

defining the parameters of the debates. These are not simple questions but issues being raised in the courts, in religious quarters and educational battlegrounds, and remain quite contentious. Perhaps the fact that the teams are so evenly drawn between two major camps should give notice that a full-bodied democratic discussion rages in Japan. Instead of the more pessimistic view that the lingering existence of these debates signifies some larger social psychosis in need of taming, I would call it a positive development.

When "I" Was Born: Women's Autobiography in Modern China.

By Jing M. Wang. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008. Pp. 276.

ISBN 10: 0299225100; 13: 978-0299225100.

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doi:10.1017/S1479591409000308

Jing M. Wang's *When "I" Was Born* describes Chinese women's autobiographies in modern China. Most of the works examined in this book were written between the late 1920s and the 1940s. Wang proclaims that a genre – women's autobiography in China – emerged during this particular period, that is, in wartime.

The author graduated from Hebei Normal University in 1982 and received a master's degree from Beijing Foreign Studies University in 1988. After moving to the United States, she received a master's degree in 1995 and a PhD in 2000, both from Ohio State University, and is now an assistant professor of Chinese literature and language at Colgate University. *When "I" Was Born* is her first work, although before this, she had published a translation *Jumping through Hoops: Autobiographical Stories by Modern Chinese Women Writers*.

Wang begins this book by explaining the status of biography and autobiography in Chinese literary history. Biography was a genre within dynastic history; hence, in traditional China, biography dominated autobiography. The notion of selfhood in Confucian ideas also limited the growth of autobiography. From the mid-nineteenth century, the concept of the individual as a sense of self began to emerge in response to the traditional Confucian ethic, and it came to fruition in the May Fourth period. The May Fourth movement enabled Chinese women to become writers, and also laid the foundation on which they could write autobiographies. In other words, autobiography was a perfect new literary mode that was introduced into Chinese literary history at the time of China's modernization.

In my view, and in accordance with the above premise, Wang tries to clarify two literary currents throughout the book. The first current concerns how the translation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* contributed to the establishment of a confessional style in modern Chinese literature. The translator of Rousseau's *Confessions* was Zhang Jingsheng, who was persecuted because of his sensational work *Xing shi* (Sexual Records). Wang observes that Zhang obviously connects his personal misfortune with the persecution of Rousseau. Wang also refers to Su Xuelin (1897–1999), who was among the first generation of women writers and teachers in modern China. She has been unfairly neglected in Chinese literary circles because she was antagonistic to Lu Xun. Su Xuelin recognized that she had been influenced by *Confessions*. Because Wang cites only one instance – Su Xuelin – I would say that there are insufficient examples and evidence to support her hypothesis about the importance of the influence of Rousseau's *Confessions* on modern Chinese literature. Still, with due regard to the absence of confessional style in Chinese literature before modern times, I would assume that this is a very fascinating and possible perspective.

The other literary current concerns how Lin Yutang and his cohort played a decisive role in nurturing Chinese women's autobiographies in modern China. Lin Yutang and his cohort published

many translations of western writings on life, mostly in their periodicals *Yuzhoufeng* (Cosmic Wind), *Xifeng* (West Wind), and *Xishu jinghua* (Western Book Digest). On one hand, they introduced Western writings on life; on the other, they called on their readers to write autobiographies and contribute to their periodicals. The result was the publication of four anthologies: *Tamen de shenghuo*, 1936 (Their Lives); *Tiancai meng*, 1940 (My Dream of Being a Genius); *Fan long*, 1941 (Prison House); and *Gong zhuang*, 1941 (Confessions). Nearly all of these short autobiographies were written by non-professional female readers. Needless to say, these writers were influenced by Western writings on life which had appeared in those periodicals.

Wang also emphasizes that Isadora Duncan's *My Life* served as a catalyst for the birth of Chinese women's autobiographies. First to introduce Duncan's *My Life* to China was Lin Yutang, who was definitely a perceptive observer. Su Xuelin (mentioned in the fifth chapter) and Xie Binying (mentioned in the seventh chapter) held *My Life* in high esteem.

The sixth chapter of this book examines Bai Wei's (1894–1987) *Beiju shengya*, 1936 (Tragic Life). Lin Yutang asked Bai Wei to write about her married life, and *Tragic Life* was the result. The seventh chapter examines Xie Bingying's (1906–2000) works. She is famous for *Congjun riji*, 1927 (War Diary), *Yige nübing zizhuan*, 1936 (Autobiography of a Female Soldier), and *Xin congjun riji*, 1938 (New War Diary). A part of *Autobiography of a Female Soldier* was published in *Cosmic Wind*. In this way, Lin Yutang had close relationships with the Chinese women writers who wrote autobiographies between the late 1920s and the 1940s.

