The Uses of the Primitive in Modern Chinese Fiction and Cinema

Rujie Wang, College of Wooster

As a teacher as well as reader of modern Chinese fiction and a viewer of Chinese cinema, what I find most interesting and identify on an emotional level are such "unlikely heroes,"[1] as Ah Q, Kong Yiji, Juan-sheng, Xiangzi, Gao Jue-xin, Ju Dou, Ermo, just to name a few. The fates of these problematic heroes are also the stories of the Chinese psyche, the unconscious archetype of the self and the foundation for the conscious experience of the individual. The archaic modes of consciousness and outdated values that they represent help me rediscover my own primitive self becoming increasingly repressed in China's struggle to become "modern." In this sense, I consider many works of Chinese literature of the Twentieth-Century the negatives of Chinese self-representations and self-definitions as "new" and "modern" by their project of modernity, but possessed psychologically by their "primitive" past.

For Carl Jung (1875-1961), literature needs to be understood as a potential means of compensation for a set of one-sided conscious values and attitudes that people develop often at the expense of human psychic wholeness. Literary works and films should be studied, therefore, as manifestations of the subconscious, as the anxiety of the "modern" man, who arrives at his intellectual enlightenment only a fragment of himself. Read within this Jungian perspective, the meaning of many literary works has to be explored beyond the workings of language, beyond the rhetoric of May Fourth anti-traditionalism, and beyond the discourse of social progress and modernization. The failed heroes, for example, show us how psychic elements become repressed because they are incompatible with such conscious values as "science" (ke xue) and "democracy" (min zhu). This split between the emotional and the intellectual is key to the meaning of many literary and visual works which lies buried in the ambivalence that we have toward the project of modernity.

Before we discuss how modern Chinese relate to their primitive past through fiction and film, or how literature and cinema "compensate" the fragmentation or alienation of the modern man from his primitive shadows, it is important to re-examine the influential arguments and views in past national debates on Chinese culture. The assumptions embedded in such a discussion can by no means be taken for granted. The discourse of national identity, by which modern Chinese fiction is

[1] Ezra Vogel, "The Unlikely Heroes: The Social Role of the May Fourth Writers," in *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era,* ed. Merle Goldman, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press,1977) p. 145

informed and defined, is made up of diverse voices and contesting views. Actually it is the tensions and contentions that invest the primitive characters in modern fiction with potent meaning. More importantly, it is the emotions and feelings (ambiguity toward progress, wounded national pride, perceived racial inferiority, despair, etc.), disturbed but given no outlet in the rational debates among the intellectuals, that charge these characters with psychological energies that even today's reader is still able to experience. More powerful than the logical positions that Chinese intellectuals were able to identify and take within the discourse on national culture are fictional characters (icons) that represent the psychological archetypes responding to a narrow set of rational attitudes and values deemed progressive. In realism, the most popular and dominant literary convention in modern literature, China often appears backward and primitive. But such a representational mode is at the same time most enigmatic as it helps register a wide spectrum of mixed emotions associated with the word "China" or "Chinese," ranging from pride to shame, and everything in between. It is really a registry of psychological energies waiting to be tapped into and explored in order to get rid of the feelings of inferiority, to re-establish ties with the past deemed unworthy of preserving from a rational standpoint, to mobilize people in the struggle against Western powers, to address generally shared feeling of ambiguity and anxiety toward modernization. The various uses of China the primitive, as a literary trope, a figure of speech, will not be clear unless we become familiar with the mixed emotions attached to China's self-definitions as "barbaric," "backward," "primitive," "ignorant," etc.

In my view, the best way to approach the symbolism of this body of fictional texts we generally refer to as "realism" is to identify what I see as a primitivism responsible for the ways in which the negative aspects of Chinese culture under indictment get displayed.

I'll begin with Lu Xun, and with his views of the Chinese as primitive, which in no small measure shaped the way the Chinese display China in modern literature. Lu Xun exemplifies what Leo Ou-fan Lee refers to as "….an unresolved tension between his unequivocal support of all the enlightened modern causes of the May Fourth Movement and the incessant pessimism that haunted his private psyche with regard to the ultimate meaning of life."[2] We need to keep this tension in mind

[2] Leo Ou-fan Lee, "In Search of Modernity: Some Reflections on A New Mode of Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Chinese History and Literature," in *Ideas Across Cultures,* ed. Paul Cohen and Merle Goldman, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990) p. 134

when we deal with the complex and rich contents of modern works. In his *On the Power of Mara Poetry* (1908), Lu Xun says the following:

> Nietzsche was not hostile to primitives; his claim that they embody new forces is irrefutable. A savage wilderness incubates the coming civilization; in primitives' teeming forms the light of day is immanent. Civilization is like the flower, savagery the bud; civilization the fruit, savagery the flower, here lies progress and hope as well. Not so with the ancients of a lapsed culture: the end of civilization brought ruin, compounded by long basking in ancestral glory; they once had dwarfed the lands around them but then became sluggish; unknowing in their dead certainty; stale as the Dead Sea.[3]

