Nanjing 1937

A LOVE STORY

YE ZHAOYAN

TRANSLATED BY MICHAEL BERRY

NANJING 1937

A Love Story

Ye Zhaoyan

Translated with an Introduction by Michael Berry

Columbia University Press New York

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
Publishers Since 1893
New York Chichester, West Sussex

Yijiusanqi nian de aiqing copyright © 1996 by Ye Zhaoyan
Translation copyright © 2002 Michael Berry
All rights reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Ye, Zhaoyan, 1957–
[Yi jiu san qi nian de ai qing. English]
Nanjing 1937 : a love story / Ye Zhaoyan ; translated with an introduction by Michael Berry.
p. cm. — (Weatherhead books on Asia)
ISBN 0–231–12754–5
1. Ye, Zhaoyan, 1957–Translations into English.
I. Berry, Michael. II. Title. III. Series.
PL2924.C533 Y513 2002
895.1'352—dc21 2002024156

Columbia University Press books are printed on permanent and durable acid-free paper.
Printed in the United States of America
c 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All Chinese names have been romanized in accordance with the pinyin system. Exceptions to this rule have been made for historical figures known in the West by alternate or nonstandard systems of romanization, such as Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) and Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan), and western-educated figures who preferred anglicized abbreviations, such as T. V. Soong (Song Ziwen) and H. H. K'ung (Kong Xiangxi).

As a work of historical fiction, the novel features appearances by and references to several dozen military, political, and cultural figures who were prominent in Republican China. For the convenience of the western reader, a comprehensive Glossary of Historical Figures has been appended at the end of this volume. This translation was based on the 1996 Jiangsu wenyi edition of the novel. Some minor textual changes were made with the author's permission.

Thanks go first to Ye Zhaoyan for his support of this translation. I am also indebted to the outside reviewers solicited by Columbia University Press, especially Professor Yunzhong Shu of Queens College,

who provided extensive comments and insightful suggestions; and to Wen-yi Chang, who read the manuscript in its entirety against the original. Special thanks also go to Leslie Kriesel, whose literary and editorial sensibilities helped the true voice of this novel shine through. Thanks to Emily Mahon for the beautiful jacket design. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my family, Chenke Zhou, Joshua Tanzer, my classmates and colleagues at Columbia University, and Professors John Balcom, Howard Goldblatt, Tomi Suzuki, and Xudong Zhang. Finally, I would like to thank Jennifer Crewe at Columbia University Press and especially Professor David Der-wei Wang. It is thanks to their interest and support of this novel that Ye Zhaoyan's vision may be shared with a new group of readers.

M.B.

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com

CONTENTS

Notes and Acknowledgments vii
Translator's Introduction 1

Nanjing 1937: A Love Story 9

Author's Afterword 341
Glossary of Historical Figures 345

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The year 1937 is but a cloud of mist passing before my eyes. My gaze is caught lingering on this particular era of the past, but, as a writer, I find myself unable to truly understand that history that historians call history. I see only shattered pieces, broken fragments, and a handful of melancholic stories destined to come to naught, all quietly playing out upon the grand stage of history.

—Ye Zhaoyan[1]

Since his appearance on the literary scene in the early 1980s,[2] Ye Zhaoyan (b. 1957) has established himself as one of contemporary China's most creative, daring, and imaginative practitioners of literary art. A prolific writer, he has created a body of work difficult to categorize due to his chameleonlike versatility and tireless experimentation with different literary forms and genres. From the tradition of *The Scholars* (c. 1750) to the legacy of Qian Zhongshu; from May Fourth to Mandarin Ducks; from roman à clef to postmodernist collage; and from

hard-boiled detective fiction to the avant-garde, Ye's literary field of vision seems to know no boundaries. The addictive storylines and the stunning visuality of Ye's work have won the Nanjing-based writer a loyal readership in Chinese-speaking communities and led to foreign translations and film adaptations.[3] At the same time, Ye Zhaoyan has been actively involved in a larger project of rewriting and reimagining the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly tradition, a popular romantic literary genre that flourished in Republican China.[4] Ye's fascination with this page in (literary) history is perhaps best demonstrated by his masterpiece *Evening Moor on the Qinhuai*,[5] a collection of historical novellas set in Republican-era Nanjing.

