

Volume Four



# LU XUN

## SELECTED WORKS

*Translated by*

Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang

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VOLUME FOUR

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## 1936

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The essays in this volume come from four collections: *Fringed Literature*\* and three volumes of *Essays of Qiejieting*.

*Fringed Literature*, a collection of sixty-one essays written in 1934, was first published in 1936. The thirty-six essays in the first series of *Essays of Qiejieting* were also written in 1934, the forty-eight in the second series in 1935, and the thirty-five in the third series in 1936. The three collections of *Essays of Qiejieting* were all published in July 1937 after Lu Xun's death, the first two having been edited by Lu Xun, the last by his wife Xu Guangping.

Between 1934 and 1936, when the essays in this volume were written, the spearhead of Japanese invasion had struck south from the northeastern provinces to Beijing and Tianjin. On April 17, 1934, the Japanese imperialists openly declared that China belonged to their sphere of influence. In 1935, He Yingqin signed the He-Umezu Agreement whereby the Kuomintang government substantially surrendered China's sovereign rights in the provinces of Hebei and Chahar. In November of the same year, the Japanese occupied Inner Mongolia and set up a puppet "autonomous government" there. In 1936, they set up a North China Garrison Headquarters, continuously increased the number of troops along the Beijing-Liaoning Railway, sent secret agents and smuggled goods

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\*So called because most of the essays in this collection appeared in literary supplements surrounded by patterned borders.



into all parts of China to create incidents and stir up trouble, in preparation for a full-scale war of aggression to conquer all China. Despite these acts of aggression, the reactionary Kuomintang government maintained its policy of non-resistance, betraying the country to Japan and devoting all its energy to suppressing patriotic movements, launching a fifth offensive against the revolutionary base of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1934, the Red Army, led by the Chinese Communist Party, set out on the famous Long March in order to advance north to fight Japan. On August 1, 1935, the Chinese Communist Party published the "Appeal to Fellow-Countrymen Concerning Resistance to Japan and National Salvation." On November 28, it published the "Ten-Point Programme for Resisting Japan and Saving the Nation," calling for the establishment of a national united front, for the cessation of civil war, and for all-out resistance to Japanese aggression. This call of the Party immediately gained wide support from the whole people including, of course, literary circles. On December 28, 1935, the Society for National Salvation was set up by cultural circles in Shanghai. In May 1936, the All-China Association for National Salvation was established, and over a thousand patriotic publications appeared in different parts of the country. At that time the common demand in the literary and art movement was to unite all writers and artists, whether old or new, regardless of class and party, except those who collaborated with the enemy, to co-operate in the common task of resisting Japan and saving the country, and to form an anti-Japanese national united front of writers and artists. Early in October, Chinese writers and artists published a Declaration on Uniting to Resist Aggression and on Freedom of Speech, signed by all representative figures in cultural circles. This laid the foundation of the anti-Japanese national united front of writers and artists.

From 1934 to 1936, Lu Xun lived in Shanghai where the White Terror was rampant. Though he had tuberculosis and his health was failing he went on fighting, leading the progressive writers, courageously exposing and attacking the reactionary measures of Chiang Kai-shek's government and defeating its "cultural offensive." During this period he also resolutely combated various reactionary trends in literature. He severely criticized the sycophantic writers represented by Lin Yutang, as well as those who advocated belles-lettres in the style of the late Ming Dynasty, or talked of standing aloof from mundane affairs and posed as a cultured élite. He also exposed such "pedlars of revolution" as Yang Cunren, such "poets" as Zeng Jinke. Lu Xun not only made clear his revolutionary stand in these courageous fights, but on the eve of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression he openly set down in writing his support of the Chinese Communist Party. In his "Reply to a Letter from the Trotskyites" he said:

I count it an honour to have as my comrades those who are now doing solid work, treading firmly on the ground, fighting and shedding their blood for the survival of this generation of Chinese.

He was referring here to the Chinese Communist Party led by Chairman Mao Zedong and the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

Lu Xun's essays of these years made a most glorious contribution in the realm of ideas to Chinese revolutionary literature. First, he made valuable proposals on the questions of popularization and elevation in literature and art. In his view, the masses were not as stupid as some educated men tended to think.

