselves, will definitely not lead to a heavy sentence in the People’s Republic of China under the leadership of the brilliant leaders of the Communist Party and the great Chairman Mao. It is just that the days of suffering from unjust charges that cannot be cleared are tougher than serving time in jail. Let alone the fact that I educated a traitor Fou Ts’ong makes me deserve more than a death sentence in front of the masses! Not to mention that dregs like us who came from the old society should have already voluntarily exited the history stage!¹⁰²

我们纵有千万罪行，却从来不曾有过变天思想。我们也知道搜出的罪证虽然有口难辩，在英明的共产党领导和伟大的毛主席领导之下的中华人民共和国，决不至因之而判重刑。只是含冤不白，无法洗刷的日子比坐牢还要难过。何况光是教育出一个

⁹⁹. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 292.

¹⁰⁰. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 172.

¹⁰¹. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 172.

¹⁰². Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 174–75.

叛徒傅聪来，在人民面前已经死有余辜了！更何况像我们这种来自旧社会的渣滓早应该自动退出历史舞台了！

The last two sentences were mocking statements Fu Lei made to himself. He was always proud of his role in bringing up a brilliant and patriotic pianist who won the first international recognition for the country. But his beloved son Fou Ts'ong was seen as a traitor for having fled to London. Calling himself “dregs who came from the old society” (旧社会来的渣滓), Fu Lei acknowledged that his work of ameliorating relations between the Party and the intellectuals who belonged to the old society was a failure. These intellectuals including him “should have already voluntarily exit the history stage” (早应该自动退出历史舞台) because they were obstinate and could not change their minds despite the Party’s “generous” efforts in reforming them. The couple could have silently withstood the accusations and mental tortures and lived on similar to when Fu Lei was labeled as a rightist in 1958. The charges levied against them by the Red Guards did not warrant a death sentence; but to the Fuses, the resulting humiliation and injustice were worse than death. Fu Lei and Zhu Meifu decided to use death to powerfully assert their integrity and protest against the injustice.

The couple entrusted Zhu Renxiu with a list of things they were concerned about before they could die at ease. Till their death, the kind couple still wanted to minimize the troubles and inconveniences brought about their deaths. Some of the requests asked of Zhu included allocating the money they left with the note for their September house rent (55.29 yuan), their housemaid’s living expenses in the transition period (600 yuan), and even their cremating cost (53.30 yuan).¹⁰³

¹⁰³. Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 293–94.

After everything was accounted for; the couple ripped off two long strips of cloth from their quilt, hung them from the iron window frames in the bedroom, and tied two knots. To prevent their suicides from causing any sounds that might disturb their neighbor's sleep, they laid a layer of cotton batting under two square stools.¹⁰⁴ They stepped onto the stools and put their neck onto the knots of the strips. The stools were kicked aside and there were not any sounds.

¹⁰⁴. Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 173.

Chapter 2: Qian Zhongshu: A Witty Dissimulator

The darkest hour is just before dawn. In 1945, Japan finally returned its control of Shanghai to the City Government of Shanghai. In the last second, intellectuals were celebrating the liberated status of Shanghai; in the next second, they heard that the Chinese Civil War between the GMD and the CPC had resumed. Everybody was worried about the future of the nation, wondering whether the current regime under the GMD would be replaced by CPC's rule and if so what would the new regime be like. Many started to ponder their backup plans. By April 1949, following the news that the city of Nanjing was liberated by the Communists without a fight,¹ it was very clear that Shanghai would soon fall in the hands of the CPC. Pessimistic about their future in a Communist China, many business owners and intellectuals decided to flee mainland China and resettle in cities not yet in the CPC's control, such as Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and foreign countries.

Qian Zhongshu (1910-1988) and Yang Jiang (1911-2016) were also provided such an opportunity to choose whether to stay in or to leave mainland China, what is soon to be the People's Republic of China. They had just been through poverty and instability in the Japanese occupied Shanghai. Compared to others, they had a sense of what to expect in a Communist regime because they read George Orwell's works and all English novels they could find about the what was behind the Soviet Iron Curtain.² They knew that while the CPC uphold egalitarianism, no parties would truly enforce the ideal as the people would never enjoy the same privilege as the power-holders.

¹ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 457.

² Xuezhao Wu 吴学昭, *Ting Yang Jiang tan wang shi* 听杨绛谈往事 [Listening to the Past Told by Yang Jiang], Chu ban, Xin ren jian cong shu 新人间丛书 202 (Taipei: Shi bao wen hua, 2008), 217.

Their friends writer Zheng Zhenduo (郑振铎) and historian Wu Han (吴晗) urged Qian and Yang to stay and emphasized that the CPC greatly values Chinese intellectuals. The married couple did not take their friends' word for word. They knew that the intellectuals whom the CPC valued were scientists who were useful to the country, not them who were the “useless intellectuals” (没用的知识分子).³ In her memoir *We Three* (我们仨), Yang wrote about their thoughts occurred on the night before Shanghai's “liberation”:

If we were to flee, it was not that we had nowhere to go. But when one is at his critical juncture, which course he takes relies on his most intrinsic feeling. We never sang patriotic tunes. Not only did we not sing it, we also did not like to hear it. But we were not willing to flee the country; we were just not willing to leave our motherland, we couldn't leave behind our family [and the Chinese people]. Our country was a weak one burdened with [decades of] humiliations; we were unwilling to seek refuge in a foreign country, live at others' mercy as second-class citizens. We were cultured people, in love with our motherland's culture, writing, and language. In short, we were the stubborn Chinese common people, and did not want to become foreigners. We did not dare to be optimistic for our future, but we quietly stayed at Shanghai, and waited for liberation.⁴ 我们如要逃跑，不是无路可走。可是一个人在紧要关头，决定他何去何从的，也许总是他最基本的感情。我们从来不唱爱国调。非但不唱，还不爱听。但我们不愿逃跑，只是不愿去父母之邦，撇不开自家人。我国是国耻重重的弱国，跑出去仰人鼻息，做二等公民，我们不愿意。我们是文化人，爱祖国的文化，爱祖国的文字，爱祖国的语言。一句话，我们是倔强的中国老百姓，不愿做外国人。我们并不敢为自己乐观，可是我们安静地留在上海，等待解放。

The first sentence indicates that Qian and Yang had places to go to if they wanted to. Qian, an accomplished literary scholar and writer, and Yang, as a talented play writer and translator, were talents wanted by everywhere. Minister of Education Hang Liwu (杭立武) invited the couple to teach in Taiwan University and Taiwan Normal University; the University of Hong Kong offered them positions; and Sinologist K.G. Spalding at Oxford University invited them to England.⁵ But they voluntarily stayed in mainland China. They emphasized that they are never patriotic or

³ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 122.

⁴ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 122.

⁵ Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang Tan Wang Shi*, 217.

nationalistic. They neither loved the national concept of China nor the CPC or the GMD. What prompted them to stay in mainland China was, their “most intrinsic feeling,” or their love toward the culture, writings, and language of their motherland China. They did not want to leave the country or home that gives birth to and nourish them. In addition, they acknowledged the current standing of China in the world—“a *weak* country burdened with *humiliations*,” referring to the Century of *Humiliation* (百年国耻) China had been through and the vulnerable and *weak* status of China who just barely survived from the war with Japan and the civil war. They believed that by fleeing to other countries, they cannot live as comfortable in these countries as in their own. They would have to ingratiate the foreigners—the superior first-class citizens—for the foreigners’ mercy of letting them—citizens of the “weak country”—to stay and become “second-class citizens” in the foreign country. In the end, Yang writes, “We didn’t dare to be optimistic for our futures.” Combining with her previous statement that the CPC values only the scientists but not the intellectuals, Qian and Yang implied that their belief influenced by their study abroad experiences in France and United Kingdom might be considered bourgeois, reactionary, and anti-CPC by the government and the people in New China. They moreover clearly knew what the consequences of staying could be for they are not “optimistic” for their situation in New China. Nevertheless, they chose to stay and face the brewing storm.

In late May, Shanghai is liberated.⁶

In the summer of 1949, the couple accepted job offers from the Department of Foreign Languages at their alma mater Tsinghua University and took the train to Beijing. There was a rule in Tsinghua that husband and wife could not both be full-time professors in the university. Yang Jiang was very satisfied with her part-time job and even declined to switch to full-time

⁶. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 457.

when the rule was abolished. It was because she could use that as an excuse to attend study meetings on Marxist-Leninist theories and works of Mao Zedong hosted for full-time teachers or housewives.⁷

Despite study meetings and the changing regime, the atmosphere around the campus did not have changed too much. People did not have to be too careful about their speech and often cracked some jokes. A communist assistant teacher at the Department of Foreign Language Yan Baoyu (严宝瑜) recalled that Qian Zhongshu once pointed out every grammatical mistake in *A Concise Guide of English* (英文简明读本) published by the Soviet Union and made everyone laugh.⁸

A year after Qian was employed by Tsinghua, the head of the Information Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC Qian Guanhua (乔冠华) came to invite Qian to be a member of the CPC Central Committee of English Translation of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (中共中央毛泽东选集英译委员会). In August 1950, Qian accepted the offer and committed himself in translations besides advising his graduate students in the weekends.⁹ An old friend of them heard the news and came to congratulate Qian. Qian was terrified and said to his wife Yang, “He thought I become the ‘officer at South Study.’ This job is not easy. I do not hope [the leaders] to recognize my service but hope [that they] do not find faults” (他以为我要做“南书房行走”了。这件事不是好做的，不求有功，但求无过。).¹⁰ Since Qing Emperor Kangxi (r. 1661-1722) mostly studied in his South Study, officers at South Study, often chosen from the prestigious Hanlin Academy, became very close to the emperor and had some say in his

⁷ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 123.

⁸ Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang Tan Wang Shi*, 237.

⁹ Wu, 238.

¹⁰ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 124.

decisions.¹¹ Qian's confession showed his passive attitude toward this "glorious and influential" job his friend considered. He was not proud to be one of the committee members and he saw potential danger in it. In fact, he never wrote his experience in the committee in his curriculum vitae.¹²

When Qian Zhongshu was translating Mao's works, he was very obedient. At the time, the English translation of *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* was simultaneous with the Chinese editing of the work. Often times, the English translation committee had just finished the translations, and the Chinese editing team came to inform that there were new revisions; so the committee needed to re-do the translations. Yang Jiang jokingly called Qian and his colleagues' translations the "shroud weaved by Penelope from Homer's *Odyssey*," which Penelope undoes the shroud every night.¹³ Qian did not raise any complaints or objections except for once. He found a mistake in Mao's work when Mao referred to *Journey to the West* (西游记) and Chairman Mao had to revise two sentences for this error.¹⁴ While Qian had to be careful with his speech and behavior, he saw advantages in working in the committee. First, there were not a lot of meetings. Second, there were only a few people on the committee; so when there were political movements, the political activities were not as intense in the committee. Third and most importantly, he had free time to read. Qian's graduate student Huang Yushi (黄雨石) who later joined the committee also confirmed that Qian spent all his time in reading and declined all

¹¹ Biyao Chen 陈璧耀, "Shenme shi 'nan shufang xingzou' " 什么是"南书房行走" [What Is "Officer at South Study"], in *Wen shi bai tan* 文史百谭 [Hundred Discussions on Literary History], Di 1 ban (Shanghai: Shanghai jin xiu wen zhang chu ban she, 2012), 140–41.

¹² Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang Tan Wang Shi*, 241.

¹³ Wu, 239.

¹⁴ Wu, 239.

invitations to feast from Zhongnanhai (中南海), or the central headquarters for the CPC and the State Council of China.¹⁵

Gradually, political movements gained momentum and the political atmosphere became more intense and sensible. In November 1951, the Central Committee of CPC (CCCPC) issued *Directive on Thought Reform and Cleaning in Schools* (关于在学校中进行思想改造和组织清理), urging cadres to initiate meetings for teachers to confess past movements they had participated and wrongs they had committed in schools; and clean up elements of counter-revolutionaries.¹⁶ Yang Jiang kept a vivid account of the Thought Reform Campaign in her fiction *Baptism* (洗澡). Thought reform was originally called “taking off one’s pants” (脱裤子) and “cutting one’s tails” (割尾巴).¹⁷ But intellectuals deemed them too vulgar and referred thought reform as “taking baths” (洗澡). In Yang’s novel, Du Lilin (杜丽琳) told Yu Nan (余楠) about the campaign in the university:

Everybody needs to take a bath. It is called “everybody passing the test.” As to how does each person take a bath, she cannot say well. She only knows that people in high positions, such as principals and deans, take baths in “large tubs”; those who in low positions take baths in “small tubs”; those in between take baths in “medium tubs.” General meeting is the biggest “large tub.” More people mean more water, signifying the largeness of the “bathtub.” Ordinary professors only need to take “bath in a small tub” in their departments.¹⁸

每个人都得洗澡。叫做“人人过关”。至于怎么洗，她也说不好，只知道职位高的，校长院长之类，洗“大盆”，职位低的洗“小盆”，不大不小的洗“中盆”。全体大会是

¹⁵ Wu, 240.

¹⁶ Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zhengzhi xueyuan dangshi jiaoyanshi 中国人民解放军政治学院党史教研室 [Office of Teaching and Researching the Party History of Chinese People’s Liberation Army Political College], “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zai xuexiao zhong jinxing sixiang gaizao he zuzhi qingli gongzuo de zhishi” 中共中央关于在学校中进行思想改造和组织清理工作的指示 [Directive of Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Thought Reform and Cleaning in Schools], in *Zhonggong Dangshi Cankao Ziliao* 中共党史参考资料 [References for History of Communist Party of China], vol. 19 (Beijing: Zhongguo ren min jie fang jun zheng zhi xue yuan dang shi jiao yan shi, 1979), 378–80. Due to its closeness to the subsequent Three Anti Campaign (三反运动)—on anti-corruption, anti-waste, and anti-bureaucracy—began in 1952, the thought reform campaign and the subsequent campaign were collectively called the Three Anti.