This view of China as a "savage wilderness," "a lapsed culture," sluggish and stale, which is certainly influenced by Orientalism in the West[4], engenders and shapes the various uses of the primitive in fictional self-representation during and since the May Fourth era. Between 1918 and 1925, Lu Xun wrote 26 short stories and many short commentaries. The characters in these texts were almost all grotesque, caricatured to represent such shortcomings as intolerance, inertia, hypocrisy, servility toward a superior and arrogance toward a subordinate, opportunism, and hesitation. Characters like *Kong Yiji*, Sister Xianglin in *The New Year's Sacrifice,* and *Ah Q*, help convey a critical view of the Chinese utterly unable to make sense of their past. This bleak prognosis of the Chinese spirit in the modern age reveals the anxiety of all those to whom the notion of progress seemed emotionally maddening. Through the pains and anguish of these mentally disturbed characters, the reader may be emotionally reconnected with his primitive self. These imagined tales, unsettling dreams, and literary fantasies in which the average Chinese person looks deranged or insane show us the dark contents of the Chinese psyche, offsetting the conscious choices of democracy and science. "Every period," says Jung, "has its bias, its particular prejudice and its psychic malaise. An epoch is like

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[3] Kirk Denton. ed. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945*. Stanford UP, 1996. Pp.98

[4] In True Story of Ah Q, for example, the image of the Chinese as seen through the lenses of Western cultural imperialism is faithfully reproduced, one that is evil and ugly. On July 2nd, 1926, long after he had returned to China from Japan, Lu Xun bought a copy of *Chinese Racial Characteristics in the Novel* by a Japanese literary critic named Yasuoka Hideo. Coming home from the bookstore in Dong Dan market in Beijing, Lu Xun wrote in his diary: "Yasuoka seems very polite, saying in his introduction: '. . .it is not the Chinese alone that are like this; there are also Japanese who resembled the Chinese but escaped Smith's scrutiny.' However, he goes on to say, 'Given the level and scope of the study [by A. Smith], there should be no reason for limiting it to the Chinese alone, even if the "national characteristics of the Chinese" were not meant to be derogatory.' Sweat was running down my spine as I read these words, a Chinese myself. He seems to have faith in Smith's *Chinese Characteristics*, from which he often quotes. The book had existed twenty years in a Japanese translation titled *Chinese Characteristics*. But few of us who are Chinese ourselves have paid much attention to it.

an individual; it has its own limitations of conscious outlook, and therefore requires a compensatory adjustment."[5]

Meant to achieve the goals "to create a new national self,"[6] modern Chinese fiction and cinema are also littered with heroes struggling with the sense of meaninglessness that plagues modern culture, proud of its rationality but at the same time a prey to doubts and existential anguish."[7] To Yu Dafu, the primitive is reified in the repressed sexuality of a Chinese youth *Sinking* (1921) in Japan at the weight of the humiliating defeats China had received at the hands of modern nations. To Shen Congwen, the primitive is rural innocence, lingering in the backwaters of *Border Town* (1934) still untouched by urbanization and foreign influences. To Cao Yu, the primitive is revealed through "fate" or "cosmic cruelty" which destroys like *Thunderstorm* (1934) and rejuvenates like *The Wilderness* (1937).[8] For Lao She, the primitive exists in man's inability to rise above his social environments or overcome psychological and economic determinism(s) which render him no different from a *Camel Xiangzi* (1937). Such views of the Chinese as incapable of being "modern" because of their deep rooted cultural values are also reflected in the irreconcilable differences between *Black Li and White Li* (1935). To Ba Jin, the primitive are rooted in *Family* (1931) kinship standing in the way of the individual to freedom. The members of the Gao family beautifully act out the dilemma of the modern man torn between his conscious self-identity as a free moral agent on the one hand and his psychological predisposition as a child in need of love, care, protection, guidance, and initiation. The idea of freedom is met with mixed feelings from family members who would rather die than question the hierarchical relationships that seem to have robbed their happiness. The "modern" idea of individual freedom seemed attractive yet

[5] Carl Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature,* trans, R.F.C. Hull, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) p. 98

[6] Marston Anderson. *Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period*. University of California Press, 1990. p.201. "Realism was adopted in China at a time when the nationa's intellectuals were flirting with Western individualism in an effort to create a new national self."

[7] Steven Walker. *Jung and The Jungians on Myth*. New York: Garland, 1993. p.23.

[8] Joseph Lau. "The Noble Savage as a Rejuvenative Symbol: Primitivism and Expressionism in The Wilderness" in Chong Ji Journal, vol.8 no.2 (1969). In this article, Lau discusses Cao Yu's primitivism in his The Wilderness and Thunderstorm. "It would be over-stating the case if we take Ch'ou Hu to be the embodiment of those Faustian-Promethean energies. Whatever his potential, he is no more a cure for China's emaciated race than is Lawrence's Mellors a hope for revitalizing the sexually frigid Anglo-Saxons. But however naïve he may seem to us on intellectual grounds, it is interesting to note that as a symbol, his health, exuberance and animalistic vitality are in every way antithetical to what are generally considered shameful debilities of old China: sickliness, inertia, and premature decrepitude. While it is difficult to believe that China would be a stronger nation if every Chinese took on whatever quality this Noble Savage represents, it is possible to conclude that Ch'ou Hu, after all, is but a romantic conglomeration of Cao Yu's wishful thinking, invented by a mind long obsessed with the problem of China's rejuvenation."

elusive like *Rainbow* (Mao Dun, 1929). Like history is stories of external events, fiction is stories of the inner struggle of the modern man for whom "the ordered cosmos he believes in by day is meant to protect him from the fear of chaos by night—his enlightenment is born of night-fears."[9].