They want knowledge, they want new knowledge. They want to study and they can absorb new things. Of course, if language consists of nothing but new

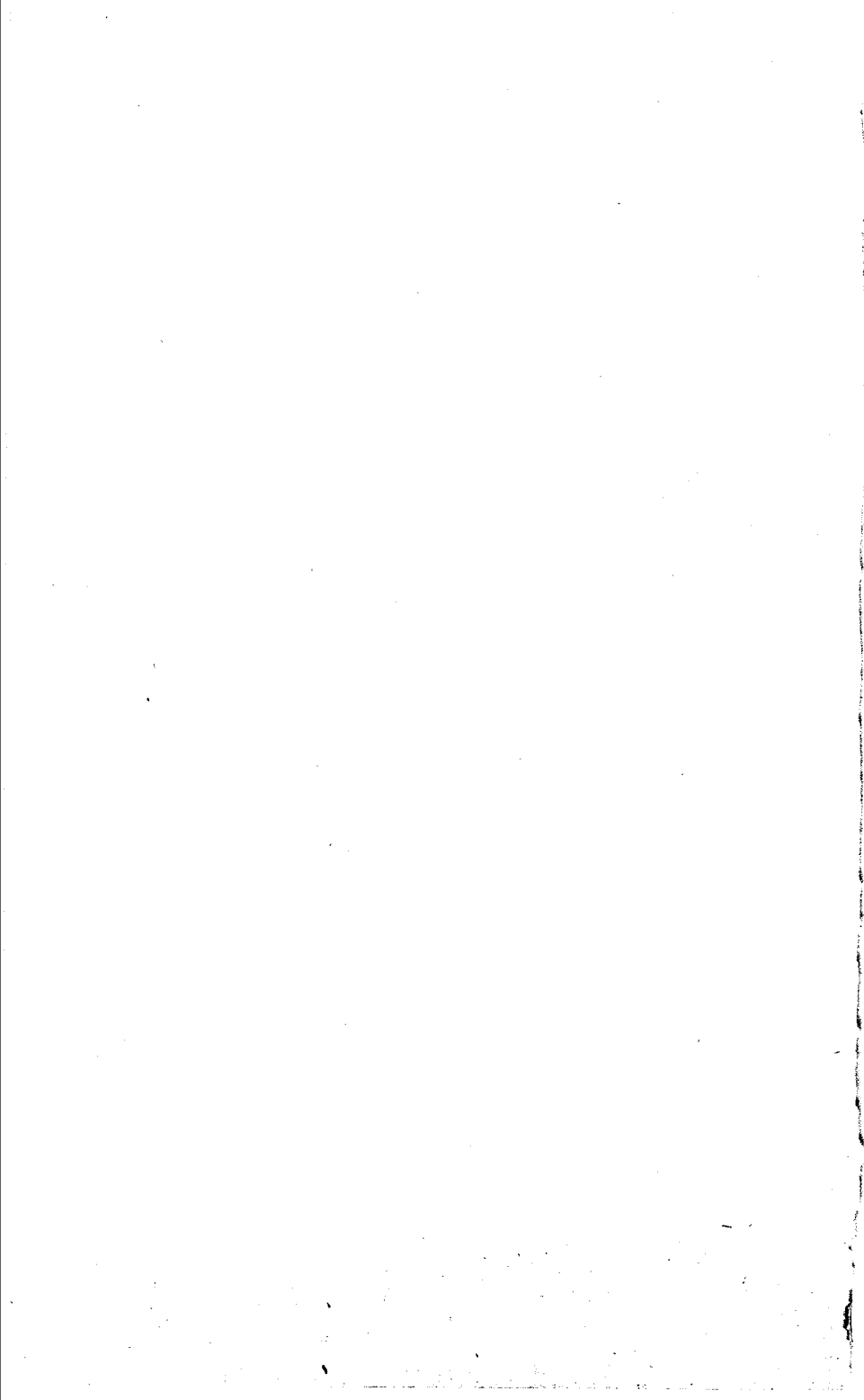
terms and a new syntax they will not understand; but if what they need is given them gradually, they can take it. Perhaps their digestions are stronger than those of many scholars with more preconceived ideas. ("A Layman's Remarks on Writing.")

Here he has indicated the relationship between popularization and elevation: the two are not incompatible, but popularization may lead gradually to elevation.

Lu Xun during this period also expressed most outstanding views on critically taking over the cultural heritage. He pointed out that the new class and the new culture did not suddenly drop down from heaven but developed mainly in the revolt against the old ruling class and its culture, developed in the clash with old traditions; thus the new culture must stem from the old and adopt certain of its attributes; it should adopt the best elements, those close to the people or to the revolution, abandoning all that was feudal and backward. In his essay "On Using Old Forms," he took Chinese painting as an example to make a vivid, detailed analysis of this problem.

Lu Xun's death on October 19, 1936, was an irreparable loss for the Chinese people. But Lu Xun's spirit will live on for ever. His magnificent writings will always be part of the most prized heritage of Chinese literature.