¹⁷ Jiang Yang 杨绛, *Xi zao* 洗澡 [Baptism] (Beijing: Ren min wen xue chu ban she, 2004), 175.

¹⁸ Yang, *Xi zao*, 175.

最大的“大盆”。人多就是水多，就是“澡盆”打。一般教授，只要洗个“小盆澡”，在本系洗。

Intellectuals needed to submit self-criticisms, touching on things they did deemed problematic by others, or else they could not pass the test. Some intellectuals helped others by stealthily mentioning points they should write about in their self-criticisms. For example, Yang Yezhi (杨业治) once passed by Yang Jiang and murmured “Animal Farm” twice. Yang Jiang caught the hint and reflected on her mentioning of *Animal Farm* by George Orwell in her class about modern British literature in her self-criticism. Her self-criticism was deemed acceptable and ended her bath in a “small tub.”¹⁹ Other times, intellectuals no longer visited each other because nobody knew which of their friends would become anti-revolutionaries and the next day and whether they would become the next targets for visiting their friends.

After Qian Zhongshu experienced the less intense “bath” in the committee, students from Tsinghua urged him to come back to the campus and take a bath. Qian took a bath in a “medium tub” and his self-criticism passed in one try.²⁰ Qian and Yang joked that the nation made a “bad investment” for hiring them. As intellectuals, they only needed to serve the people at their jobs distributed by the nation. Indeed, they were willing to serve the people wholeheartedly, yet they were not qualified as intellectuals from the old society, so the country needed to re-educate them.

Qian and Yang saw the money the nation put in to reforming their minds as a bad investment because they received both high salaries and “educations” while the state got nothing in return.²¹

¹⁹ Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang Tan Wang Shi*, 242; Yang, *Wo men sa*, 127.

²⁰ Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang Tan Wang Shi*, 249.

²¹ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 137.

Following the “baths,” professors cautiously choose what to teach to prevent students or other people from catching their “counterrevolutionary” speeches in class. Yang Jiang decided to teach more on grammars rather than discussing literature.²²

In 1952, the government adjusted schools and departments within universities to emphasize education in science, technology, engineering, and math. College of arts and science and law school of Tsinghua University were merged into Peking University. Humanities students now accounted for 14.9% of university students, compared to 33.1% in 1947.²³ Qian Zhongshu and Yang Jiang no longer belonged to Tsinghua University and were both transferred to Institute of Literature in new Peking University. Having been through the thought reform, the couple was happy to find their new post as researchers because they no longer needed to teach.

Qian Zhongshu’s work at Committee of English Translations of *Selected Works of Mao* came to a pause and he returned to work at the Institute of Literature in 1954. Director Zheng Zhenduo knew that the foreign literature team was full and switched Qian to the classic literature team. Although Qian felt aggrieved, since he never majored in Chinese classics and on the contrary studied and taught foreign literature in college, Qian showed endurance by following Zhang’s order and was never able to return to the foreign literature team.²⁴ From 1954 to 1956, Qian Zhongshu worked on *Selected and Annotated Song Dynasty Poetry* (宋诗选注).

Qian and Yang kept a low profile and remained silent throughout the early period of PRC. If something was encouraged or promoted by the Party, they saw it as “political campaign” and political campaigns always ended up in the extreme side. They deemed themselves not “competent” enough to understand political campaigns and thus decided to not voice out their

²² Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang Tan Wang Shi*, 252.

²³ Wu, 251–52.

²⁴ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 127–28.

opinions.²⁵ In fact, it was the other way around. They were aware of the possible consequences in engaging themselves with campaigns and saw remaining silence as the best choice. During the “Hu Shi Thought Criticism Campaign” (胡适思想批判运动) from October 1954 to 1955, Qian did not join the mass.²⁶ On the contrary, Qian said to Yang in English in private, “If we don’t have freedom of speech, at least we have freedom of silence.”²⁷

Despite his enforcement of his “freedom of silence,” Qian Zhongshu could not escape from others’ false claims against him. In a national meeting on problems centering around intellectuals hosted by the CCCPC in January 1956, Department of Higher Education submitted investigation reports of Peking University. One of the reports raised Qian Zhongshu as an example of a reactionary professor, citing his close relationship with American spy Allyn Rickett and another spy Shen Xuequan (沈学泉) recently exposed in Tsinghua. It additionally claimed that Qian declined to bring *Selected Works of Mao* home to translation, saying that “bringing home such dirty thing will filthy the air [of my house]” (这样肮脏的东西带回家去，把空气都搞脏了). Other reactionary speeches made by Qian, according to the report, included: “The CPC and the Soviet Union, the GMD and the United States; the two groups are no different from each other” (共产党和苏联一伙，国民党和美国一伙，一个样子没有区别); “The Food Purchase and Distribution Policy starved many to deaths in the rural area. [The Party] was no better than the Japanese” (粮食统购统销政策在乡下饿死好多人，比日本人在时还不如); and etc.²⁸

None of these claims were accurate. Qian only talked to Professor Rickett from University of

²⁵ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 135.

²⁶ Jiangang Lin 林建刚, “Pi Hu Shi yundong zhong zhishi fenzi de butong xuanze” 批胡适运动中知识分子的不同选择 [Different Decisions Made by Intellectuals in the Criticize Hu Shi Campaign], *Yue hai feng* 粤海风, no. 06 (2014): 23, <https://doi.org/10.16591/j.cnki.44-1332/i.2014.06.018>.

²⁷ Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang tan wang shi*, 248.

²⁸ Yong Xie 谢泳, *Zhongguo xiandai zhishi fenzi de kunjing* 中国现代知识分子的困境 [The Dilemma of Chinese Modern Intellectuals], BOD 1 ban (Taipei: Xiu wei zi xun ke ji gu fen you xian gong si, 2008), 186–87.

Pennsylvania once to discuss *Guanzi* (管子), an ancient Chinese political and philosophical text. Shen Xuequan was not found on the list of students from Tsinghua but Shen Xueqian (沈学潜), who was not close with Qian and not a spy. Moreover, friends of Qian saw the reactionary speeches included in the report as ridicules as Qian never talked about politics in public or in private.²⁹

During the height of Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1957, Qian had the chance to hear from Mao Zedong in Zhongnanhai. He thought that the Party was sincere in asking opinions from the intellectuals.³⁰ The couple's friends and acquaintances responded to the Party's request enthusiastically. Fu Lei published more than 10 articles revolving around the Party's treatments to literature and arts on *Wenhui Bao*. Chen Mengjia wrote criticisms on the writing reforms that attempted to Latinize Chinese writings or simplify Chinese characters, and dogmatism within the party.³¹ Nevertheless, in spite of many invitations and urges, the couple did not speak in the campaign. In five weeks, Qian and Yang saw Fu's and Chen's names in angry headlines of the same newspapers that published their articles:

BIG DEBATE AT CITY POLITICAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE IN CLIMAX:
Fu Lei's "Middle Way" Thought... Was Criticized
WHAT PLAYED THE ROLE IN FOU T'SONG'S ACHIEVEMENT? Fu Lei's Whip or
the Party's Nourishment?³²
REFUTE THE RIGHTIST ELEMENT CHEN MENGJIA'S ABSURD THEORY
CRITICIZE CHEN MENGJIA.³³

Their friends were now labeled as "rightist" and heavily criticized against. On one hand, the couple felt fortunate to not have spoken out in the Hundred Flowers Campaign. On the other

²⁹ For the full accusation of Qian Zhongshu and analysis of its credibility, see Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang tan wang shi*, 258–60.

³⁰ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 135.

³¹ Hessler, *Oracle Bones*, 412.

³² Ye, *Fu Lei hua zhuan*, 137.

³³ Hessler, *Oracle Bones*, 413.

hand, they felt sorry for their friends and terrified for the extremeness and unpredictability of political campaigns.

Even though the couple were not labeled as “rightists,” they became targets of “white flags” (白旗) in May 1958. In the second meeting of Eighth National Congress of the CPC, Mao Zedong asked all local organizations to “Plant Red Flags and Pluck White Flags” (插红旗、拔白旗) in preparation for the “Great Leap Forward” (大跃进).³⁴ Red flags referred to proletariats and white flags referred to capitalists. Qian Zhongshu’s *Selected and Annotated Song Dynasty Poetry* and Yang Jiang’s academic paper both published in 1958 were seen as “white flags.” At the time, Qian was on the English Translation of *Selected Works of Mao* Finalization Team and could not attend the criticism meetings. Yang Jiang had to attend the meetings on Qian’s behalf and pass on their criticisms.³⁵ Some denounced Qian for overly emphasizing the art and form of poems and playing down the significance of politics in his selections; some criticized his work being too difficult to understand as a popular book.³⁶ The criticisms stopped when Japanese sinologists Yoshikawa Kōjirō (吉川幸次郎) and Ogawa Tamaki (小川環樹) highly praised Qian’s selection of poems.³⁷ On the other hand, Yang’s academic essay was fully turned down. She decided to no longer write any academic papers and dive herself into translations.³⁸

³⁴ Zhonggong quanzhou shiwei dangshi yanjiushi 中共泉州市委党史研究室 [Party History Research Office of Communist Party of China Quanzhou City Committee], “‘Ba baiqi, cha hongqi’ douzheng” “拔白旗、插红旗”斗争 [“Pluck White Flags, Plant Red Flags” Struggles], in *Zhongguo gongchandang Fujian sheng Quanzhou shi lishi* 中国共产党福建省泉州市历史 [History of Communist Party of China in Quanzhou City, Fujian Province], Di 1 ban, Zhonggong Fujian Lishi Di Er Juan Congshu 中共福建历史第二卷丛书 (Beijing: Zhong gong dang shi chu ban she, 2018), 228.

³⁵ Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang Tan Wang Shi*, 266–67.

³⁶ Fan Li 黎藩, “Yiyang baobian yao liqiu gongyun: Dui tushu pinglun de jidian yijian” 抑扬褒贬要力求公允: 对图书评论的几点意见 [Praises and Criticisms Need to Be Grounded: Opinions toward Book Reviews], *People’s Daily*, September 17, 1959, par.6.

³⁷ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 136.

³⁸ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 136.

Qian Zhongshu was back to work on translating Mao's writings. His participation in these projects highly valued by the Party might have served as his protection amid the political turmoil. From 1950 to 1954, he was on the Committee of English Translation of *Selected Works of Mao*. From 1958 to 1963, he was on the two-people team of finalizing the English draft of *Selected Works of Mao* with Solomon Adler. From 1964 to 1976, interrupted briefly by the Cultural Revolution, he became a member of another team, consists of five people, translating Mao's poems into English.³⁹ These teams were relatively small so an elimination of anyone on the team through political campaigns would surely impede the progress.

The end of the "Pluck White Flags" campaign brought the beginning of Great Leap Forward in 1958. The Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1960 aimed to heighten economic productivity in China through inspiration of revolutionary fervor and mass organizations of public works. Intellectuals had to reform themselves in rural areas and factories. As a result, Qian Zhongshu, Yang Jiang, and their daughter Qian Yuan (钱瑗, 1937-1997) were all sent to participate in the Great Leap Forward. Yang Jiang was sent to Changli (昌黎), Hebei in November and Qian Zhongshu in December 1958.⁴⁰

Yang Jiang had a great time in Changli, working alongside peasants whom she considered genuine and friendly. Furthermore, Qian Zhongshu wrote letters to her daily. But as letters accumulated, Yang unwillingly burned the letters to prevent evil-minded people from finding "mistakes" in Qian's writings and citing them as evidence against Qian in potential struggle sessions.⁴¹

³⁹ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 133.

⁴⁰ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 137–138.

⁴¹ Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang tan wang shi*, 272. For Yang's experience in Changli, see Wu, 272–76.

One of the goals the Party leaders set in the Great Leap Forward was to surpass Great Britain's steel production in 15 years. Qian Yuan, a college student at the time, was sent to work in a factory to help with steelmaking.⁴² In people's communes (人民公社) set up by the Party, people melted pots to make steel (which obviously did not work and made steel scrap instead) and ate in communal canteens. Officials exaggerated reports of grain production and the central government that believed in them exported more grain to the USSR in exchange for heavy machinery. The result was a three-year great famine that killed about 20 million people spanned from 1959 to 1962.⁴³

By December 1958, when Qian Zhongshu was sent to Changli, the great famine had started, so he did not have an experience as enjoyable a time as Yang's. Qian was responsible for making manures. While Yang had had steamed sweet potatoes for meals when she was in November,⁴⁴ he had cornbread made with moldy potato and corn flour.⁴⁵

The harshest criticisms against Qian and Yang came during the Cultural Revolution. Qian Zhongshu was not unfamiliar with the political atmosphere he was facing. He once wrote in 1941, "The great crimes, great atrocities—no crime is greater than atrocity—were often committed by those who have high moral ideals...If God wanted to punish humankind...God sometimes would create a moralist, with unknowing arrogance formed by his noble ideals that ordinary men cannot fulfill along with his confidence and ability to incite, proportionate to the nobility of his ideals" (世界上的大罪恶，大残忍——没有比残忍更大的罪恶了——大多是真有道德理想的人干的.....上帝要惩罚人类.....有时产生一个道德家，抱有高尚得一般人

⁴² Yang, *Wo men sa*, 138.

⁴³ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 522–23.

⁴⁴ Wu, *Ting Yang Jiang tan wang shi*, 73.

⁴⁵ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 138.

实现不了的理想，伴随着和他的理想成正比例的自信心和煽动力，融合成不自觉的骄傲。).⁴⁶ During the Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao was this “arrogant moralist” who “incited” fervor among his followers, the Red Guards, to achieve an “ideal that ordinary men cannot achieve.” And through this fervor, one of the most infamous crime and atrocity was delivered.

