

Volume Two



LU XUN

SELECTED WORKS

Translated by

Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang

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EDITOR'S NOTE

All the essays in this volume but three — “In the Belfry,” “Silent China” and “The Other Side of Celebrating the Recovery of Shanghai and Nanjing” — are from five collections entitled *The Grave*, *Hot Air*, *Bad Luck*, *Bad Luck (II)*, *And That's That*.

The Grave, published in 1927, consists of 4 essays dating from 1907 and 19 written between 1918 and 1925. *Hot Air*, published in 1925, contains 41 essays written between 1918 and 1924. *Bad Luck*, published in 1926, has 31 essays written in 1925. *Bad Luck (II)*, published in 1927, consists of 32 essays written in 1926 and one written in 1927. *And That's That*, published in 1928, has 29 essays written in 1927 and one written in 1926. “In the Belfry” and “Silent China,” which also belong to 1927, were included in *Three Leisures* published in 1932. “The Other Side of Celebrating the Recovery of Shanghai and Nanjing,” written on April 10, 1927, and forgotten for nearly fifty years, was re-discovered in 1975.

As the contents show, all the essays in this volume were written between 1918 and 1927, the period of the May 4th Movement (1919) and the First Revolutionary Civil War (1924-27). They show how Lu Xun battled during these years and the extent of his contribution to the democratic revolution.

It is interesting to consider the things that drew his fire. In the early part of this period, about the time of the May 4th Movement, the feudal-minded literati were still giving active support to the foreign imperialists and the Northern warlords. Opposing democratic

reforms, they grumbled that the world had gone to the dogs. Upholding and praising feudal morality, they did their best to bolster up patriarchal authority, considering it right and proper for children to obey their fathers implicitly, and for widows to kill themselves. Advocates of sacrificing to Confucius, the reading of Confucian classics and the preservation of "national characteristics," they defended superstition and attacked science, considering all democratic ideas fraught with danger. In short, what they wanted was a return to the past. These hidebound conservatives supported the Northern warlords and were supported by them; thus the warlord government of the time passed decrees for the honouring of women who were chaste according to its inhuman standard, and repeatedly ordered the schools to sacrifice to Confucius and study the Confucian classics.

During this period, therefore, Lu Xun first attacked feudal conventions and morality, the feudal family system, and the die-hards, warlords and bureaucrats who upheld such ideas and systems. Lu Xun called on his readers to emancipate women and young people, and to win a better future for their children. At the same time, he indignantly tore away the sanctimonious masks of those evil-minded hypocrites.

The task of the democratic revolution in China to oppose imperialism and feudalism during those years was liberation of the people. This work was not completed by the 1911 Revolution, but was continued by the May 4th Movement.

But in the later part of this period, when the democratic movement was making headway, there was a split among the Chinese intelligentsia. The rightist bourgeois elements in the democratic front — mostly students returned from England and America, whose chief representative was Hu Shi — turned reactionary, and worked for the Northern warlords and later for the Kuomintang. So Lu Xun had to fight against these modern "gentlemen."

These Westernized renegades were much craftier than the earlier group of die-hards. Dubbing themselves "scholars" or "intellectuals" devoted to "science" and "knowledge," they proposed that the intellectuals should "discuss more concrete problems and fewer 'isms,'" "carry out gradual reforms," "study our cultural heritage," and "go into the laboratory," hoping by these means to distract the attention of intellectuals and students from the revolution. So it became an urgent task to unmask these Westernized gentlemen and scholars and expose their false liberalism and reformism. The fight Lu Xun started in 1925 against the reactionary journal *Modern Critic* and against Chen Yuan is an excellent example of the struggle between the revolutionaries and the reactionary intellectuals. Those unfamiliar with the actual circumstances of the time may be bewildered by all the names and incidents referred to in Lu Xun's essays. But as the well-known revolutionary and literary critic Qu Qiubai (1900-35) observed:

Perhaps some young folk today are not very much interested in these essays because they do not know the history of men like Chen Yuan. The fact is that the names of Chen Yuan, Zhang Shizhao and others in Lu Xun's essays can be taken as standing for certain types. There is no need to know all about their lives. The important thing is that China today is still crawling with such vermin: "fawning cats," "dogs more snobbish than their masters," "mosquitoes which insist on making a long harangue before biting," "flies which after much preliminary buzzing and fuss lick off a little sweat and leave some filth." It is imperative in the struggle to tear off the masks of these shameless dastards, these savage time-servers and slaves.

In brief, to join battle with the die-hards, the reformists and the pseudo-liberals returned from England

and America was the main task of Lu Xun and other revolutionary writers at that time; though, of course, there were other struggles too. This is the historical background to this volume.

Needless to say, the range covered by Lu Xun in his battle of ideas was very great. While attacking the reactionaries, he criticized many backward ideas and habits, concerned himself with nearly every aspect of Chinese life, and touched upon almost all the problems of the revolution. A few important essays have been left out because long comments and notes would have been needed to make them clear, and we trust our readers will excuse these omissions.

