

Volume Three



LU XUN

SELECTED WORKS

Translated by

Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang

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VOLUME THREE

Translated by
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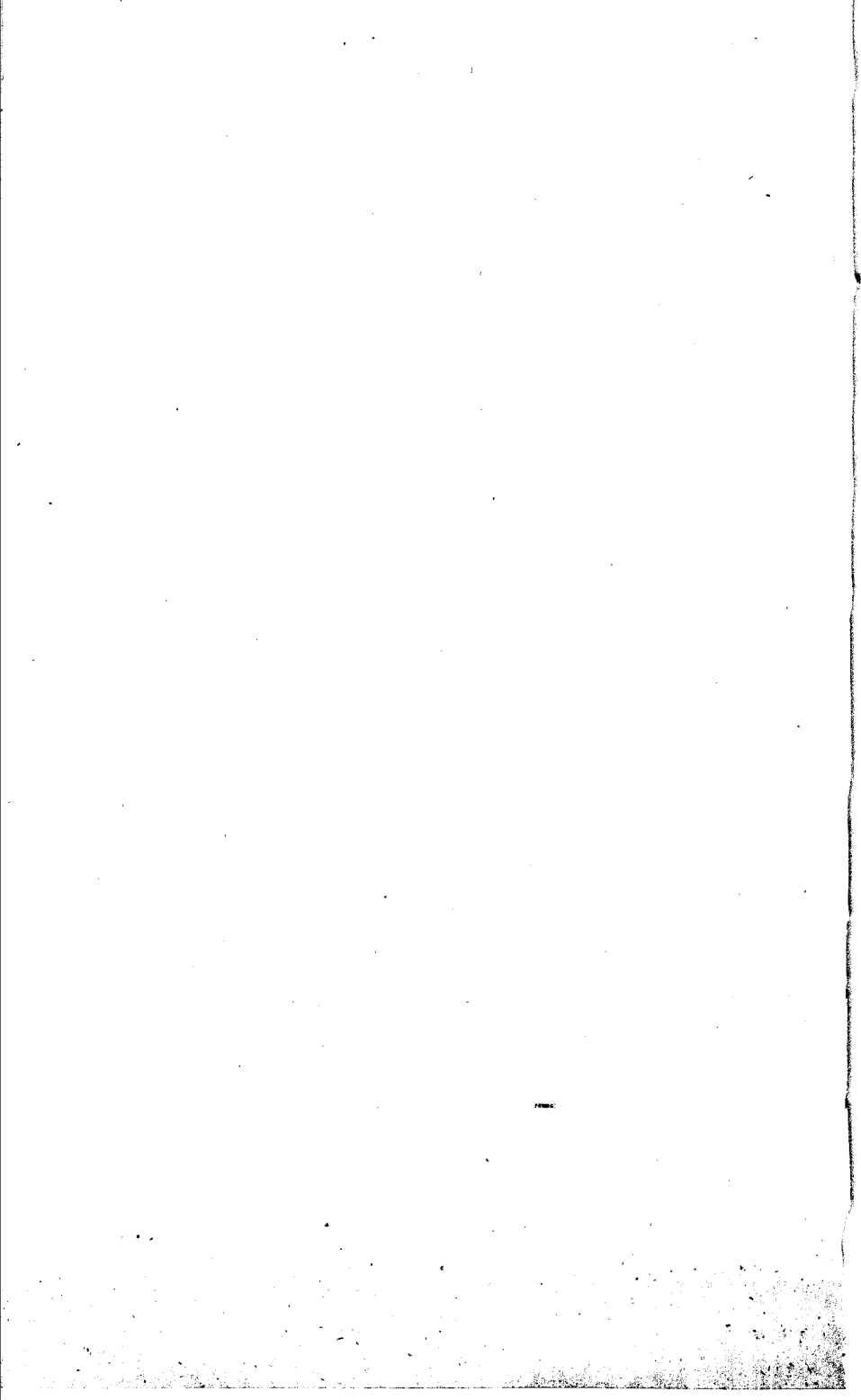
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The essays in this volume come from the following collections: *Three Leisures*, *Two Hearts*, *Mixed Dialects*, *False Liberty* and *Semi-Frivolous Talk*.

Three Leisures and *Two Hearts* were published in 1932. The former includes 34 essays written between 1927 and 1929 and a list compiled in 1932 of Lu Xun's writings and translations. The latter consists of 37 essays written during 1930 and 1931. *False Liberty*, published in 1933, has 43 essays written between January and May that year. *Mixed Dialects*, published in 1934, has 50 essays written in 1932 and 1933. *Semi-Frivolous Talk*, published in 1934, contains 64 essays written between June and November of 1933.

As indicated in the table of contents, all the essays in this volume were written in the six years between 1928 and 1933. This was during the earlier part of the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-36) in China. The Kuomintang had betrayed the revolutionary cause, surrendered to the imperialists and imposed a reign of terror throughout the land, imprisoning and massacring progressives and attacking the people's revolution by force of arms as well as in the cultural field. As a result, the country's position became one of increasing jeopardy. In 1931 the Japanese imperialists occupied vast territories in the Northeast. In 1932 they attacked Shanghai.