One key to Ye Zhaoyan's attachment to preliberation China is the literary family from which he hails. His father, Ye Zhicheng (1926–1992), was a noted writer, as was his grandfather, Ye Shengtao (1894–1988), also an influential educator and editor and the author of the 1928 classic *Ni Huanzhi*,[6] one of the first full-length modern vernacular novels.[7] Ye Zhaoyan is one of the few contemporary Chinese writers to hold a graduate degree in Chinese literature; he earned his M.A. from Nanjing University in 1986, writing his thesis on one of the crowning achievements of preliberation literature, Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged*.[8] After graduation, Ye worked as an editor for the Jiangsu Arts and Literature Publishing House. In 1991, he left the publishing world to pursue writing full time; he has since produced an astounding twenty-seven books, including a seven-volume set of collected works.

First published in 1996, *Nanjing 1937: A Love Story* is perhaps Ye Zhaoyan's most ambitious project to date. Individually embodying the genre-crossing complexity that characterizes his body of work, the novel also captures Ye's nostalgic passion for rewriting missing pages from Republican China's past. *Nanjing 1937* is the tale of a man seemingly incapable of love who falls for the most unlikely woman during the most inconceivable of times. Ding Wenyu, the only son of a powerful Shanghai banker, is smitten with a young married woman, Ren Yuchan, and is sent abroad by his father as a cure for his lovesickness. Some seventeen years later, Ding returns to China only to fall even harder for Yuchan's younger sister, Yuyuan—on her wedding day. Progressing at an unhurried pace, *Nanjing 1937* traces the development of this unlikely love story, subtly juxtaposing Ding's romantic advancements with the mili-

tary advancements of the Japanese army, to which the city would fall in December 1937.

This connection between love and war is not only made through Ye's meticulously crafted narrative structure but also enhanced by his clever use of language. Militaristic terminology describing Ding's pursuit of Yuyuan, as well as other romantic subplots in the text, permeates the novel:

> He [Ding Wenyu] continuously sought out different types of women, and once he *achieved his target*, he would immediately *initiate his next campaign*. He was like a *general* who endured a *hundred battles*, *charging forward* amid a sea of women, time after time facing setbacks, time after time losing face for all to see. Even though he usually came off as *the glorious victor in his battles*, his soul had already long been covered with scars. (32)

> Running from the *battlefield defeated* made it look as if she [Yuyuan] were guilty of some wrongdoing. (114)

> She [Qu Manli] began her little talk as if she were *launching an attack*. (266)

> Ding Wenyu decided to *strengthen his romantic offensive* on Yuyuan. (307) (MY ITALICS)

Such passages reinforce the link between the novel's two seemingly contradictory and mutually exclusive narrative lines, which are signaled even in the book's title, *Nanjing 1937: A Love Story*.[9] In a time and place inextricably connected with horrific images of violence and war, on the eve of what historians would later deem the "Rape of Nanjing," how could there be room for love or romance?

One answer to this question lies in the pages of Chinese literary history and the tradition of fictional romance set in times of national calamity. *Nanjing 1937* inevitably invites comparisons to earlier works in the Chinese literary tradition, from the Qing drama *The Peach Blossom Fan* (1699) to Eileen Chang's modern classic, "Love in a Fallen City" (1943), both of which have left their marks on Ye's novel.[10] But the true intertextual skeleton key can be found in Qian Zhongshu's

classic *Fortress Besieged* (1946). The similarities between the two novels are stunning—from the temporal framework of 1937 and the protagonists' respective educational and career backgrounds as dilettante foreign students who return to China to become college professors, to their detached aloofness toward the times in which they live. Indeed, it would not be a stretch to read *Nanjing 1937* as a contemporary rejoinder to Qian Zhongshu's landmark novel.