In August 1966, Qian and Yang became “Ox Demons and Snake Spirits.” Their savings in the bank were all frozen by the government.⁴⁷ Out of the two well-respected scholars, Qian became a janitor, sweeping the backyards of the Institute of Literature while Yang became a toilet cleaner.⁴⁸ They were called onto the stages in auditorium and theatres to be criticized by the Red Guards. Red Guards beat the couple with whips and belts and degraded them by spitting on them, smearing snots, and painting glue on their backs.⁴⁹ Even when they were not the main target of the struggle sessions, they needed to put on the paper hat, lower their hat, and be criticized with the prime “culprit.”⁵⁰ At the time, their daughter Qian Yuan joined the party as a “white elite” (白尖子). Since she was considered part of the “revolutionary mass,” she needed to draw a line between herself and her parents. So, whenever she visited them, she would have to first write a big character poster that criticize her parents and distinguish herself from them before she walked into her home.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Zhongshu Qian 钱锺书, *Xie zai rensheng bian shang* 写在人生边上 [Written in the Margins of Life] (Beijing: Zhongguo she hui ke xue chu ban she, 1990), 56.

⁴⁷ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 143.

⁴⁸ Jiang Yang 杨绛, “Bingwu dingwei nian jishi” 丙午丁未年纪事 [Chronicles of 1966-1967], in Ganxiao liu ji ji jiang Yin cha *deng pian* 干校六记及将饮茶等篇 [A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters and Other Essays in *Jiang Yin Cha*], Chu ban, Xin ren jian cong shu 新人间丛书 92 (Taipei: Shi bao wen hua, 2006), 184. The years 1966 and 1967 can be written according to the sexagenary cycle as Bingwu (丙午) and Dingwei (丁未), respectively. Ancient Chinese people hold the believe that since years of Bingwu and Dingwei are associated with the element of fire, so national disasters will occur.

⁴⁹ Yang, “Bingwu dingwei nian jishi,” 185–86.

⁵⁰ Yang, “Bingwu dingwei nian jishi,” 205.

⁵¹ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 142.

Qian and Yang remained positive despite the terrible situations they were in. Although they needed to hand write their placards with their name and “crimes” as a “capitalist academic authority” (资产阶级学术权威) that they wore to work every day, they took the humiliating act as a chance to compare and appreciate each other’s penmanship.⁵² When Red Guards shaved their heads to what was called “strange heads” (怪头), they were not bother by it. The aesthetic “barbers” shaved a cross on Qian’s head and named it “cross head” (十字头); they trimmed half of Yang’s hair and called it a “yin-yang head” (阴阳头). These hairstyles signified one’s nature of “counterrevolutionary” to the revolutionary masses. So real barbers would not take them as customers. Yang helped Qian to shave the rest of his hair and made a wig for herself.⁵³ Yang comforted herself that her childhood wish of shaving her hair like her brother was fulfilled.⁵⁴ When Yang was forced to parade through the street with moisty wood board hanging on her neck and gongs on her hand, she thought of herself as the messenger of her translation *Lazarillo de Tormes* and loudly informed others that she was a “capitalist intellectual.”⁵⁵

The couple’s optimism did not, however, mean that they were insensible to pain and mundane emotions. As “capitalist authorities,” they were supposed to welcome some “revolutionary masses” to live with them under the Party’s order. Once this “revolutionary” family asked the cleaner hired by the Qians to do their laundry as well and insisted the cleaner to do their laundry before the Qians. Qian Yuan refused and said that the cleaner was hired by her. In response, the “revolutionary” woman slapped her. Seeing her daughter to be beaten, Yang was angered and hit back. The “revolutionary couple” held Yang up and threw her down multiple

⁵² Yang, “Bingwu dingwei nian jishi,” 184.

⁵³ Yang, “Bingwu dingwei nian jishi,” 185, 188.

⁵⁴ Yang, “Bingwu dingwei nian jishi,” 189.

⁵⁵ Yang, “Bingwu dingwei nian jishi,” 206–7.

times. Amid the chaos, Yang bid a finger of the “revolutionary couple.” Qian Zhongshu, who was reading in the bedroom, heard the noise and came out to see this horrifying scene. He immediately took a very thick wooden board and aimed at the “revolutionary” man’s head. Fortunately, the man blocked it with his arms.⁵⁶ This fight incident showed that Qian and Yang who did not resist in incessant struggle sessions and humiliations were nevertheless normal human beings like us, who could feel pain and anger. Qian and Yang never mentioned this incident and saw it as an inappropriate act of them. Qian commented, “One will degenerate to the same level of those who one lives with” (和什么等人住在一起, 就会堕落到同一水平).⁵⁷

Stoically withstanding the Cultural Revolution and asthma, which caused cerebral hypoxia, Qian worked on his *magnum opus* the four-volume *Limited Views* (管锥编), a comprehensive academic work that introduced the field of Comparative Literature to China. The whole work was written in classical Chinese, which Qian described as an “Aesopian language” that is circuitous and veiled in his foreword to Monika Motsch’s German study on *Limited Views*.⁵⁸ Yang Jiang also noted that his choice of using difficult classical Chinese was to protect the work from being destroyed by the Red Guards.⁵⁹ In *Limited Views*, he formed conversations between more than 1,000 western literatures works with 10 classical works. In the process, he drew in works and ideas of over 3,000 Chinese and foreign authors in what he called his “reading notes.”⁶⁰

In the preface of Yang Jiang’s *A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters* (干校六记), Qian Zhongshu categorized himself as a coward who knew there was injustice done to the ones

⁵⁶ Tang, *Yi dai caizi Qian Zhongshu*, 297–98.

⁵⁷ Tang, 298.

⁵⁸ Rea, *China’s Literary Cosmopolitans*, 130.

⁵⁹ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 155.

⁶⁰ Yue, “A New Beginning for China’s Comparative Literature,” 65.

criticized during the political campaigns but was not courageous enough to speak out and could only respond to campaigns with passivity.⁶¹ Indeed, throughout the chaotic decades, he kept a low profile, did not actively talk about politics or criticize others, and on the basis of that did everything he could to survive. But in a period when most people around one were driven into madness, whether they were instigated into attacking their acquaintances or they were tortured to insanity; it was estimable for someone like Qian Zhongshu who stayed calm and rational, joining neither group. While being a victim, Qian responded to the era with great tolerance and gifted the era a masterpiece of the literary world.

⁶¹ Jiang Yang 杨绛, “Ganxiao liu ji” 干校六记 [A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters], in *Ganxiao liu ji ji Jiang yin cha deng pian* 干校六记及将饮茶等篇 [A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters and Other Essays in Jiang Yin Cha], Chu ban, Xin ren jian cong shu 新人间丛书 92 (Taipei: Shi bao wen hua, 2006), 8.

Chapter 3: Shen Congwen: A Romantic Phoenix

A month before Beijing changed its color from blue to red,¹ on December 31, 1948, Shen Congwen, who is recognized as one of the most influential literary giants today, had resolved to abandon his writing career. On his calligraphic gift *Ode to Dispatching Troops* (出师颂) to his colleague Zhou Dingyi (周定一), Shen Congwen ended with the line “Paper Testing and Laying Down my Brush on New Year’s Eve of Thirty-seventh Year [of the Republic of China]” ([民国]三十七年除夕封笔试纸).² In “Trivial Account on Mr. Shen Congwen” (沈从文先生琐记) he wrote in 1988, the recipient Zhou Dingyi interpreted that “Laying Down my Brush” (封笔, literally “to seal one’s pen” in Chinese) here might be a double entendre: one referring to the social custom that offices close, troupes stop performances, and writers lay down their pens on New Year’s Eve; another referring Shen Congwen’s decision to no longer write fiction.³ Indeed, in the subsequent 40 years of 1948, despite many attempts, Shen Congwen was not able to finish even one novel in contrast to more than 80 novels he published in the previous 25 years.⁴

If it was not his death, Shen Congwen (1902-1988) would be the winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature.⁵ He occupies a special position in the history of Chinese literature

¹. Xiaojian Ni 倪晓建, ed., *Beijing diqu tushuguan dashi ji: 1949-2006* 北京地区图书馆大事记: 1949-2006 [Chronicle of Events of Libraries in Beijing Region: 1949-2006] (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chu ban she, 2007), 1. Beijing is liberated by the CPC, represented by the color red, from the GMD, represented by blue, on January 30, 1949.

². Congwen Shen 沈从文, *Shen Congwen quan ji* 沈从文全集 [The Complete Collection of Shen Congwen], ed. Zhaohe Zhang 张兆和, Di 2 ban (Taiyuan, Shanxi: Beiyue wen yi chu ban she, 2009), 14:498.

³. Shen, 14:498.

⁴. Jizeng Yu 于继增, “Jiannan de jueze: Shen Congwen tuichu wentan de qian qian hou hou” 艰难的抉择——沈从文退出文坛的前前后后 [A Difficult Decision: the Before and After of Shen Congwen Retiring from Literature Writing], *Shu wu* 书屋, no. 08 (2005): 71.

⁵. Xuemin Yang, “Meet Nordic Sinologist Goran Malmqvist: A Bridge for Chinese Literature to the World,” CGTN.com, October 23, 2019, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-10-23/Meet-Goran-Malmqvist-A-bridge-for-Chinese-literature-to-the-world-KZXTts5aww/index.html>.

because of his diverse and pervasive contributions to literature. He was one of the very few Chinese authors who engaged in “liberation of thought” and experimented with avant-garde ideas and techniques in his fiction. One of his most well-known novel *The Border Town* (边城) was considered by literary critics “nearly perfect in style and form.”⁶ Put in the words of literary historian Jeffrey C. Kinkley, *The Border Town* is as seminal as *Madame Bovary*, as original as *Tristram Shandy*, and as substantial as *A la recherche du temps perdu*.⁷ Having been devoted to fiction writing since his adolescence, what then prompted Shen Congwen to “lay down his pen” that meant so much to him right before 1949, the symbolic year that marked the establishment of PRC? What killed the writer in him? Where would he go after 1949?

Before Beijing was liberated by the Communist Party, Shen Congwen’s friends and some members from the GMD had tried to convince him to move southward with the GMD. Thinking that the GMD regime would not last, he did not hesitate to decline the offer and stayed in Beijing.⁸ At the same time, he was concerned about the new regime and was pessimistic about China’s future. In his essay “‘Where is China Going?’ ” (“中国往何处去? ”) published on the journal *Lunyu* (论语) a year before the Civil War between the CPC and GMD ended in 1949, Shen wrote that China was on the road to “destruction” (毁灭) and even if the Civil War was over, “what we prepared for the next generation, was, I am afraid, complete ‘authoritarianism’ ” (我们为下一代准备的却恐将是一分不折不扣的‘集权’!).⁹ As a liberalist writer who advocated for democracy and freedom of mind, he was not fond of either the CPC or the GMD,

⁶. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 3.

⁷. Kinkley, 3.

⁸. Kinkley, 266.

⁹. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 14: 323, 324.

both of which to him was authoritarian. In fact, because he stayed out of any groups, while not to the point of archenemy, every faction deemed him as an enemy.¹⁰

In the face of the critical transition from China under the rule of the GMD to the CPC, Shen Congwen at first thought of using literature to reform the minds of the Chinese people. He considered the contemporary character of “bloodlust and materialism,”¹¹ the former brought by endless wars—the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Civil War that immediately resumed (1927-1937, 1945-1949)—China was involved in and the latter brought by western culture such as American movies, within the Chinese society degenerate and disgraceful to the term civilization. Under the pseudonym “*Balu jueshi*” (巴鲁爵士, roughly translate to Knight of Baruch), he published a series of essays called *Beiping Communications* (北平通信) from December 1947 that called people to “use art and culture to clean the souls and rebuild the society” with detailed methods.¹² Borrowing from the May Fourth Intellectual Cai Yuanpei’s (蔡元培) rhetoric “aesthetic education as a substitute for politics” (美育代宗教), to solve the Chinese problem and seek progress, *Balu jueshi* advocated that, rather than calling empty slogans following the government’s party officials and engaging in the political structure that butchers people like animals, Chinese people should use “aesthetic education” (美育) and “poem education” (诗教) to rebuild their political minds to believe in the “truly progressive and ideal politics” (真正进步理想政治).¹³ Shen Congwen also told his wife Zhang Zhaohe (张兆和,

¹⁰. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 276.

¹¹. Kinkley, 259.

¹². Xinying Zhang 张新颖, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng: Yi jiu si ba- yi jiu ba ba* 沈从文的后半生: 一九四八-一九八八 [The Latter Half of Life of Shen Congwen: 1948-1988], Zeng ding (Shanghai: Shanghai san lian shu dian, 2018), 9.

¹³. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 14:384.

1910-2003) that he would extend his love and dignity to his work and dedicate himself to another ten to twenty books for his children.¹⁴

Within a year, however, Shen Congwen seemed to give up the idea that art and literature can save the country, citing his decision to quit writing fiction. He faced one of the strongest criticisms to his literature in March 1948. Guo Moruo (郭沫若), a firm supporter of Mao Zedong and an arbiter of philosophy, art, and literature within the CPC, published “Reprimand to Reactionary Arts” (斥反动文艺) and categorized “reactionary arts” in colors of red, yellow, blue, white, and black. Guo especially called out Shen Congwen as a “peach-pink” (桃红色) writer who promotes pornography as in Shen’s novel *Plucking a Star* (摘星录).¹⁵ Guo moreover claimed that Shen had been a reactionist all along, citing his unpatriotism for not joining the anti-Japanese United Front writer’s organizations,¹⁶ calling the Chinese Civil War—or CPC’s “Revolutionary War against Anti-Revolutionary War” (革命战争反对反革命战争) waged by the GMD in Guo’s word—a “tragedy of ethnic suicide” (民族自杀悲剧), and attempting to propagate a “fourth-party” (第四组织) to counter-revolution.¹⁷ Following Guo’s criticisms, other scholars who worked under the CPC like Xia Yan (夏衍) and Shao Quanlin (邵荃麟) identified Shen as a defender of fascism and an accomplice of landlord and bourgeois.¹⁸

As Shen understood more of the CPC’s standards of literature, he knew that it would be hard for him to change his writing style and his literature did not fit in the new era. At the night

¹⁴. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 10.