During this period the demands of the Chinese people were unequivocal. They called for an end to civil war so that the whole country might unite to resist the aggressors. But this the Kuomintang reactionaries refused to

do, for they represented the interests of the compradore bourgeoisie and the feudal landlords. At the instigation of the imperialists they mobilized all the counter-revolutionary forces in China in an attempt to exterminate the Communists, while at the same time they knuckled under to the enemy and yielded to all Japan's demands. As such a regime lost popular support it became more and more desperate and resorted to repressive measures: freedom of speech and of the press was suppressed, bookshops were smashed, patriots and progressives were arrested or murdered. Since Lu Xun's name was on the black list and he could not publish his work freely, he wrote many of the essays in this collection under pseudonyms.

In addition to a policy of open terror, the Kuomintang government concocted various "theories" to disguise its betrayal of the national interests and to deceive the people. Their hirelings, the "westernized gentlemen" and "scholars" launched a concerted attack on progressive writers. Some spread rumours, others acted as spies. They donned various masks and disguises, denied the class character of literature or advocated "art for art's sake" in an attempt to deceive the younger generation and turn black into white. In this way they hoped to divert attention from the real issues at stake.

This meant that to tell the truth about the Kuomintang regime, expose the real nature of the seemingly dignified "scholars" and "professors" and refute their lies as well as those of their masters became urgent tasks for progressive cultural circles at that time. This is the historical background of the essays Lu Xun wrote during these years.

It is clear from these essays that Lu Xun always took the standpoint of the people to fight against the forces of reaction. He discloses the true nature of the Kuomintang policy: "We must settle troubles at home before driving out the invaders." He attacks the terroriza-

tion against patriots. Under his pen hypocrites assume their true form and are shown up as a pack of "homeless watchdogs of the capitalists." Lu Xun says:

No writer living in a class society can transcend class, no one living in a time of wars can leave the battlefield and stand alone, and no one living today can write for the future — this is sheer fantasy. There are no such men in real life.

He tells the truth also about the so-called "third category," the writers of "nationalist literature" who shout and clamour "like mourners and musicians at a funeral to cover up the loss of our territory," but who have no concern for their country because they too are abject slaves of the imperialists.

Heated arguments between progressive writers also took place during this period. Lu Xun joined energetically in the debate on revolutionary literature with the Creation Society and the Sun Society, as we can read in this volume. Indeed, this controversy gradually led to a serious study of literary theory and did much to introduce true revolutionary principles of literature. By the time Lu Xun wrote "My Thoughts on the League of Left-Wing Writers," a united front had been formed among progressive writers.

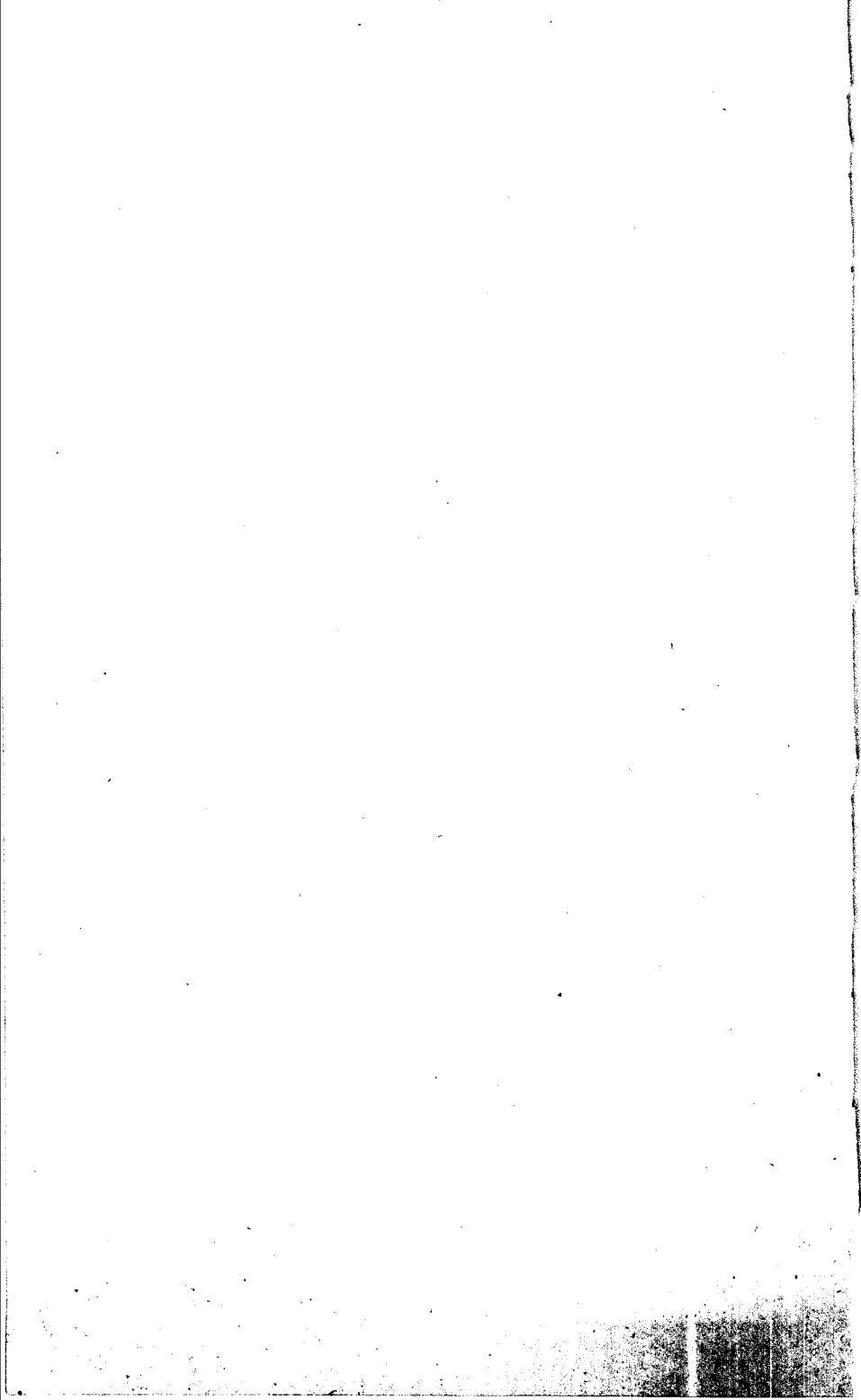
The great advance in Lu Xun's ideas during this period is most striking. He explains this briefly in his preface to *Two Hearts* by saying:

While I started by simply hating my own class which I knew so well, and felt no regret over its destruction, later on the facts taught me that the future belongs solely to the rising proletariat.

Because Lu Xun attacked all social injustice and waged an uncompromising battle against reactionary and backward ideas in the fields of politics and culture, these essays are extraordinarily profound and the range of sub-

jects is extremely wide. As this volume contains a selection only of his writings from this period it cannot fully represent his many-sided activities. For instance, he wrote numerous articles during these years on translation, but since these are hard to render into another language we have included very few of them here.

1928



BEFUDDLED WOOLLINESS*

This year — by the old calendar as well as by the new — seems to be having a strangely stimulating effect on Shanghai writers. For both lunar and solar New Year have seen a spate of new periodicals, which have lavished all their attention on big, impressive topics, not caring how deadly dull the contents are. Even magazines more than one year old are thrashing about in desperation and undergoing sudden metamorphoses. Some of the writers are new, but many of them are old acquaintances, though a number seem like strangers because they have written nothing for a year or so. What were they doing all that time, and why have they taken up their pens again simultaneously? Well, that is a long story. Suffice it to say they did not have to write then, but now they have to — they are just the same as the old, inept literati. Consciously or subconsciously, they know this, and so they are announcing to their readers that they mean to “go abroad,” “shut themselves up in their studies,” or else “win over the masses.” Great deeds are not accomplished at a stroke, but once men come back from abroad, leave their studies or win over the masses, that is something

* This essay was an answer to the attack on Lu Xun early in 1928 by the Creation Society, one of the literary groups founded after the May 4th Movement of 1919. The Society's literary trend was romantic, till its members were drawn close to the revolution. Then, owing to the extreme “leftism” and sectarianism of Cheng Fangwu and other leading members, they judged Lu Xun wrongly and carried out misguided attacks on him.

worth watching. The far-sighted, careful, timid and opportunistic will of course be well-advised to give them a "revolutionary salute" in advance. If you delay, it may be too late.

But all these journals, however different their style, have one common characteristic — woolliness. The reason for this woolliness, to my mind — although Feng Naichao has labelled me "befuddled"* — lies in those bureaucrats and warlords loved by some and hated by others. Those connected with or eager to be connected with them seem to smile cheerily all the time as they write, to show how friendly they are. But being far-sighted too, they sometimes dream of the terrible hammer and sickle and dare not flatter their present masters too openly. This accounts for their slight woolliness. Those who have lost their connections or never had any, and who are closer to the people, ought to be able to speak without any scruples. But however heroic their tone and however hard they try to impress their readers, very few of them are fools enough to forget who has the whip hand. So they leave things rather woolly too. That is why in the same place and at the same time we see writers' colours through would-be woolliness, and would-be true colours grown unavoidably woolly.

As a matter of fact, this woolliness is immaterial. Even in the most revolutionary countries, art and literature may appear rather woolly. Revolutionaries, on the other hand, are never afraid of self-criticism. They see clearly and dare speak plainly. The only exception is China where men who, aping others, consider Tolstoy a "vulgar moralist" and admit that in "the present situation" in China "the whole society is controlled by the forces of

* In the first issue (January 1928) of *Cultural Critic*, a journal of the Creation Society, Feng Naichao wrote, "Lu Xun often gazes out at the world with befuddled eyes from the top floor of a dark tavern."