For the title of his novel, Qian Zhongshu borrowed Trollope's conception of the fortress besieged. In Qian's hands, the phrase quickly became a brilliantly understated allegory for the contradictions in our everyday lives; the saying can perhaps be no better articulated than by Qian's wife, writer Yang Jiang:

> Those trapped in a fortress besieged long to escape,
> Those outside want to charge in.
> Such is one's marriage, and one's career,
> Such is the way of most human desires.[11]

Exactly half a century later, in 1996, Ye Zhaoyan echoes this philosophy in his novel *Nanjing 1937*, where characters seem to be eternally trapped in a fortress of desires and discontent. Ye Zhaoyan's brilliance, however, lies in the fact that he does not merely rearticulate Qian's allegory but develops it in an ironically tragic way. As the Japanese army descends on the capital and the curtain of history falls, the fortress (or, rather, city) besieged is lifted from the allegorical to the literal level and the reader realizes that Ye Zhaoyan has constructed a true "fortress beseiged."

Ye Zhaoyan's literary and historical vision is complex and marked by a penchant for the unexpected. Indeed, the strategies of representation employed by the author could not be more different from those of previous works of historical fiction set against the Rape of Nanjing, such as A Long's *Nanjing* (1939)[12] or Zhou Erfu's *The Fall of Nanjing* (1987). The massacre that commenced on December 13 seems to have permanently stained the spatial-temporal coordinate of Nanjing in 1937 with images of rape and murder, even though during the previous eleven and a half months of that year the city saw virtually unprecedented prosperity. Though the indelible December tragedy constantly lurks just beyond the horizon of his novel, Ye Zhaoyan's repeated descriptions of the grandeur

of the budding capital—its booming real estate market, rapid development, flourishing economy, and political dynamism—all remind us of its lost splendor, bearing testament to a side of Nanjing's past often obscured by the shadow of calamity.

Popular culture of the day also plays a key role in *Nanjing 1937*, from descriptions of the popular music and stage performances to depictions of the latest gossip and fashions. The meticulous attention paid to everything from cultural pastimes like mahjong to cultural icons like Mei Yanfang points to a deconstruction of the grand and sublime discourses that have dominated so many historical and even literary representations of the era. Ye's Nanjing is a world where notions of popular culture are (re)inscribed onto, and sometimes in place of, more traditional historical narratives. Monumental figures like Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping are relegated to minor characters who appear fleetingly on the streets of Paris. Chinese fighter pilots are remembered not for their heroic deeds in the air but for their superstitious bedside manners. Even the Rape of Nanjing, the purported subject of the novel, is subverted. However, Ye's inability to depict the massacre at year's end should not be seen as an failure to face the vicissitudes of a blood-stained past but rather as a passionate attempt to remember what was lost.

That is not to say that Ye Zhaoyan does not leave us with questions to ponder. For although he shies away from graphic illustrations of the Rape of Nanjing, he does not exercise the same restraint when depicting acts of violence committed by Chinese characters against their compatriots. What does it mean when the most vicious and cold-blooded acts portrayed in a novel set in 1937 Nanjing are not committed by the Japanese (or even against the Japanese) but are, rather, indigenous acts of Chinese violence? Ye's understated criticism points back, however subtly, to a Lu Xunian critique of the Chinese national character. Ye Zhaoyan, however, is not one for moralizing, and *Nanjing 1937*'s complex combination of satire and sentimentality may very well leave many readers poised between loving and loathing his characters.

Returning to our earlier question, as the city falls, how can we reconcile this "love story" born of the ashes of war? Then again, perhaps we would be better off asking whether Ding Wenyu's driving passion is love at all—or merely a twisted obsession.[13] In the world of Ye Zhaoyan's 1937 Nanjing, there is, indeed, a fine line between love and obsession, satire

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com

and sentimentality, comedy and tragedy, splendor and decadence, history and allegory. These thematic coordinates intersect and blur, creating a sophisticated and stirring fictional pastische. The year 1937 saw not only the fall of the ancient capital of Nanjing but also the pinnacle of its development; in his novel, Ye Zhaoyan captures both. And although the novel comes to an end on December 13, 1937, the day the massacre begins, the reader knows all too well how the story ends. Ye Zhaoyan, admittedly, may not understand "that history that historians call history," but in the end, what he leaves us with is precisely the melancholic power and unbearable weight of History.