¹⁵. Moruo Guo 郭沫若, “Chi fandong wenyi” 斥反动文艺 [Reprimand to Reactionary Arts], in *Shen Congwen yanjiu ziliao* 沈从文研究资料 [Research Materials on Shen Congwen], ed. Huaqiang Shao 邵华强, vol. 1, *Zhongguo wenxue shi ziliao quan bian* 中国文学史资料全编 [Full Collection of Chinese Literature History Materials], *Xiandai juan* 现代卷 [Volume on Modern Times] (Beijing: Zhi shi chan quan chu ban she, 2011), 153.

¹⁶. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 253.

¹⁷. Guo, “Chi fandong wenyi,” 153–54.

¹⁸. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 266; Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 16–17.

of November 7, 1948, he attended a literary forum called “Today’s Direction of Literature” (今日文学的方向) held at Peking University. Literature in the new era promoted by the Party was to strictly follow political agenda, such as praising the proletariats along with the peasants and depicting the different political movements against landlords and anti-revolutionary. In the forum, Shen posed a couple of questions:

“May he [a driver] disregard the traffic lights?” (他[驾车者]能不顾红绿灯吗?)
 “What if someone manipulates the traffic lights?” (如有人要操纵红绿灯, 又如何?)
 “Perhaps there are people who think it is better to go without traffic lights?” (也许有人以为不要红绿灯, 走得更好呢?)
 “Besides accepting influences from politics, can literature reform politics? Or should literature be solely following the rules?” (文学是否在接受政治的影响以外, 还可以修正政治, 是否只是单方面的守规矩而已?)¹⁹

Shen compared the political agenda to “traffic light” (红绿灯). The first three questions listed above show Shen’s skepticism over the overall effectiveness of such “traffic light.” His last question indirectly revealed his unwillingness to accept the new way to write literature. Even after he reached compromise with the new standards, Shen still attempted to ask for some freedom in writing that can help with bettering politics through inserting suggestions and criticisms to politics in literature. The predictable answers to Shen’s questions demonstrated a dim future for him. An English professor Qian Xuexi (钱学熙) suggested two ways for Shen if Shen believed that his direction is correct but in conflict with the Party’s: “One way is to disregard everything and walk forward until you are shot [by the Party]; another way is to compromise, stop writing for now and wait for the future. But in fact, compromising is

¹⁹ Jianjun Chen 陈建军, ed., “Jinri Wenxue de Fangxiang -- ‘Fang Xiang She’ Di Yi Ci Zuotan Hui Jilu” 今日文学的方向——“方向社”第一次座谈会的记录 [The Direction of Today’s Literature: Record of the First Discussion Forum of “Direction Club”], in *Wo Ren de Renlei de Jimo: Fei Ming Shiji* 我认得人类的寂寞: 废名诗集 [I Recognized the Loneliness of Human Kinds: The Poems of Fei Ming], by Ming Fei 废名, Di 1 ban (Beijing: Xin xing chu ban she, 2018), 203–4.

equivalent to shooting yourself” (一是不顾一切，走向前去，走到被枪毙为止；另一是妥协的路，暂时停笔，将来再说。实际上妥协也等于枪毙自己。).²⁰ Qian implied that if the writer disagreed with the Party’s attitude toward literature, then either way the writer chose would inevitably lead to “the death of the writer.” His insight was especially true to Shen Congwen who could not but helplessly sighed, “On the one hand, there is restriction set by the traffic lights; on the other hand, I still want to walk” (一方面有红绿灯的限制，一方面自己还想走路).²¹ Shen still wanted to “walk,” or to write, but he still did not know whether he could adapt himself to this new writing style that required him to unconditionally follow the “traffic light,” regardless of whether it would impede one’s ability to walk and whether it was manipulated by somebody.

Shen came to a conclusion by the end of 1948. In a letter Shen Congwen sent to a novice writer in December 1948, he wrote:

For these past twenty or thirty years my writing has been based on contemplation [*si*]. Now, however one has to see everything from the perspective of belief [*xin*]. I might not be able to accomplish such a transformation. Before long, even if I were not forced to, I would eventually stop writing. This is the fate of certain people of our generation.²²
二十年三十年统统由一个“思”字出发，此时却必需用“信”字起步，或不容易扭转，过不多久，即未被迫搁笔，亦终得把笔搁下。这是我们一代若干人必然结果。

Shen was not able to accustom himself from the old way of writing based on “*si*” (思, contemplation or empathy) to the new way under “*xin*” (信, belief). The idealist who believed in the power of literature in reforming politics and the minds of people at last realized that the literature in this era would no longer have that power and degenerate into a repeater of the Party.

²⁰. Chen, 205.

²¹. Chen, 205.

²². Xiaojue Wang, “Shen Congwen’s Journey: From Asylum to Museum,” in *A New Literary History of Modern China*, ed. David Der-wei Wang (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), 545.

Like what he wrote on his calligraphic gift to Zhou Dingyi, he decided to lay down his most valued “pen” for the past two decades and gave up his literature career that he had relied on to support his family. By writing that “this is the fate of certain people of our generation,” Shen remarked that his tragic fate of giving something up to compromise with the new era is shared by not only him but many others of his generation who came from the old era.

Shen was never able to pick up his pen to write fictions like before. From 1951 to 1952, he attempted to write a novel called *Old Comrade* (老同志) to portray this comrade who worked in the cafeteria of Revolutionary University. It was not as well written as his previous works and this was never published during his life.²³ In 1961, Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai (周恩来) personally summoned Shen and encouraged him to resume writing. The state patronized Shen to travel to and stay at Jinggangshan (井冈山), or Mount Jinggang on the border of Jiangxi and Hunan where the CPC had built the Red Army, for three years to write his novel based on a Communist martyr in his wife’s family. Yet he returned to Beijing three months with nothing on hand.²⁴ Shen preferred depicting people’s genuine emotions in ordinary life, which he deemed would “certainly move people” (必然使人感动) and should be written because that is how literature specifically “touches” on people. He, however, acknowledged that “it is not the focus of literature at the moment” (不是目下文学要求的重点) and he was not able to write the novel the Party expected him to.²⁵ In addition, he disapproved and was not at all interested in literature created in the new era. He did not read any of it.²⁶ Shen exclaimed in 1951, “The era was very lively, yet the literary scene was too dull!” (时代十分活泼，文坛实在太呆板!).²⁷

²³. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 47–48.

²⁴. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 271.

²⁵. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 21:135.

²⁶. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 279.

²⁷. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 60.

As the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of CPC came closer and closer to Beijing in late 1948, more and more people echoed Guo Moruo's rhetoric and criticized Shen publicly at his workplace. Around the campus of Peking University, banners of "Down with Shen Congwen who Belongs to the Crescent Moon Society, *Modern Criticism*, the Third Way Cliques!" (打倒新月派、现代评论派、第三条路线的沈从文!) were hang up. Students pasted big character posters that copied Guo's "Reprimand to Reactionary Arts" and denounced Professor Shen as a "peach-pink" author who was uncommitted to the New China, defended fascism, and praised landlords in his literature. Shen received hate mails and some even posed death threats.²⁸

Shen found the claims untrue with a sense of betrayed. Following the official rhetoric of the CPC, associations with the Crescent Moon Society, *Modern Criticism* clique, and the Third Way (or Middle Way) suggested Shen Congwen's support to imperialism and capitalism. Writers from the former two cliques were said to have published articles defending the GMD and warlords while opposing Marxism and revolutions.²⁹ In a letter he wrote to his niece Zhang Yiying (张以瑛) in March 1949, he exclaimed that he was never close with the GMD in his writing career of 26 years. He admitted he was not actively engaged in any factions and his negligence in politics made him an easy target of anti-revolutionary or pro-GMD. He was ridiculed by the false claims and ended with a rhetorical question: "If I really engaged in realpolitik, I would have flown to Taiwan and Guangzhou already, why would I choose to suffer here and now?" (如真的和现实政治相混, 那就早飞到台湾广州去了, 那会搁到这个孤点上

²⁸. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 266–67.

²⁹. See Deyong Wang 王德勇 et al., eds., "Xin yue pai" 新月派 [Crescent Moon Society], in *Wenyi lilun gainian qian shi* 文艺理论概念浅释 [Brief Explanations of Literary Theories and Concepts] (Langfang, Hebei: Langfang shi zhuan zhong wen xi, 1982), 227–29; Xianjun Zhang 张宪军 and Yi Zhao 赵毅, "Xiandai pinglun pai" 现代评论派 [Modern Criticism Clique], in *Jianming zhongwai wenlun cidian* 简明中外文论辞典 [A Concise Dictionary of Chinese and Foreign Literary Theories] (Chengdu: Ba shu shu she, December 2013); Xia and Chen, "Zhongjian daolu."

受罪?)³⁰ As for praising landlords, he pointed out that he had no surviving landlord relatives while on the contrary did know some Communists.³¹

Suffering from both his abandonment of his career as a fiction writer and abusive denunciations from his workplace, Shen was in depression. He retired to his friend's house in the suburb. In Zhang Zhaohe's letters to her husband's siblings in April, she described that from January to April, Shen was sometimes happy and determined to reform himself but most of the time he was melancholic, pessimistic, desperate, and suspicious. He often felt that someone was going to persecute him. His wife and his friends all found him abnormal and hopeless.³² In early January, Shen wrote in the margins of his short story "Green Nightmare" (绿魔) that "I should take a rest, [my] nerves are stretched to a breaking point. I will be driven mad, or worse, ruined" (我应当休息了, 神经已发展到一个我能适应的最高点上。我不毁也会疯去).³³ In comments he wrote on letters his wife Zhang Zhaohe sent to him on January 30, he elaborated more on what he meant by "rest": "Give me a rest that is not so painful, and that I do not need to wake up from. Whatever I said was understood by no one. None of my friends wanted or dared to understand that I am not mad. They all prevaricated... [I am] completely isolated[guli]. Isolated and desperate, I do not dream of surviving. I should then rest!" (给我不太痛苦的休息, 不用醒, 就好了, 我说的全无人明白。没有一个朋友肯明白敢明白我并不疯。大家都支吾开去.....[我]完全在孤立中。孤立而绝望, 我本不具有生存的幻想。我应当那么休息了!)³⁴ A rest that he did not need to wake up from surely referred to "death." His comments

³⁰. Congwen Shen 沈从文, *Shen Congwen zixu zhuan* 沈从文自叙传 [Self-Accounts of Shen Congwen], ed. Xiaoqiang Xu 续小强 and Zhongyi Xie 谢中一, Di 1 ban (Taiyuan, Shanxi: Bei yue wen yi chu ban she, 2016), 2:685.

³¹. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 266.

³². Shen, *Shen Congwen zixu zhuan*, 2:686.

³³. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 14:456.

³⁴. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 18–19.

also showed that a factor that worsened his depression was his perception of being “completely isolated” from all of his friends who did not “want or dare” to understand his situation. *Guli* (孤立) was the word he used for “being isolated.” Like *guli*’s literal meaning, “to stand alone,” he was desperate to find out that his expectation of his fate being shared by many from “his generation” was not true. For example, his once-close friend Ding Ling (丁玲) joined the CPC and quickly rose to be the vice president of the National Association of Literature and Arts and the chief editor of *Literary Gazette* (文艺报).³⁵ People around him was able to adapt, or muddle along, to the social and historical tide but he could not and would not like to. He was “standing alone” on an isolated island, bearing the tragic fate brought by the era alone, and watching others across the sea who found ways to detour away from the fate.

In the morning of March 28, Shen used a razor to slit his throat and wrists and drank some kerosene at his Peking University dormitory.³⁶ His cousin-in-law Zhang Zhonghe (张中和) found Shen’s door was blocked from inside when Zhang came to visit Shen. Zhang realized that something was wrong and broke in through a window. Shen Congwen was sent to an emergency center and soon hospitalized in a mental asylum.³⁷

After days of unconsciousness, Shen Congwen woke up in the asylum. He wrote diaries to reflect on himself and expressed his state of mind: “Tragedy has turned into tranquility. It was as if I saw God in the state of tranquility. I came to understand God. When I see things, I no longer react to them negatively but accept them peacefully” (悲剧转入谧静，在谧静中仿佛见到了神，理会了神。看一切，再不会用一种强持负气去防御，只和和平平来接受了).³⁸ He

³⁵. Wang, “Shen Congwen’s Journey,” 545.

³⁶. Shen, *Shen Congwen Zixu Zhuan*, 2:686.

³⁷. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 24.

³⁸. Zhang, 25.

reached the conclusion that “there really was not any need or necessity to commit suicide or be killed” (实在没有自杀或被杀的需要或必要) and decided to “use the rest of his life to do something beneficial to the people” (用余生作点什么与人民有益的事).³⁹ In the diaries, he wrote as many as six times that “I want a rebirth. I want to attain rebirth I deserved, amid all slanders and humiliations, attacks and struggles” (我要新生，在一切毁谤和侮辱打击与斗争中，得回我应得的新生).⁴⁰ Shen at last compromised with the reality and accepted his fate. The era had changed, and he should change, too.