1934



## WOMEN ARE NOT THE WORST LIARS

In "On Lying"\* Mr. Han Shiheng declares one of the reasons for lying to be weakness, and the fact cited in evidence is: "That is why women lie more often than men."

This may not be a lie, but it may not be a fact either. True, we often hear men claim that women lie more often than men; but no proof of this is available and no statistics either. Schopenhauer, who railed against women, was discovered after his death to have among his papers a prescription for curing syphilis. Another young Austrian savant,\*\* whose name I forget, wrote a massive tome to prove women inveterate liars — but later he committed suicide. I suspect that he was mentally deranged himself.

To my mind, the statement "women lie more often than men" is less accurate than "women are often said to 'lie more often than men.'" But of course no figures for this are available either.

Take the case of Lady Yang and the lies the literati told after An Lushan's revolt.\*\*\* Instead of blaming Emperor Ming Huang they blamed her for all the troubles. Few indeed dared say:

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\* Published in *Free Talk*, a supplement of *Shen Bao*, on January 8, 1934.

\*\* Otto Weininger (1880-1903), an Austrian philosopher.

\*\*\* An Lushan revolted in 755 and Lady Yang, as the Tang emperor's favourite, was held responsible.

*Ignoring the decline of Xia and Shang,  
They accused Bao Si and Da Ji instead.\**

In fact, the same was true in the case of these two beauties. Women have surely been penalized far too long for men's sins as well as their own.

This year is "Women's National Products Year."\*\* So promoting Chinese products is up to the women too. Before long they will be read another lecture, for it is by no means certain that they can increase the production of Chinese goods; but by advocating this and then blaming the women the men will have done their duty.

I remember a poem written by someone to express his indignation on behalf of a certain woman:

*His Majesty had put up the white flag in surrender,  
But deep in the palace I did not know it;  
Two hundred thousand troops all laid down their  
arms;*

*Was there a single man among them?\*\*\**

Well said!

January 8, 1934

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\* A quotation from Du Fu's poem "Going North." Bao Si was the queen of King You of the Zhou Dynasty, Da Ji was the queen of the last ruler of the Shang Dynasty. Their beauty was said to have made their royal masters neglect affairs of state, thus causing their kingdoms to fall.

\*\* Because Chinese goods could not compete with the foreign products flooding Chinese markets, various vain appeals were made to patriots to "Buy Chinese!" In December 1933, four popular bodies in Shanghai decreed that 1934 should be "Women's National Products Year."

\*\*\* This verse is generally attributed to Lady Hua Rui, a concubine of the king of Shu in the tenth century, who is said to have recited it to the new emperor after the fall of the kingdom.

## THE CRITICS OF THE CRITICS

Times certainly change! Up to last year all critics as well as those who were not critics were criticizing literature, and naturally most of them were dissatisfied, though a few found something good to say. But last year there was a volte-face: writers as well as those who were not writers started criticizing the critics.

This time very few have anything good to say. The most extreme will not admit that there have been any genuine critics of late. If they admit it, they roar with laughter at the fellows' stupidity. Why? Because critics so frequently have their own particular yardstick which they hold up against a work. If the work measures up to it, well and good; if not, it must be bad.

But does the history of literary criticism disclose a single critic without a definite yardstick? All without exception have one. It may be beauty, it may be truth, it may be human progress. Your real freak would be the critic without a yardstick. A magazine may claim unlimited range, but there precisely lies its limitation, the handkerchief used to camouflage sleight-of-hand. Thus an editor who believes in "art for art's sake" and professes to be impartial, finds scope in book reviews alone for plenty of tricks. If a book belongs to the school of "art for art's sake" and suits his taste, he may publish an article praising this school or a review lauding the work to the skies. Or he may print a pseudo-radical appraisal, posing as an out-and-out revolutionary, to ram it into the ground. So dust is thrown into the readers' eyes. But a man with any memory cannot be so in-



consistent and must have some definite criterion. We cannot blame him for having a yardstick. We can criticize him only if his yardstick is wrong.

But the critics of critics have cited the case of Zhang Xianzhong.\* To examine scholars, Zhang hung a cord between two pillars, past which he ordered the candidates to walk. Those who over-topped the cord were killed, so were those who failed to reach it, till all the talent of Shu\*\* was slain. If we compare critics who have definite views with Zhang Xianzhong, the hearts of readers will certainly swell with rage. But a criterion for literature is quite different from a cord to measure scholars. A discussion of the merits and weaknesses of writing is not the same as measuring men's height. Citing this example is not criticism but slander.

January 17, 1934

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\* Leader of a peasant uprising at the end of the Ming Dynasty. Past historians had maligned him with many tales of cruelty.

\*\* Another name for Sichuan Province.