1918

MY VIEWS ON CHASTITY

"The world is going to the dogs. Men are growing more degenerate every day. The country is faced with ruin!" — such laments have been heard in China since time immemorial. But "degeneracy" varies from age to age. It used to mean one thing, now it means another. Except in memorials to the throne and the like, in which no one dares make wild statements, this is the tone of all written and spoken pronouncements. For not only is such carping good for people; it removes the speaker from the ranks of the degenerate. That gentlemen sigh when they meet is only natural. But now even murderers, incendiaries, libertines, swindlers and other scoundrels shake their heads in the intervals between their crimes and mutter, "Men are growing more degenerate every day!"

As far as morality goes, inciters to evil are not the only degenerates. So are those who simply condone it, delight in it, or deplore it. That is why some men this year have actually not contented themselves with empty talk, but after expressing their horror have looked around for a remedy. The first was Kang Youwei.* Stamping and sawing the air, he declared "constitutional monarchy" the panacea. He was refuted by Chen Duxiu,** who was

* Kang Youwei (1858-1927), who led the 1898 reform movement, in 1918 published an article declaring that China was not yet ripe for democracy.

** Chen Duxiu (1880-1942), then chief editor of the magazine *New Youth*, published an article there refuting Kang Youwei's ideas.

followed by the spiritualists who somehow or other hit on the weird idea of inviting the ghost of Mencius to devise a policy for them. However, Chen Bainian, Qian Xuantong, and Liu Bannong* swear they are talking nonsense.

Those articles refuting them in *New Youth* are enough to make one's blood run cold. This is the twentieth century, and dawn has already broken on mankind. If *New Youth* were to carry an article debating whether the earth were square or round, readers would almost certainly sit up. Yet their present arguments are pretty well on a par with contending that the earth is not square. That such a debate should continue *today* is enough to make anyone's blood run cold!

Though constitutional monarchy is no longer discussed, the spiritualists still seem to be going strong. But they have failed to satisfy another group, who continue to shake their heads and mutter, "Men are growing more degenerate every day." These, in fact, have thought up a different remedy, which they call "extolling chastity."

For many years now, ever since the failure of the reformists and the call for a return to the past, devices like this have been generally approved: all we are now doing is raising the old banners. Moreover, in step with this, writers and public speakers keep singing the praises of chastity. This is their only way to rise above those who are "growing more degenerate every day."

Chastity used to be a virtue for men as well as women, hence the references to "chaste gentlemen" in our literature. However, the chastity which is extolled today is for women only — men have no part in it. According to contemporary moralists, a chaste woman is one who does not remarry or run off with a lover after her husband's

* In 1918 *New Youth* carried articles by these three professors at Beijing University inveighing against the spiritualist school and advocating a return to the past.

death, while the earlier her husband dies and the poorer her family the more chaste it is possible for her to be. In addition, there are two other types of chaste women: one kills herself when her husband or fiancé dies; the other manages to commit suicide when confronted by a ravisher, or meets her death while resisting. The more cruel her death, the greater glory she wins. If she is surprised and ravished but kills herself afterwards, there is bound to be talk. She has one chance in ten thousand of finding a generous moralist who may excuse her in view of the circumstances and grant her the title "chaste." But no man of letters will want to write her biography and, if forced to, he is sure to end on a note of disapproval.

In short, when a woman's husband dies she should remain single or die. If she meets a ravisher she should also die. When such women are praised, it shows that society is morally sound and there is still hope for China. That is the gist of the matter.

Kang Youwei had to use the emperor's name; the spiritualists depend on superstitious nonsense; but upholding chastity is entirely up to the people. This shows we are coming on. However, there are still some questions I would like to raise, which I shall try to answer according to my own lights. Moreover, since I take it that this idea of saving the world through chastity is held by the majority of my countrymen, those who expound it being merely their spokesmen who voice something which affects the whole body corporate, I am putting my questions and answers before the majority of the people.

My first question is: In what way do unchaste women injure the country? It is only too clear today that "the country is faced with ruin." There is no end to the dastardly crimes committed and war, banditry, famine, flood and drought follow one after the other. But this is owing to the fact that we have no new morality or new science and all our thoughts and actions are out of date. That is why these benighted times resemble the old dark

ages. Besides, all government, army, academic and business posts are filled by men, not by unchaste women. And it can hardly be because the men in power have been bewitched by such women that they lose all sense of right and wrong and plunge into dissipation. As for flood, drought and famine, they result from a lack of modern knowledge, from worshipping dragons and snakes, cutting down forests, and neglecting water conservancy — they have even less to do with women. War and banditry, it is true, often produce a crop of unchaste women; but the war and banditry come first, and the unchaste women follow. It is not women's wantonness that causes such troubles.

My second question is: Why should women shoulder the whole responsibility for saving the world? According to the old school, women belong to the *yin** or negative element. Their place is in the home, as chattels of men. Surely, then, the onus for governing the state and saving the country should rest with the men, who belong to the *yang* or positive element. How can we burden weak females with such a tremendous task? And according to the moderns, both sexes are equal with roughly the same obligations. Though women have their duties, they should not have more than their share. It is up to the men to play their part as well, not just by combating violence but by exercising their own masculine virtues. It is not enough merely to punish and lecture the women.

My third question is: What purpose is served by upholding chastity? If we grade all the women in the world according to their chastity, we shall probably find that they fall into three classes: those who are chaste and should be praised; those who are unchaste; and those who have not yet married or whose husbands are still

* Ancient Chinese philosophers held that all phenomena resulted from the interaction of the positive principle *yang* and the negative principle *yin*.