To change, however, did not mean to conform. In the process of recovering from his mental illness, Shen reconstructed a new self—one that was true to himself, did not completely submit himself to politics, and most importantly, allowed him to survive through the era.

In “One’s Self-Account” (一个人的自白) he wrote before his suicide, Shen stated that, “What the new era demands from people is ‘selfless’ [*wangwo*] and ‘no-self’ [*wuwo*]; completely forgetting or getting rid of that small, timid, and finite self, and dissolving ‘self’ into political process, social demand, or, the big principle ‘for next generation’s rationality, progress, and happiness’ ” (新的时代要求于人的是“忘我”“无我”，忘掉或去掉那个小小的，蜗缩的，有限的我，而将“我”溶解于政治进程中，社会要求中，或者说，一个“为下一代合理、进步、幸福”大原则中).⁴¹ His interpretation of the new era was adequate. To be “*wangwo*” (忘我, literally to forget self) and “*wuwo*” (无我, literally no-self) were to give up critical thinking and blindly follow what the political leaders suggest. Indeed, this was an era that prioritized *xin* over *si*. Pressured by the drastic change of the new era, through mental struggles and attempts of self-

³⁹. Zhang, 25, 26.

⁴⁰. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 19:24, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32.

⁴¹. Shen, *Shen Congwen Zixu Zhuan*, 1:126.

destruction, Shen's old self, who often saw his mission was to deliver the overlooked yet genuine sadness and happiness in ordinary lives (平凡人生卑微哀乐) to the public on paper,⁴² was shattered. In silent nights, he would address protagonists of his fiction stories, such as Cuicui (翠翠) and Sansan (三三): "Cuicui, Sansan, am I mad again...I am looking for myself that is lost...I cannot recall who I am, where did my previous self go? Even the pen on my hand, why did it suddenly lose all its luster? Each character [it wrote] on paper was as if frozen, with absolutely no links among themselves and no meanings." (翠翠, 三三, 我难道又疯狂了.....我在搜寻丧失了的我.....想不出我是谁, 原来那个我在什么地方去了呢? 就是我手中的笔, 为什么一下子会光彩全失, 每个字都若冻结到纸上, 完全失去相互间联系, 失去意义?).⁴³ His calling out to his protagonists showed his intimacy with his literature and again demonstrated how painful the decision of quitting writing could have been to him. But he no longer could write as his pen "suddenly loses all its luster." Healing from the mental illness, Shen needed a new purpose to live, or a new life path.

Shen Congwen first decided to reengage with the era, and with what he named *qun* (群). In a letter he wrote to his cousin's son Huang Yongyu (黄永玉) in July, he denied his whole writing career as it had isolated himself from the majority, the people, or what he called the "group," *qun*.⁴⁴ Throughout his own narrative writings and his poems from 1949 and onwards, Shen repeatedly brought up that he "wandered off" (游离) from the *qun* and was in a state of "complete isolation" (完全孤立). In "Beiping Dormitory on May 30, 10 PM" (五月卅下十点北

⁴². Shen, 1:137.

⁴³. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 19:42, 43. Cuicui is the protagonist of *Border Town* and Sansan is the protagonist of *Sansan*.

⁴⁴. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 31.

平宿舍), he expressed his feeling: “There is a sense of emptiness and loneliness rising deep inside me, as if I am completely isolated from the human world, as if I am entirely cut off from the sadness and happiness of a group[*qun*]” (有种空洞游离感起于心中深处, 我似乎完全孤立于人间, 我似乎和一个群的哀乐全隔绝了。).⁴⁵ Shen felt isolated not only because he was not willing to conform to the *qun* and live in ways the new society demanded him to; but also because the fervid atmosphere of the era as well prevented him from joining the *qun*. But in his letter to Huang, he realized that it was not healthy to stray away from the *qun*. Instead, he was now determined to use knowledge on history he accumulated in the past 20 years and his love of arts to study the history of Chinese arts and crafts. He pointed out that no one was willing to study the history of people’s arts in the past millennium. Shen saw conducting research on Chinese arts and crafts as his first step to be closer to the people and to the *qun*.⁴⁶ He found a new mission to live on: to serve the people and to pave the road for later scholars through his research. He even laid out a plan: “[I] plan to do [research on] the history of porcelain, the history of lacquering, silk, furniture and so on one by one” (预备要陆续把陶瓷史、漆工艺史、丝织物、家具等等一样样做下去).⁴⁷ Shen’s mental breakdown allowed him to rethink his position in the complex era and reconstruct a new self centered around the new career as a researcher. Similar to what he described in his poem “Understood from Beethoven’s Music” (从悲多汶乐曲所得) he wrote in September, “It disintegrated me yet reconstructed me, / gave me a completely new birth!” (它分解了我又重铸了我, 已得到一个完全新生!).⁴⁸

⁴⁵. Zhang, 27. Beiping (北平) is the old name of Beijing (北京) in the Republican Era. It is sometimes shortened to “Ping” (平).

⁴⁶. Zhang, 31.

⁴⁷. Zhang, 31.

⁴⁸. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 15:222.

Just like how Shen denied his entire writing career, the nation and the Party did as well. After Shen was discharged from the asylum in April, his classes were no longer offered in Peking University. The veteran writer was not invited to the first All-China Congress of Literary and Art Representatives held in Beijing in July.⁴⁹ By 1953, all of his short stories and novels disappeared from bookshelves of bookstores both in the mainland China and in Taiwan. Even the corresponding printing plates of his works were destroyed. His name was erased from the official literary histories.⁵⁰ The situation remained so even in the 1980s.⁵¹

Parting from his literary career, Shen was finally able to fling himself into the artifacts and material culture he grew interested since his adolescence. He was first introduced to scrolls of paintings, bronze vessels, and academic writings on these artifacts when he was the secretary of General Chen Quzhen (陈渠珍) in his hometown Xiangxi (湘西), western part of Hunan.⁵² In his self-account “About Southwestern Lacquerware and Others” (关于西南漆器及其他) he wrote right before his suicidal attempt, he expressed his love to music, art, and mathematics over literature. Art helped him understand other lives and resonate with the emotions put in by the artisans. Shen loved arts, and beyond arts, the truly naïve yet genuine mind, or the *xin* (心), that created these touching works; while the genuineness in ordinary people had always been the focus of his literature.⁵³

As early as February 1948, out of love to arts, Shen had helped with preparation works to establish a museum in Peking University even though he was not on the planning committee. He donated many of his collections, including porcelains, palm-leaf manuscripts, and all the

⁴⁹. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 30.

⁵⁰. Wang, “Shen Congwen’s Journey,” 546.

⁵¹. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 270.

⁵². Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 13:356.

⁵³. Shen, *Shen Congwen Zixu Zhuan*, 136–48.

lacquerwares he collected in Yunnan mentioned in his self-account; gifted sets of academic books to serve as the museum's resources; and helped curating exhibitions.⁵⁴ He was very worried about the future of Chinese artifacts made by the Chinese people as he witnessed the ill treatment of these cultural relics by staffs in the museums and the lack of attention from the state, both the ROC and the PRC at the time:

The worst was the Forbidden City, [the administration of] which idled the days away, and only hired some employees to do office works! After they registered the wood furniture, as if there was not any use in it, the furniture were left aside; while they used an entire gallery to showcase western clocks! They paid no attention to the thousand kinds of silk-made items, and sold many inconsiderately when [they] were living in Ping[Beijing]; but dedicated a whole building to exhibiting the [paintings of] big horses of Giuseppe Castiglione and Ignaz Sichelbarth. What a sin they committed!⁵⁵

最作孽的莫过于故宫，什么事都不作，只养下一些职员办公！木器家具除登记后搁着下来，竟若毫无用处，陈列室却用一专室放西洋钟！丝织物有上千种不注意，许多都在你们住平那个时候随意卖了，现在却还有一个房子陈列郎世宁艾蒙的大马。真是作孽子！

Not only the important cultural heritage was not preserved carefully by the staffs—some were “left aside” and some were “sold inconsiderately”; but the museum valued western arts, such as the “western clocks” and paintings of Castiglione and Sichelbarth, over Chinese arts and crafts like the “wood furniture” and the “thousand kinds of silk-made items.” Amid the transition from old China to new China, Shen was able to find a corner cared by no one at the time but deemed very significant in retrospect. Throughout his researching career, he remarked on that there was not enough time for him to do research and preserve artifacts that the nation had ignored for the past four decades.⁵⁶ Despite loneliness and misunderstanding from the contemporary, he positioned himself in the era as a man tidying up the corner and laying the foundation for future scholars.

⁵⁴. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 10.

⁵⁵. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 18:512–13. Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766) and Ignaz Sichelbarth (1708-1780) were renown Jesuit painters in Qing China's (1644-1912) imperial court.

⁵⁶. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 70.

In August 1949, Shen Congwen was assigned to the exhibition team of National History Museum. The Head of the Bureau of Cultural Relics Wang Yeqiu (王冶秋) was close to Guo Moruo and depended on Guo in work. Wang saw Shen as a writer trying to take shelter in the museum amid political storm and a dispensable person in the material culture circle. Many Shen's colleagues thought the same and treated Shen badly. Even though there were a lot of empty offices in the museum, when Shen asked for one, the administrators of the museum did not grant him one.⁵⁷ Shen's early works in the museum consist of simple ones, such as writing object labels, copying exhibition cards, keeping records of artifacts in the museum, and sometimes setting up exhibitions.⁵⁸ He also led museum tours. In fact, archaeologist Wang Xu (王予), one of his research assistants and successor of his works, met him through a museum tour in 1953. Wang recalled the attentiveness of Shen to visitors: "As soon as I walked in, a man in his 50s in a white shirt stood up, followed me, and then explained [the artifacts] to me. I remember it was a display case of bronze mirrors, bronze mirrors from Tang and Song dynasties. There were dozens of them in a case. Just this case, he explained to me for two or three hours. I was very moved" (我刚一进门, 一个穿着白衬衫的五十来岁的人就站起来, 跟着我看, 然后就跟我讲。我记得那时铜镜展柜, 唐宋的铜镜, 几十面, 一个柜子。这个柜子就给我讲了两三个小时, 使我非常感动).⁵⁹ Wang spent another week in the museum and said that although he did not know anything about artifacts at the time, the guide taught him as if he was a kindergartener.⁶⁰ In his long letter to a journalist in 1951, he expressed his gratitude to the people

⁵⁷. Tushou 陈徒手 Chen, "Wu Men Cheng Xia de Shen Congwen 午门城下的沈从文 [Shen Congwen under the Meridian Gate]," in *Yuedu Renge Ershi Ke 阅读人格二十课 [Reading 20 Lectures on Human Dignity]*, ed. Yufeng 黄玉峰 Huang and Zhaoqiang 王召强 Wang (Shanghai: Shanghai ke xue ji shu wen xian chu ban she, 2015), 241.

⁵⁸. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 32.

⁵⁹. Zhang, 89.

⁶⁰. Zhang, 89.

who were willing to spend time in the museum to understand more about their own culture. He was additionally thankful for how they became his new meaning of life: “You young people, I pulled through for you[singular], for you[plural]...I will always hold out silently, amid all unimaginable difficulties, for that there may be someone among you who will consider me as your friend or your acquaintance from my work” (你年青人，我就为了你，为了你们，我活下来了.....我就为你们之中还有可能从我工作中，理解我是你们的朋友，你们的熟人，就在一切想象不到的困难中，永远沉默支持下来了。).⁶¹

Shortly after Shen Congwen started working in National History Museum, in March 1950, he was sent to North China People’s Revolutionary University (华北人民革命大学) to reform his thoughts, remove influence from the old era, and nourish sense of belonging to the new regime. Students in Revolutionary University needed to study Marxist-Leninist theory, attend meetings and discussions, and write self-criticisms that were deemed acceptable by the teachers and classmates.⁶² He saw criticism sessions as a waste of time and hoped people use those time to do something useful to the society. Shen tried very hard to adopt what he learned but these new ways of living encouraged by the Party went against his belief that centered around *si*. He found it difficult to follow. Ten months later, in December, he graduated with a low but passing grade. There were a few people who could not graduate and were arrested.⁶³ His summary of his study in the university read more like a list of criticisms on study methods employed in the university, such as criticizing classmates in discussions and having endless

⁶¹. Zhang, 55.

⁶². Zhang, 43.

⁶³. Tushou Chen 陈徒手, “Wu men cheng xia de Shen Congwen” 午门城下的沈从文 [Shen Congwen under the Meridian Gate], in *Yuedu renge ershi ke* 阅读人格二十课 [Reading 20 Lectures on Human Dignity], ed. Yufeng Huang 黄玉峰 and Zhaoqiang Wang 王召强 (Shanghai: Shanghai ke xue ji shu wen xian chu ban she, 2015), 240.

written tests on theories.⁶⁴ Between 1950 and 1951, tens of thousands of intellectuals from the old era to be sent to reform their mind in Revolutionary University for six to eight months. They went through process of celebrating shared group solidarity, experiencing isolation and guilt, suffering from fear and insecurity, and understanding the greatness of the Party for bringing new lives to them.⁶⁵ Shen's wife Zhang Zhaohe attended the university in May as well.⁶⁶

Children, on the other hand, received their political education from school. A dialogue between Shen Congwen and his oldest son Shen Longzhu (沈龙朱) was recorded in his "Politics is Everywhere" (政治无处不在). His son did not understand his work in the museum and saw him not making progress like other people at the time. Longzhu believed that his father could write good essays and thus he should write beneficial essays for the Party and the state. In addition, he thought Shen Congwen was not working happily. Shen Congwen retorted that he worked industriously in the museum for the country and exposed the achievements of the people under exploitations of emperors, bureaucrats, and bureaucrats in the feudal society. Shen Congwen additionally said that he was making efforts to learn to be happy as an intellectual who just been through the painful process of reform. He concluded that the divergence between his and his son's mindsets had stemmed from the fact that they perceived the nation from different starting points: his son's from the starting point of *xin* while his from the starting point of *si*.⁶⁷ Thought conflicts between fathers and sons, or family members, were usual in this period. Some children wrote big-character posters criticizing their parents, actively participated in struggle

⁶⁴. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 27:116–19.