Wang points out that, in those days, it was impossible for women writers to focus on self-representation in their writing because of the rise of leftist literary ideology and collective concerns. Nevertheless, the historical situation of the war decades gave rise to women's autobiography. Wang interprets this phenomenon a result of the ideological differences between liberalism and the leftist mainstream, as well as of the wartime economy. Moreover, she places a high value on Lin Yutang and his cohort's contribution to liberalism and individualism.

Wang's investigation of Lin Yutang's contribution and impact on the development of Chinese women's autobiographies is important work. She interprets these autobiographies as a product of the confrontation between the liberal intellectual's individualism and the left's wartime ideology, and her view is justifiable and convincing. Thus I think Wang is successful in clarifying one literary current in modern China.

However, I cannot accept the way in which she seems to expand her view to the general situation of Chinese women's autobiographies in this period, because it is common knowledge that left-wing writers also expressed autobiographical narratives. It is incorrect to say that they were concerned only with the collective, as Wang claims. For example, it is regrettable that the author does not consider Ding Ling, who is an important subject of feminist criticism. Ding Ling suffered from the conflict between the ideal model of the communist activist and her private life as an ordinary woman, and grappled directly with this problem. Her autobiographical narratives and her autobiography *Wangliang shijie*, 1987 (Monster World) deserve mention.

In my view, Su Qing's *Jiehun shi nian*, 1943 (Marriage of Ten Years) is another remarkable work. It presents simultaneously the private and social life of a woman who lived in the Japanese occupation area. The problem of the individual under occupation should not be explained by liberalism. Rather, I think it is a compelling kind of individualism, and is worth examining from a different perspective.

Reading this book, I was very impressed by the fact that female intellectuals sometimes avoid discussing their private life. Lu Yin (1898–1934) is famous for her novels in which characters plunge into free love, and throughout her *Lu Yin zizhuan*, 1934 (Autobiography of Lu Yin) importance of free love is emphasized. However, her actual marriage often proved an obstacle to her career, and her autobiography rarely refers to her private life. Su Xuelin and Xie Bigying are much the same. Although Su Xuelin married and had children, she isolated herself from her family and devoted

her life to writing, research, and teaching. Xie Bingying regarded marriage as a revolutionary union. She seldom talks about her child who was born out of a failed marriage.

Writing itself was their true identity. It is true that the literacy that modernity gave them enabled them to express themselves. However, at the same time, it was difficult to connect their private life with the modern “self.” This fact probably shows that Chinese women’s identity in modern times is very ideological and distant from their practical life, and also far from women’s history.

Sun Yatsen zai Lundun, 1896–1897: Sanmin zhuyi sixiang tanyuan 孫逸仙在倫敦, 1896–1897: 三民主義思想探源 (variant title: *London and the Chinese Revolution: Exploring the London Origins of Sun Yatsen’s Three Principles, 1896–1897*).

By John Y. Wong (黃宇和). Taipei: Lianjing, 2007. Pp. 598.

ISBN 13: 9789570831382.

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doi:10.1017/S147959140900031X

The author, Dr. John Y Wong, is a professor in the Department of History at Sydney University and also a fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia. His research focuses on two basic themes: British imperialism and China, especially the first and second Opium Wars; and early Sun Yatsen, especially his stay in London (1896–1897). His excellent book, *The Origins of an Heroic Image: Sun Yatsen in London, 1896–1897* (Oxford University Press, 1986) makes clear that his kidnapping was the moment at which world media formed his heroic image. His second book about Sun, 孫逸仙倫敦蒙難真相 (The Truth about Sun Yatsen’s Kidnapping in London)¹ indicates with certainty that his kidnapping incident was arranged by the Chinese legation in London. The author’s third book, 中山先生與英國 (variant title, *Sun Yatsen and the British, 1883–1925*),² traces Sun’s relationship with Britain, and argues that although Sun’s desire around the time of the Xinhai Revolution (1911) to unify and modernize China was not opposed to British special interests in China, the British preferred the strongman Yuan Shihkai to undertake the initiative to build a new China, the ROC. Faced with a low evaluation by the British, Sun adopted a more familiar policy with Russia and then the Soviet Union. In this book, Wong’s fourth in the field, the author revisits the issue of Sun’s stay in London in order to bring into sharper focus Sun’s experience there and consider how it influenced his “Three Principles of the People” (*Sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義), the crux of which is thought to have been formulated while he was in London.

Sun Yatsen arrived at London on 30 September 1896, after the failure of his resistance movement at Guangdong the previous year. He left London on 1 July 1897. During his stay Sun came to be recognized as the symbol of the Chinese revolution through the “kidnapping” incident carried out by officials of the Chinese Legation on 11 October. “Chinese revolutionary arrested” – such headlines appeared all over the world. On 23 October he was released when the British government intervened. For the remaining eight months, Sun took advantage of London’s many facilities and imbibed a flood of modern thought, leading to the creation of the basic elements of his original philosophy, the Three Principles of the People. This book emphasizes that the essence of the principles was achieved in this period, although the text of the principles would subsequently be revised many times.

1 Taipei: Lianjing, 1998.

2 Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 2005.