NOTES

1. Ye Zhaoyan, "Preface" (*Xie zai qianmian*) in *Yijiusanqi nian de aiqing* (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi, 1996), 5.

2. Ye Zhaoyan's first published short stories appeared in 1980, but he did not begin to gain wide recognition until the publication of his 1988 work, *Tale of the Date Tree* (*Zaoshu de gushi*).

3. One case in point is Ye's 1994 novel, *Flower Shadows* (*Hua Ying*), which was adapted by Fifth Generation director Chen Kaige (along with Wang Anyi, who co-wrote the screenplay) for his 1995 motion picture, *Temptress Moon* (*Fengyue*). The following year the novel was translated into French under the title *La Jeune Maîtresse* (Paris: Philippe Picquier, 1996). Film rights for *Nanjing 1937: A Love Story* have been purchased by actor/director Jiang Wen.

4. Tragic romances are just one fictional strain that falls under the umbrella of Mandarin Duck fiction; others include scandal fiction, detective stories, and chivalrous martial arts tales. For more on Mandarin Duck and Butterfly literature, see Perry Link's influential study, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

5. The four award-winning novellas that make up *Evening Moor on the Qinhuai* (*Ye bo Qinhuai*) were serialized in three PRC literary journals between 1987 and 1990 before being collected in a single volume in 1991.

6. *Ni Huanzhi* was translated by A. C. Barnes as *Schoolmaster Ni Huan-chih* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1958).

7. The Ye family can now claim four generations of published writers. In 2001, Ye Zhaoyan's seventeen-year-old daughter published her first book, a collection of essays on America.

8. *Fortress Besieged* (*Wei cheng*) was first serialized in *Literary Renaissance* and appeared in book form in 1947. The work is generally considered the last great literary masterpiece of the preliberation era. It is a satiric novel that traces the romantic and professional misadventures of Fang Hongjian, who after several years of foreign study abroad returns to China, bogus degree in hand, to teach at a provincial university. An English edition translated by Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao appeared in 1979 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

9. A more literal translation of the book's title, *Yijiusanqi nian de aiqing*, would read "The Romance of 1937."

10. Even the subplot involving Ding Wenyu's rickshaw puller Monk's involvement with an overbearing older woman will remind readers of the protagonist of Lao She's *Rickshaw* or, to an even greater degree, of Ding Erhe from Zhang Henshui's *Deep in the Night* (*Shen ye chen*).

11. Quoted in Zhang Wenjiang, *Yingzao babita de zhizhe: Qian Zhongshu zhuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai Arts and Literature Publishing House, 1993), 57.

12. Although completed in 1939, A Long's novel was only published posthumously in 1987, under the revised title *Nanjing Blood Sacrifice* (*Nanjing xueji*).

13. A parallel to Ding Wenyu's obsession can be found in his rickshaw puller and sometime companion, Monk. The twisted love triangle in which Monk finds himself caught constitutes the most significant subplot of the novel and represents a darker alternative outcome to obsessive love. The obsessions that drive both Ding and Monk are fundamentally the same—Ding's fanatical letter writing represents the manifestation of a "cultured obsession," while Monk's social and educational background leaves him with no alternative but to express his obsession through violence.

Chapter One

I

January 1, 1937 was a Friday. It was a clear, cool day; the northern cold front had just passed and the temperature had begun to warm up a bit. Although the Nationalist government had already declared the lunar calendar obsolete, the atmosphere among the people during the western New Year celebration fell short of the anticipated excitement. All over the country, conferences were being held for New Year's Day. From the central government all the way down, auditoriums were packed with high-sounding stately meetings. It seemed as if anyone who didn't attend a conference wasn't really celebrating the new year. The year 1937 arrived amid a wave of strong anti-Japanese sentiment. The Xi'an Incident* and its peaceful resolution not long before had raised Chiang Kai-shek's

*An episode that occurred in December 1936 when a former warlord, General Zhang Xueliang, kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in an effort to force Chiang to take a more anti-Japanese stance and join with the CCP in a second united Chinese front against Japan.