⁶⁵ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 506–7.

⁶⁶. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 27.

⁶⁷. Congwen Shen 沈从文, "Zenme Shuo Wo Lao Bu Jinbu, Hai Bu Kuaile Gongzuo" 怎么说我老不进步, 还不快乐工作 [Why Did You Say I Never Make Progress, and Not Work Happily], in *Shengming de guangying xingxian: Rensheng ganxiang lu* 生命的光影形线: 人生感想录 [The Light, Shadow, Shape, and Lines of Life: Life Reflections], ed. Hongqing Liu 刘红庆, Di 1 ban (Beijing: Xin xing chu ban she, 2017), 85–86.

sessions against their family, and reported their parents' misbehavior to the state. For example, in hope to quickly blend into the new society, Hu Sidu (胡思杜) wrote extensive criticisms against his father Hu Shih (胡适), one of the most influential May Fourth intellectual and the previous principal of Peking University.⁶⁸ Indeed, it was an era that aimed to overturn all old values, including “feudal” Confucian ideals that emphasize on filial piety and family. To many people, family was no longer a shelter: to the youths, it was a burden; to the people from the old society, it was another place for them to be tortured by new political ideals they have yet mastered.

On October 25, 1951, Shen Congwen followed the Beijing Land Reform Team to Sichuan. He witnessed many struggle sessions against the landlords in the countryside. In a 5,000 people gathering, about 400 landlords were subdued under the control of both male and female peasants weaponized with knives and spears. Shen noted that some of the landlords' clothes were as worn out as those on the farmers. The mass was wearing blue shirts with white turbans. When the mass walked through fields of rape, bean, and wheat, they formed a long blue line led by a big red flag. After the landlords were verbally and sometimes physically abused, the landlords kneeled in front of the fields before their houses while the military and the peasants confiscated their properties amid beating drums and gongs. Shen remarked that it was such a “historic spectacle” (历史奇观): “It was as if everyone was driven by an incomprehensible force, and carrying out the procedure planned by the era” (人人都若有一种不可理解的力量在支配, 进行时代所排定的程序。).⁶⁹ Yet he also noticed the “calm of the land” (土地的平静) that absorbed the loud sounds of drums and gongs after the session dissolved as if nothing had

⁶⁸. See Sidu Hu, “Hu Shi and Hu Sidu: Father and Son,” in *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, ed. Janet Y. Chen et al., Third edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 386–89.

⁶⁹. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 75–76.

happened.⁷⁰ It was a calm that “cannot be disturbed by any social changes” (由任何社会变动都搅不乱的平静).⁷¹

Shen’s observation of the moving and stationary during the land reform helped him gain a deeper understanding of his position in history. He realized that “tens of thousands of people move through history, some earned fame, some accumulated fortunes...but, [they] left nothing through time and gone” (万千人在历史中而动，或一时功名赫赫，或身边财富万千……但是，一通过时间，什么也不留下，过去了。).⁷² Yet among those who moved through history, there were a few who, though living through an “insufferable life filled with unbearable loneliness and painful frustration” (不可堪忍的艰困寂寞，痛苦挫败生活), decided to record all beings around them that they were passionate about in writings. They were the poets and historians.

He pondered, while all heroes, rulers, beauties, and scholars become dust and soil and lose their meanings of existence after the era has past; the poets and historians who wrote “literature or history with feelings,” *youqing* (有情), became “the only vehicles to connect past and present, self and other. Hence, they created historical continuity and enabled feelings to be revived across different times and spaces” (却成了唯一联接历史沟通人我的工具。因之历史如相连续，为时空所阻隔的情感).⁷³ In the new era, however, “history with feelings” was often dismissed as “ignorant” (无知) and “incompetent” (无能) by the dominant discourse of “history with feats” —*shigong* (事功)—and emphasis on “practical functions”—*zhiyong* (致

⁷⁰. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 19:267.

⁷¹. Shen, 321.

⁷². Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 79.

⁷³. Wang, “Shen Congwen’s Journey,” 546; Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 80.

用)—adopted by the current politics.⁷⁴ It was Shen’s sensibility that prevented him from stepping foot on the new era’s literature that laid emphasis more on its political, educational, and social impact to the people. His realization during the land reform reinforced his determination in working with historical objects.

With the thought that loneliness nourishes individuals and especially sensibility in individuals, Shen aspired to be one of the vehicles and hoped to write down “history with feelings,” like *Records of the Grand Historian* (史记) by the Western Han (202 BCE – 9 CE) historian Sima Qian (司马迁). Indeed, in his art historical works on cultural objects of the past, he was able to transmit the genuine feelings embedded by the artisans from thousands of years ago to modern readers, forming a bridge through time.

In March, Shen Congwen returned to work in the National History Museum. Most of the time, he was not understood by his colleagues and scholars in his field. His colleagues saw no meanings in his work and even laughed at him.⁷⁵ Shen became a member of the art acquisition team in 1952.⁷⁶ During a working conference of museums national wide, National History Museum curated an internal exhibition called “Exhibition of Anti-waste” (反浪费展览) by the Meridian Gate (午门) of the Forbidden City, presenting “wastes” Shen Congwen had purchased. For example, one of these “wastes” was a 4 yuan twill damask with “Made in Prefecture Hejian” (河间府制造), a famous silk production region, weaved on it. The patterns were very similar to the important Fan Chunren’s (范淳仁) memorial from Song dynasty. Shen’s colleagues even made him guide museum workers outside of Beijing through this exhibit.⁷⁷ Shen’s study on

⁷⁴. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 82.

⁷⁵. Zhang, 54–55, 93.

⁷⁶. Zhang, 88.

⁷⁷. Zhang, 94.

“trivial,” *za* (杂), artifacts and their material culture were not understood by the mainstream scholars at the time. But the lack of understanding itself showed the significance of Shen’s unique material culture research.

Shen Congwen’s priority in his research over politics saved him from being labeled as a “rightist” in the late 1950s. After the Hundred Flowers Campaign started in 1956, Shen Congwen was invited to speak in the Second Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and became a member of the CPPCC. In his speech, he perfunctorily admitted that his wrongs as an intellectual from the old era and acknowledged that the Party successfully led the mass in building a better society contrary to his early doubts. He claimed that he would self-reflect frequently and contribute all useful knowledge he learned to the country as a new intellectual in the Mao Zedong era.⁷⁸ Shen’s speech showed that while he did not agree on how the CPC handled thought reforms and literature, he was not against the CPC. In April, he was sent by the CPPCC to Shanghai to oversee production of silk and visit museums and universities. Concentrated wholly in works related to the cultural relics, he turned down all writing requests and interviews about the ongoing Hundred Flowers Campaign. Yet, many of his acquaintances and friends, including novel writer Ba Jin (巴金), history professor Cheng Yingliu (程应镠), and Chen Mengjia, voiced out their opinions to the Party. In the subsequent Anti-Rightists Movement, these friends were labelled as rightists on newspapers and being criticized. His oldest son, who already became a party member, was also labelled as a rightist.⁷⁹ Although he fortunately escaped the dangerous situation, witnessing the abrupt change of identity of his

⁷⁸. Congwen Shen 沈从文, “Shen Congwen de Fayan” 沈从文的发言 [Shen Congwen’s Speech], *People’s Daily*, February 9, 1956, sec. Zai zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi di er jix quanguo weiyuan hui di er ci quanti huiyi shang de fayan 在中国人民政治协商会议第二届全国委员会第二次全体会议上的发言 [Speeches on the Second All-Member Meeting of National Committee of Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference].

⁷⁹. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 127.

friends and his son from enthusiastic respondents to the Party's request to sinful rightists who are anti-party, Shen was worried that he would soon be also deemed as a rightist and decided to be more careful in this era full of unpredictability. When Zhou Yang (周扬), one of Mao Zedong's most supported literary theorists, offered him the President seat of CWA, Shen Congwen immediately rejected, citing his incompetence and his current focus in material culture.⁸⁰

Regardless of how careful he was, Shen Congwen was forcibly drawn into the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Dozens of big character posters listing several hundreds of serious wrongs of Shen were put up in National History Museum. While Shen was very disappointed seeing many authors of the posters were his colleagues who had worked with him for more than 10 years; Shen was especially resentful toward his assistant Fan Zeng (范曾), who often visited Shen's house with his wife and received Shen's help, for "exposing" Shen's misdeeds, many were false, the most: "Ten crimes would be already sufficient to impose a death sentence on someone, yet Fan Zeng wrote as many as several hundreds of charges all at once" (十大罪状已够致人于死地, 范曾一下子竟写出几百条).⁸¹ Shen never mentioned Fan's name again.⁸² Soon, Shen was categorized as a reactionary academic authority; a special team was even created to investigate Shen's possible wrongs. He was considered an "old hand at anti-Communist activities" (反共老手), citing Guo Moruo's early criticisms of him. From July 1966 to December 1968, Shen wrote more than 60 self-criticisms regarding serious misdeeds he had committed during his working period in the National History Museum.⁸³ Shen Congwen sarcastically wrote

⁸⁰. Zhang, 130. This incident was confirmed by Shen Congwen's colleague Shi Shuqing (史树青), but Shen's students Wang Zengqi (汪曾祺) and Lin Jinlan (林斤澜) who had been working in the CWA for several decades said they never heard about it. See Chen, "Wu Men Cheng Xia de Shen Congwen," 247-48.

⁸¹. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 187.

⁸². Chen, "Wu Men Cheng Xia de Shen Congwen," 249.

⁸³. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 190.

in one of his defenses against big character posters that the Cultural revolution “allowed us—stinky intellectuals from the old society, fake professional, fake experts—to dig out all filthy, ugly, and stinky things deep in our soul and reform more thoroughly. In this great revolution era, individual is truly small, and not worth to speak of!” (让我们这种从旧社会来的臭知识分子，假专家，假里手，把灵魂深处一切脏、丑、臭东西，全部挖出来，得到更彻底的改造。在这个大革命时代，个人实在十分渺小，实在不足道！).⁸⁴

The Cultural Revolution prevented any work from proceeding. Other than being struggled against, Shen Congwen, along with his colleagues Chen Qiao (陈乔) and Shi Shuqing (史树青), were sent to clean the museum’s toilets and pulling weeds everyday.⁸⁵ In an interview done in 1985, he proudly said, “My greatest service during the ‘Cultural Revolution’ was cleaning the toilets, especially women’s toilets. I cleaned them so thoroughly!” (在‘文革’里我最大的功劳是扫厕所，特别是女厕所，我打扫得可干净了).⁸⁶

In addition, Shen’s small house was raided for eight times from 1966 to 1968; almost all of his books and CDs were confiscated. Calling to Mao Zedong’s slogan “To Rebel is Justified” (造反有理), the “rebels” (造反派) believed that the Shens should only live in one room, so they had workers come in to forcibly occupy the other two rooms of Shen’s house. Shen’s adopted daughter Shen Zhaohui (沈朝慧) was driven out of Beijing’s registration system and sent back to Xiangxi.⁸⁷

⁸⁴. Shen, *Shen Congwen quan ji*, 172.

⁸⁵. Chen, “Wu Men Cheng Xia de Shen Congwen,” 249.

⁸⁶. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 337.

⁸⁷. Zhang, 196.

Since the Cultural Revolution aimed at “destroying the four olds” (破四旧)—old customs, old habits, old culture, and old thinking—from the old society,⁸⁸ many artifacts, statues, and books were demolished. Shen Congwen grieved over the loss and thought that preparatory work done patiently and passionately in the past two decades were destroyed in a few days.⁸⁹

Soon, Shen was sent to May Seventh Cadre School (五七干校) in Xianning (咸宁), Hubei in November 1966. These schools were named after the date when Mao Zedong issued the directive to re-educate cadres and intellectuals through hard agricultural works and study of Mao’s works.⁹⁰ After two years, when Shen Congwen was finally permitted to return to Beijing because of his worsened health condition, he found out that his house was occupied by someone else. He was forced to move as many as six times from 1968 to 1970.⁹¹

Shen’s experience during the Cultural Revolution was not the worst. His friend Ba Jin was categorized as one of the “ox monster and snake spirit” and thus was isolated in so called “cow shed” (牛棚) in mid-August, 1966. Another influential modern writer Lao She (老舍) was beaten by the red guards and committed suicide by drowning in a lake on August 24. Fu Lei and Chen Mengjia both hanged themselves in their respective homes in Shanghai and Beijing on September 3. In the span of about 40 days from late August to the end of September, about 1,700 people were beaten to death, 33,600 houses were raided, and 84,000 people were driven out in Beijing alone.⁹² Withstanding distress and loneliness brought forward by the numerous political movements and unjust claims against him, Shen Congwen survived through the early period of PRC and passed away on his bed in 1988.

⁸⁸. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 545.

⁸⁹. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 203.

⁹⁰. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 552.

⁹¹. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 241–42.

⁹². Zhang, 200.

Works around artifacts filled the latter half of Shen's life after his suicide. From volumes 19 to 26 in *the Complete Collection of Shen Congwen* (沈从文全集), numerous letters answering senders' questions about research resource of certain artifacts, examples of specific patterns or motifs in arts, and purchasing artifacts for instructional use demonstrated that providing opinions through letters had become Shen's daily life. From 1953 to 1963, despite his high blood pressure and heart disease, Shen published a plentiful of academic paper, and monographs including *Lacquerware of the Warring States Period* (战国漆器), *Patterns on Chinese Fabric* (中国丝绸图案), *Bronze Mirrors of the Tang and Song Dynasties* (唐宋铜镜), *Ming Dynasty Brocades* (明锦), and *The Art of Dragons and Phoenixes* (龙凤艺术).⁹³

Shen's most important academic work was *Researches into Ancient Chinese Costume* (中国古代服饰研究). It established his academic authority in history, archaeology, and ancient Chinese costumes. The academic work had gone through cycles of proofs and was only waiting to be printed and distributed. But it caught up with the new Party policy in 1964, right before the start of the Cultural Revolution, of making modern plays follow certain guidelines to be transform into "model works," *yangbanxi* (样板戏). These revolutionary model works aimed to eject traditional "feudal" protagonists of Chinese operas such as emperors, kings, generals, bureaucrats, scholars, and beauties from the stage.⁹⁴ Affected by the policy, some advised Shen to rearrange the illustrations in the book according to the current hierarchical system and raise the status of the working class in the book.⁹⁵ The decision to publish the work had to come to a

⁹³. Yu, "Jiannan de jueze," 70.

⁹⁴. See Barbara Mittler, "Cultural Revolution Model Works and the Politics of Modernization in China: An Analysis of *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*," *The World of Music* 45, no. 2 (2003): 53–81; Barbara Mittler, "'Eight Stage Works for 800 Million People': The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Music—A View from Revolutionary Opera," *The Opera Quarterly* 26, no. 2–3 (March 1, 2010): 377–401, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oq/kbq017>.

⁹⁵. Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 175.

pause and the work had to be thoroughly revised following new political demands. After deleting many descriptions of the images and revising his manuscript, Shen was worried and only hoped that his book would not be deemed as anti-party or reactionary.⁹⁶ Red guards who never read the work deemed it as poisonous weed (毒草) that praised the feudal society and shouted at Shen and his supporters for more than seven hours.⁹⁷ The book was finally published in 1981, five years after the end of Cultural Revolution. This masterpiece of Shen was officially recognized and highly praised by the Party, the very same Party that had dismissed Shen's literary accomplishment as pornographic works. Guo Moruo who had denounced Shen heavily in "Reprimand to Reactionary Arts" wrote the foreword for this book.⁹⁸ *Researches into Ancient Chinese Costume* was often presented as gifts to heads of states when Chinese presidents visited foreign countries.

Shen Congwen's priority of *si* over *xin* throughout his life was also gradually understood by people who saw him as one not progressing with the society, such as his oldest son Shen Longzhu. In Longzhu's memoir of his father, he wrote:

Relying on one's independent thinking to do things and conduct oneself is difficult; relying on conviction, on the other hand, one can conform to the society, and work one's way through groups with similar beliefs. Contemplation needs independence while belief is collectivist. Contemplation is often rebellious; while belief is obedient and faithful, even against one's will, and under madness and power of the masses, it may be brave and violent... Thinking independently is lonely, but it may lead to new discoveries in the fields of science, philosophy, literature, and art. When that outcome is finally recognized by the society and accepted by the public, it becomes the new power that advances social development.⁹⁹

用自己独立思考去做事、为人很难；凭信仰则可以随大流，在团体或相同的人群中求发展；思索要独立，信仰则是集体；思索常常是叛逆的，而信仰则是温顺虔诚的，甚至是违心的，当然在发疯的情况下，也可能是凭借着集体的力量变成勇敢或

⁹⁶. Zhang, 181.

⁹⁷. Zhang, 99.

⁹⁸. Yu, "Jiannan de jueze," 70.

⁹⁹. Longzhu Shen 沈龙朱, "Wo suo lijie de Shen Congwen: Huashuo 'si' yu 'xin' " 我所理解的沈从文——话说“思”与“信” [The Shen Congwen I Understand: On "Contemplation" and "Conviction"], *National Museum of Modern Chinese Literature* 中国现代文学馆, May 2011, <http://www.wxcg.org.cn/jdzjzk/1762.jhtml>.

者暴虐的.....独立思考是孤独的，但是独立思考的结果可能是开辟一片新的科学、哲学、文学、艺术的新天地，当那个成果终于被社会承认并被大众接受，那就是推动社会发展新的力量。

Although many intellectuals at the time struggle between *si* and *xin*, Shen Congwen firmly stuck to his belief and saw everything from the starting point of *si*. In an era when most of the people valued *xin* and chose to abandon critical thinking and blindly conform to others; Shen chose the route that was more strenuous and lonelier, as pointed out by Longzhu. But Shen Congwen was able to resolutely bid farewell to his literature career that could no longer fit in the new era; and instead through loneliness he found his unique position in history to be the link between the past, present, and future. He made enormous contributions to the field of material culture and artifacts. Though misunderstood by the contemporary, today his work is widely “recognized by the society and accepted by the public.” Indeed, Shen Congwen’s achievements spawned from his independent thinking has furthered social development and helped transmit a “history with feelings,” moving many.

Conclusion: To Adapt or to Resist

Looking back in time, the emergence of the social category of cosmopolitan intellectual dated only to a century previous. Before then, intellectuals, or otherwise known as literati (士大夫) at the time, were those who followed the traditional route of learning Confucian classics and achieved officialdom through civil service examinations. It was not until 1847 when China had her first international student, Yung Wing (容闳), who graduated from Yale College.¹ From then on, China sent thousands of international students abroad to western countries such as France, the United Kingdoms, and the United States. Deeply aware of China's weak geopolitical status, on account of unequal treaties and losses in interstate wars, these patriotic international students aimed to bring back knowledge they learned to advance the development of science, technology, education, and the political system in their motherland. After they returned to China, they became "cosmopolitan intellectuals" who were highly valued by the country, both in the case of the late Qing and the ROC, for their talents and experiences abroad.

Fu Lei, Qian Zhongshu, and Shen Congwen all counted as cosmopolitan intellectuals who played an important role in transforming Chinese society before the establishment of the PRC. Upon returning from France, Fu Lei stimulated Chinese art and literature circles through his extensive reviews for art, literature, and music along with translations of a variety of French literature including works of Balzac and Rolland. His translations as well as his essays on literary theories built a bridge between the Chinese readers and foreign ideals, urging them to think critically about the role of art in strengthening the state. Qian Zhongshu wrote a series of essays compiled in *Written in the Margins of Life* that contained witty insights into life. In addition, by

¹ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 189–90.

drawing from his abroad experience in the United Kingdoms and his teaching experiences at three universities during the wartime period, he wrote his most famous sarcastic novel *Fortress Besieged* (围城) showcasing intellectuals of the time. In addition to fiction writings, he also engaged in the academia and published *On the Art of Poetry* (谈艺录), which was written in classical Chinese, and discusses Chinese poems in light of his study of western literature and his familiarity with classical literature.² While Shen Congwen was not an international student, the extent of his exposure to foreign music and literature qualified him as a cosmopolitan intellectual. In his fiction writings, he experimented avant-garde ideas, Freud, and other abstract western thinkers of the Enlightenment tradition.³ Believing that literature can purify or transform one's mind, Shen wrote more than 80 short stories or novels. Out of which, most conveyed the honesty of people living in rural areas and depicted his hometown Xiangxi as a land forgotten by time.

Though highly regarded in the ROC, social standing of these intellectuals deteriorated when when the GMD lost the Civil War to the CPC. Despite the uncertainties, all three figures chose to stay in the mainland to confront an unpredictable future despite their opportunity to flee to the island of Taiwan, the colonies in Hong Kong and Macau, and foreign countries. While they had friends who were GMD or CPC party members, none of them were close to either party. Qian Zhongshu did not like to voice out his political opinions throughout his life and he would run back home early to avoid meeting with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek of the GMD.⁴ Both Fu Lei and Shen Congwen did at some point write⁵ authoritarianism and violence of GMD.

² Yan Tang 汤晏, *Yi dai caizi Qian Zhongshu* 一代才子钱锺书 [Qian Zhongshu the Talented Scholar in This Generation] (Shanghai: Shanghai ren min chu ban she, 2005), 254.

³ Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 187.

⁴ Yang, *Wo men sa*, 121.

As for the three's attitudes toward the CPC, they were ambiguous but above all skeptical at the CPC's claim of treating intellectuals well. Fu Lei and Qian Zhongshu had an upper hand, having read novels about life in the communist USSR and heard about what happened in the CPC-controlled Jiangxi Soviet, so they were aware of what they might face as a consequence of staying in mainland China. At first, Fu Lei went to Hong Kong for a couple of months and he found living in an English colony uncomfortable. "Even if I die, I want to die on the soil of my country." The patriotic Fu said and returned to Shanghai. On the other hand, Qian Zhongshu, who never liked to sing patriotic tunes, decided to stay; because he loved the writings, culture, and language of China, and he did not want to be living at others' mercy as someone from a weak country in foreign countries. Lastly, Shen Congwen, different from the above two figures, already faced criticisms launched by the Party before the liberation. He was clear that he could not continue his writing career in the new China. But he declined invitations from GMD intermediaries and saw in living in a GMD-controlled Taiwan controlled as no different than living in mainland China under the CPC. He stayed because he thought there was no way out and he was pessimistic about his and the nation's future: "As I see it, it's no use to escape."⁶

In new China, previously deemed meritorious ideas the cosmopolitan intellectuals promulgated were now categorized as bourgeois, capitalistic, or imperialistic. They needed to undergo thought reform, or in vulgar terms "taking off one's pants" and "cutting one's tail," writing confessions and criticizing themselves in front of their friends, families, colleagues, and students. Overnight, intellectuals who had been respected by many people and cherished by the state in the past became the enemy of the people that everyone could freely denounce and punish. Experiencing the radical change in social standing, from the respected to the despised,

⁶ Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen*, 266.

intellectuals undoubtedly were confused and struggled to find a way to cope with the new era. Should they adapt, sincerely reforming their thoughts to accept the new ideals, and enduringly continue to contribute to state-building in some way; or should they resist, bravely voicing out their dissents of the state's unfair treatments of intellectuals, and resolutely bidding farewells to their loved ones and the nation?

The first case, Fu Lei, was a pragmatist yet deeply rooted in his principles. Out of the three cases, Fu was the one most likely not to form a relationship with the CPC, but in the end, he was the most involved in political affairs. Before and after liberation, while his translations were popular and his name was well known by the public, he was not particularly close with any cliques, he was not part of any institutions, and he concentrated on his translation career.

Although some of his closest friends were CPC members, there were really no way that he could come into contact with the CPC unless he voluntarily stepped out of his study. Yet the spotlight fell on him when his son won international recognition and he was involuntarily placed in many positions in the PCC and the CWA. One of his principles was not to take on work perfunctorily. These activities did not threaten his other principles, so he took them on and “adapted” to the historical tide. As a result, he made visible efforts to engage with the political scene and accept Marxist-Leninist theories he previously dismissed as too theory focused.

Notwithstanding his endeavor to improve the relations between the party and intellectuals, Fu was labelled a “rightist” in 1958. Should he endure the opprobrious remarks and continue his adaptation; or should he resist and directly confront the false claims? In this critical moment, Fu still chose the former—to adapt out of consideration for his second son who was still in school. On the other hand, his oldest son Fou Ts'ong chose to resist when he received a summon from the nation and the latest news that his father was now a “rightist.” Fou was

unwilling to return to China to criticize his father to assert his political correctness; nor was he willing to suffer the potential hardship of being labeled as rightist for not criticizing his father. Fou decided to resist by bidding farewell to his family and his country, both of which he loved dearly, and fleeing to the United Kingdom.

Even though Fu Lei chose to adapt, signs of resistance started to sprout in him. He held steadfast principles and did not acknowledge his “wrongness” in his self-criticisms for the sake of getting a pass. He refused to publish his translations under pseudonyms. During his period as a “rightist,” he diverted his attention to practicing calligraphy and planting roses.⁷ Furthermore, though he no longer wrote as many art reviews as in the past, Fu continued to translate a series of works by Balzac and *Philosophie de l'Art* by Taine. It was specifically in these translations from 1958 to 1966 that he showed resistance to the CPC when the party-state’s control over literature rose to ever greater heights. While he made a compromise at a surface level with the new normative linguistic policies, Fu Lei defended his own translation style that abandoned close resemblance to the French original text for fluency, elegance, rhythm, and “likeness in spirit” in the Chinese translation; and he rejected the recommendation from the state that favored Lu Xun’s (鲁迅) direct translation (直译) style.⁸

Fu Lei once more confronted with the question of to adapt or to resist in the start of the Cultural Revolution. Despite his toleration during the Anti-rightists Campaign, after he was again humiliated with unfounded charges by the Red Guards, he resolutely chose to resist and

⁷ Jin, *Fu Lei zhuan*, 249, 251.

⁸ Nicolai Volland, “A Linguistic Enclave: Translation and Language Policies in the Early People’s Republic of China,” *Modern China* 35, no. 5 (September 1, 2009): 467–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700408330013>.

wished to have nothing more to do with the era. It must be noted that Fu Lei could have survived through the era and he committed suicide at his free will rather than being forced.⁹

Fu was a typical “gentleman,” or *junzi* (君子) in the sense of Chinese classics, who valued his integrity and dignity over his life. There was a close resemblance between Fu and Confucian literati in imperial China, especially in the Ming dynasty (1368 - 1644), when dozens of literati dauntlessly turned in memorials defying emperors’ decisions even if their advices would cost their lives. Fu Lei would not allow anyone to disgrace his dignity. Scenes of Fu being paraded through the streets while calling himself a capitalist intellectual and hitting a gong like Yang Jiang; allowing the Red Guards to shave a “cross-head” like Qian Zhongshu; and cleaning women’s toilets like Shen Congwen were simply unimaginable. Fu fully embodied the Chinese saying “rather be a smashed vessel of jade than an intact earthenware” (宁为玉碎，不为瓦全). He would rather die as a “jade” with his dignity preserved than live as an “earthenware” thought lowly by others and especially himself.