prestige to an unprecedented level. Nationwide, there were magnificent fireworks displays in celebration of the Republic of China's auspicious turn for the better. Initially, the most widespread fear among the people had been that the Xi'an Incident would incite a large-scale civil war. They were also worried that for the Japanese, who had long set their sights on Chinese soil, the Incident would provide the perfect opportunity to strike in a time of weakness. Amid the grand rejoicing of the soldiers and citizens of China, Chiang Kai-shek safely returned to the capital, Nanjing. With his promise never again to bow down to the power of Japan, the long-anticipated initial stages of a democratic and unified anti-Japanese campaign had finally begun. The desperation in the hearts of the Chinese people seemed to have been replaced with a newfound hope.

On New Year's Day 1937 there was a virtual flood of government bigwigs in Nanjing who, after rushing to a never-ending series of meetings, came down with colds. Attending conferences became a heavy burden for those party and government VIPs. But there were at least three that couldn't be missed. First was paying homage at Sun Yat-sen's mausoleum. This was also the most utterly exhausting. Each year on the first day of the new year, one had to respectfully take part in this ritual. Of the visitors who climbed the steps to the mausoleum, there wasn't a soul who didn't come down panting for air and reeking with sweat. After that, one had to rush to the Central Party Headquarters on Hunan Road to hear Yu Youren deliver his New Year's speech. Finally, one had to go to the Nationalist Government Building to listen to Chairman Lin Sen's address. Every word uttered would be printed in the newspapers the next day, but attending these three events in person observed a kind of official decorum and indicated an individual's status in the government hierarchy—and this was something no one was willing to give up. Rushing back and forth, many of the people in attendance ended up with the chills and broke out into a series of feverish sweats. Those older gentlemen a bit on the frail side were sneezing before Lin Sen's address was even finished.

Ding Wenyu also caught a cold on New Year's Day, but it certainly had nothing to do with attending conferences or speeches. Except for a single wedding ceremony, he didn't go anywhere. He had long since thrown all those large red invitations with golden trim into the wastepaper basket. Although Ding Wenyu had already earned quite a name for himself, what really set him apart was his peculiar character. What other

people went out of their way for he was always slow to take to heart. It was as if he couldn't even understand what there was worth celebrating on New Year's Day. We know that he caught a cold because he recorded this tidbit in his diary. Ding Wenyu habitually recorded his whereabouts and personal experiences in his diary; on New Year's Day, he surprisingly added the following passage:

> Today is a special day. I have a terrible cold and a runny nose, which toward the evening has grown especially acute. It is a good thing that the day wasn't a complete waste, because during an annoying wedding banquet, I ran into the beautiful Miss B. Instantly, my heart was thrown into disarray by this exquisite young girl. Here I describe her as a lovely and attractive girl, but actually today was her wedding day. As I write these words, it is very possible that she is already no longer a girl at all. Ah, why must women marry such vulgar creatures as men? I have no extravagant or ulterior motive; I desire only to be her eternal friend. This shall be the greatest happiness of my life. I shall do my utmost to carry this out.

It was the first day of 1937 when Ding Wenyu, already a middle-aged married man, in the strong cursive writing of his diary, first conveyed his fanatical feelings of love at first sight for Yuyuan. Because his diary was written only for himself, not to mention the fact that it was written in English, his wording and phrasing came across as a bit brazen. From simply looking at that day's diary entry, one would never guess that any kind of noteworthy story would unfold between him and Ren Yuyuan—the woman referred to as Miss B. Since it was written for his eyes only, inordinate comments about bold and beautiful women repeatedly appeared in Ding Wenyu's diary.

In actuality, only a fraction of his nearly one-thousand-word journal entry that day was devoted to Yuyuan and his cold. Most of the entry recorded vile remarks about another woman, a certain Miss Chen. For Ding Wenyu, the first day of 1937 was an abnormally difficult day. He had stayed up all night playing mah-jongg with Miss Chen at the Morning Cloud House near the Temple of Confucius. This was indeed a bitter task; Ding Wenyu truly despised the game that has been hailed as the quintessence of Chinese culture. Just one month before, he had made the

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com