The second protagonist, Qian Zhongshu, was the wittiest out of the three cases. He was very sensitive to the political climate and never for a second believed in the rhetoric of the people in power. His essays compiled in *Written in the Margins of Life* and satiric novels such as *Fortress Besieged* and *Humans, Beasts, and Ghosts* (人·兽·鬼), all written before liberation, already showed his keen insights in the essence of life and humanity. Different from Fu Lei and Shen Congwen, Qian never thought of committing suicide. From the moment he chose to stay in mainland China, he decided to live through the era and adapt to the historical tide. When his wife Yang Jiang asked him in Cadre School whether he regretted his decision to stay, Qian firmly said, “Even if time were to rewind, I would have made the same decision” (时光倒流，我还是

⁹ Chen, “Fu Lei and Fou Ts’ong,” 651.

照老样).¹⁰ But unlike Guo Moruo, Zhou Yang, Wu Han, and others, Qian did not “adapt” to the era by openly advocating the greatness of the PRC and actively participating in political movements. Qian was a “dissimulator,” who adopted the necessary changes on the surface and remained unchanged at his core.

Qian Zhongshu obediently carried out all sorts of requests from the top. He took on the job of translating Mao’s works and poems into English even though Mao’s works might not have interested him. There was also a chance that Qian agreed because he saw its value as a protective umbrella. As a point of comparison, if Fu Lei were requested to translate Mao’s works, he would not do it if this was not what he wanted to do. Besides from the translations, Qian accepted his switch from the Foreign Literature to the Classical Literature team at the Institute of Literature. He attended all struggle sessions and wrote self-criticisms without complaints when he was asked to. His self-criticisms were often concise, to-the-point, and perfunctory. In addition, he kept a low profile and did not speak out in any campaigns. As he put it, he was enjoying his “freedom of silence.” Qian did what he needed to survive through the political turmoil and never stretched himself. But as political campaigns surged, were his thoughts reformed according to the Party’s standard? Far from it. He did not believe in Marxist-Leninist theory like Fu Lei in the 1950s, and he did not seem to have experienced the an intense mental conflict between his ideals and social ideals like Shen Congwen.

Qian and his wife’s optimism also helped him live through the terrible era. While being criticized, they thought of themselves as actors staging a farce and did not take the criticisms seriously. They tried to seek pleasure amid suffering to lighten up their mood. They compared

¹⁰ Jiang Yang 杨绛, “Ganxiao liu ji” 干校六记 [A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters], in *Ganxiao liu ji ji Jiang Yin Cha deng pian* 干校六记及将饮茶等篇 [A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters and Other Essays in *Jiang Yin Cha*], Chu ban, Xin ren jian cong shu 新人间丛书 92 (Taipei: Shi bao wen hua, 2006), 62.

their penmanship of their charges on their placards, and they comforted themselves that the nation had made a bad investment on them. Indeed, Qian lived in accordance with what he wrote in “On Happiness” (论快乐) in 1941, “This happiness of transforming suffering to enjoyment is the biggest victory of mind over matter” (这种快乐，把忍受变为享受，是精神对于物质的最大胜利).¹¹

Though Qian showed indifference and resignation to the political campaigns and criticisms, Qian was human after all. The accident of a physical fight between Qian and Yang and the “revolutionary masses” who had moved into their house in 1969 showed it well. As someone who did not experience those decades of turmoil and reads his life in retrospect, it is easy to say that Qian was a removed “observer” of the era but at the same time it is also easy to neglect how much pain he had been through. To be enlightened and see through the essence of these political campaigns was one thing; to be stoic and force oneself to firmly stick to one’s early decision—to adapt and survive—in spite of consecutive challenges brought by the campaigns was another. Qian was truly an admirable man who showed his incredible capacity to remain unruffled and endure such difficulties.

The third case, Shen Congwen, was in between of the two extremes personified by Fu Lei and Qian Zhongshu. Shen neither resolved to resist to the era like Fu, nor held the will to adapt and survive throughout like Qian. He was the most confused out of the three. Coming from the rural Xiangxi, he was a naïve “romanticist,” who emphasized sensibility, feelings, and honesty. Shen dedicated his whole life to transmitting genuineness found in ordinary people, not only through his fiction stories but also his academic monographs.

¹¹ Qian, *Xie zai rensheng bian shang*, 26.

Unlike Fu Lei and Qian Zhongshu, Shen faced criticisms as early as before liberation. He was forced to respond to the drastic change in no time. He already experienced slanderous remarks and hate letters, so he knew what his life would be like if he chose to adapt and live. Meanwhile, he made the decision to no longer write fiction as he considered changing his writing habit developed over 20 years to follow the “traffic light” manipulated by the party-state was close to impossible. Losing the freedom of creativity, abandoning his writing career, and suffering from public slander; he found no meaning in life. Convinced that he could not adapt to the era, he chose to commit suicide by drinking kerosene and cutting his wrists and neck with a razor. In contrast to Fu Lei’s suicide that rang a strong note of protest against the era and asserted his integrity by hanging himself, Shen’s suicide suggested something more like forceful imposition and could be interpreted as a surrender. In a way, rather than “resisting,” he was “adapting” to the historical tide by voluntarily helping the era to enforce the evolutionary concept of “survival of the fittest” and eliminating himself who he deemed as unfit. He was doing precisely what Fu Lei wrote in his suicidal note by “voluntarily exiting the history stage” as a “dreg who came from the old society.”

But fortunately, Shen was saved by his family and transferred to the mental asylum. Although he still suffered from moments of madness after his suicide, demonstrated by his self-contradictory writings, he went on a mental journey of discovering his new meaning in life. He was in constant debate between what he called *si* (contemplation or empathy) and *xin* (belief) as well as between a tradition of *youqing* (with feelings) and *shigong* (emphasized on feats). While he tried to adopt *xin* and *shigong* as promoted by the party-state in his writings and thinking after his thought reform at the Revolutionary University, he failed and continued to adhere to his preference for *si* and *youqing*. He had the ability to write according to the party’s prescriptions,

but he was too genuine and therefore could not bring himself to write something he did not truly believe in. Shen was neither as cynical as Qian, nor as supportive as Fu Lei about the prevailing political ideology.

In the end, Shen found his new meaning of life in preserving artifacts and engaging in the studies of material culture. Never again did he think of suicide and talk about his previous suicide attempt. He aspired to be the one transmitting a culture or history with feelings amid troubled times. As opposed to Fu Lei who died to preserve his dignity and Qian Zhongshu who lived to preserve himself and his knowledge, Shen Congwen was selfless and survived by seeking to preserve the cultural history of the nation. Shen was a “phoenix,” who was reborn from his destructed self in 1949. His reborn self delved into material culture and was no less brilliant than his previous self as a fiction writer. Shen in post-1949 produced numerous valuable academic works on artifacts based on his idea of *si*, not only emphasizing independent thinking but also nostalgic reconnection to the past. Shen’s academic contributions eventually compelled the era that once despised and belittled him to openly praise him and celebrate his achievements.

Like many other authors of the time, the three intellectuals were not able to create as many literary works compared to pre-1949.¹² Rather than creative works that might expose their beliefs and opinions, such as writing novels and reviewing literature and art; they focused more on research or writing that closely examine previous works, such as Fu Lei’s Balzac translations, Qian Zhongshu’s reading notes in *Limited Views*, and Shen Congwen’s studies in ancient Chinese costumes. This trend could also be found in the reigns of Qianlong (r.1736-1799) and Jiaqing (r.1796-1821) when there were extensive literary inquisitions so intellectuals instead

¹² Some of these authors are Mao Dun (茅盾), Ba Jin, Ding Ling, Bing Xin (冰心), Xia Yan, Cao Yu (曹禺), Sha Ting (沙汀), Guo Moruo, Ye Shengtao (叶圣陶), Zheng Zhenduo, and Shi Zhecun (施蛰存); see Yu, “Jiannan de jueze,” 69.

focused on what is called *kaoju xue* (考据学), or evidential scholarship, which emphasized careful textual study and critical thinking.

Fu Lei, Qian Zhongshu, and Shen Congwen all noted their loss of writing skills at some point post-1949. Shen Congwen knew he could not cope with the new writing style demanded by the state as early as late 1948, and his multiple attempts to pick his pen back up ended in failures. Shen was, however, able to experiment with writing classical poetry.¹³ Qian Zhongshu, too, continued to write classical poetry in his free time.¹⁴ While Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged* was considered one of the greatest novels of modern Chinese literature, he no longer wrote novels after liberation, citing a gradual loss of writing momentum and ability, even though he had drafted a beginning of about 20,000 characters for a new long novel called *Artichoke Heart* (百合心, derived from the French expression *le cœur d'artichaut*) right before the establishment of the PRC.¹⁵ In the 1980s, he remarked that he was still interested in writing, but his literary brilliance was not as good as before. In addition, he would rather regret, or *hen* (恨), not being able to write than repent, *hui* (悔), being able to write but producing an inadequate work.¹⁶ In Fu Lei's case, he wrote to his son in 1963 after he revised *Le Père Goriot*, "For the past four or five years, I am more and more aware of my limit, as if it was a yawning gap that I cannot transcend" (这四五年来愈来愈清楚的感觉到自己的 limit [局限], 仿佛一道不可超越的鸿沟).¹⁷

¹³ Zhang, *Shen Congwen de hou ban sheng*, 152–56.

¹⁴ About 270 Qian's classical poems from 1934 to 1991 were compiled into *Huaiju Poems* (槐聚诗存).

¹⁵ Zhongshu Qian 钱锺书, *Wei cheng* 围城 [Fortress Besieged], Beijing di 2 ban (Beijing: Ren min wen xue chu ban she, 2017), 1.

¹⁶ Jiang Yang 杨绛, "Ji Qian Zhongshu he Wei cheng" 记钱锺书和《围城》 [Accounting Qian Zhongshu and *Fortress Besieged*], in *Wei cheng* 围城 [Fortress Besieged], by Zhongshu Qian 钱锺书, Beijing di 2 ban (Beijing Shi: Ren min wen xue chu ban she, 2017), 377.

¹⁷ Fu, *Fu Lei jia shu*, 403.

Amidst hardship through the decades of madness, intellectuals were still able to publish amazing works. Fu Lei's translations, Qian Zhongshu's *Limited Views*, and Shen Congwen's *Researches into Ancient Chinese Costumes* all could be considered works of escapism. Grand Historian Sima Qian once wrote in his "Letter to Ren An" and his preface in the *Record of the Grand Historian*:

When the Earl of the West was imprisoned at Youli, he expanded the *Changes*; Confucius was in distress and he made the *Spring and Autumn Annals*; Qu Yuan was banished and he composed his poem "Encountering Sorrow"; after Zuo Qiu lost his sight he composed the *Narratives of the States*; when Sunzi had had his feet amputated he set forth the *Art of War*...most of the three hundred poems of the *Book of Odes* were written when the sages poured forth their anger and dissatisfaction. All these men had a rankling in their hearts, for they were not able to accomplish what they wished. Therefore, they wrote of past affairs in order to pass on their thoughts to future generations.¹⁸

Sima listed several examples of many figures who are now considered sages, who created all these well-known classics in times of distress. Such a practice was also prevalent in the west. For example, Goethe studied Chinese literature daily during the harshest days of the Napoleon Wars.¹⁹ Carrying on this intellectual tradition of escapism our three protagonists produced works that might not have been acknowledged by others at the time but became greatly praised by future generations. Some said that had there not been these political campaigns and the Cultural Revolution, Fu Lei, Qian Zhongshu, and Shen Congwen could have created more influential works. True, Fu Lei could have translated much more literature and contributed to the art development in China had he not died; Shen Congwen and Qian Zhongshu could have produced fiction as great as their *Border Town* and *Fortress Besieged*. But these hypotheticals remain as fantasies because there are no "ifs" in life. On the contrary, if it were not because of the troubled

¹⁸ Qian Sima, "Excerpt from Sima Qian's Letter to Ren An," *Asia for Educators*, 4, accessed April 11, 2021, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/sima_qian_letter.pdf.

¹⁹ Tang, *Yi dai caizi Qian Zhongshu*, 348, note 3. Tang also provided other examples in modern China.

times, works like *Limited Views* and *Researches into Ancient Chinese Costumes* could not have come into being by transforming pain in their tormented lives.

Through the comparative study of Fu Lei, Qian Zhongshu, and Shen Congwen, one sees how intellectuals responded to a complicated era. In the early period of PRC, intellectuals who upheld liberalist views were the one of the ones who felt the most pain seeing freedoms of creativity and speech stripped away, the masses transformed into zealots who blindly followed the party-state's rhetoric, and Chinese culture embedded in statues, artifacts, and books burned to ashes. Scholar Chen Yinke (陈寅恪) once wrote in his memoir of Wang Guowei (王国维) who committed suicide when the Qing dynasty was overthrown, "Whenever a culture is in decline, anyone who has received benefits from this culture will necessarily suffer. The more a person embodies this culture, the deeper will be his suffering."²⁰ For the intellectuals, to adapt or to resist was not a simple question. Most of the intellectuals had to go through cycles of mental struggles to make the decision. If one was to resist, by either leaving the country or committing suicides, would one be able to give up what one had and part with those people, places, and things one loved? If one was to adapt and live through the era, would one be able to still hold fast to his decision throughout? The decision to adapt was not a one-time decision. The question to adapt or to resist came up again and again in these intellectuals' lives. It was a time so unpredictable that one did not know when oneself, one's family, and one's friends would be suddenly labeled as an enemy of the people; nor did one know if one's relationships would be betrayed through false reports and criticisms. When these matters came up, would one still choose to "adapt"?

²⁰ Hessler, *Oracle Bones*, 392.

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