The use of the primitive is informed by Western social theories as divergent as Darwinism, Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis. The aesthetic principles of realism and naturalism help Chinese writers debunk the Confucianism based on the notion of "ren", an inborn quality which distinguishes man, not only from animals, but also, and even more so, from the barbarian who lacks respect for moral values. The assumptions that man is in full control of his moral integrity[10] and that he is expected and able to rise above his social and economic environment[11] are brought under close scrutiny and interrogated by the realist writers. Heroes as Yong Yiji, Xiangzi, the prostitute in *Crescent Moon* and Lotus in Mao Dun's *Spring Silkworms* and the factory workers in his *Midnight*, challenge the validity of Confucian humanism and Western individualism by revealing how animal-like humans are. They are biologically determined, psychologically predisposed, and economically driven to become a product of his environment. Conditioned by his social and historical circumstances, the failed hero calls into question the efficacy of human endeavors.

In the post-1949 socialist era, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the use of the primitive is key to the literary production of socialism, which is, as Xudong Zhang points out, "a radical form of modernism and a radical formulation of the mainstream Enlightenment idea of modernity."[12] In his *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art* (1942), Mao Zedong rejected the earlier uses of the primitive by saying, "Only counter-revolutionary writers and artists describe the people as 'born fools' and the revolutionary masses as 'tyrannical mobs'." Lao She, along with Ding Ling, Ai Qing and Xiao Jun, had to chastise himself in 1954 for his depiction of the "oppressed masses" in *Camel Xiangzi*.[13] In Mao's "Talks,"

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[9] Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, p. 95

[10] *Confucian Analects,* in Legge 241. "The commander of the forces of a large state may be carried off, but the will of even a common man cannot be taken from him."

[11] *Mencius,* in Legge 651. "To walk in the great path of the world; when he obtains his desire for office, to practice his principles for the good of the people; when that desire is disappointed, to practice them alone; to be above the power of riches and honors to make dissipated, of poverty and mean condition to make swerve from principle, and of power and force to make bend--these characteristics constitute the great man."

[12] Xudong Zhang. "The Power of Rewriting: Postrevolutionary Discourse on Chinese Socialist Realism" in *Socialit Realism without Shores*. ed. Lahusen and Dobrenko. Duke UP, 1997. p.283.

[13] Lao She. Afterword to *Camel Xiangzi*. Beijing Foreign Languages Press, 1981. p.230. "I wrote this story nineteen years ago. In it I expressed my sympathy for the laboring people and my admiration of their sterling qualities, but I gave them no future, no way out. They lived miserably and died wronged. This is because at that time, I could only

we find the reinvented images of the primitive soon to populate the "proletarian literature" of the ensuing decades. Here is the political criterion Mao deemed more important than the artistic independence of the author as he argues the need for literary and art workers to reform their worldviews:

> Here I might mention how my own feelings changed. I began life as a student and used to feel it undignified to do even a little manual labor, such as carrying my own luggage in the presence of my fellow students, who were incapable of carrying anything, either on their shoulders or in their hands. At that time I felt that intellectuals were the only clean people in the world, while in comparison workers and peasants were dirty. I did not mind wearing the clothes of other intellectuals, believing them clean, but I would not put on clothes belonging to a worker or peasant, believing them dirty. . . . I came to feel that compared with the workers and peasants the un-remolded intellectuals were not clean and that, in the last analysis, the workers and peasants were the cleanest people, and, even though their hands were soiled and their feet smeared with cow dung, they were really cleaner than the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois intellectuals.[14]

Mao's romantic ideal of "the people" as culturally backward and primitive but spiritually pure and noble culminates in the slogan "Literature should be the combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism." Being financially poor, economically backward, and intellectually simplistic, is no longer a sign of doom as it is construed in the discourse of anti-traditionalism but one of the criteria and desired conditions for modernity. "A blank piece of paper," as Mao says with a sense of complacence, "is best suited for painting the newest and the most beautiful picture." Such films as *The Red Women's Brigade* ("Hongse niangzijun", 1961), *Li Shuangshuang* (1962), *Little Soldier Zhang Ga* ("Xiaobing Zhangga", 1963), *The Slave* ("Nong Nu", 1963), and *The Sentry under the Neon Lights* ("Nihongdeng xie de shaobing", 1964) successfully established the iconography of the "laboring people" (lao dong ren min). In these works of revolutionary romanticism, "da lao cu" (the uncouth and uneducated) appear dignified and honorable, as masters of a "new China." The heroes and heroines are no longer the same "primitives" that we find in nativist realism (xiangtu wenxue0 and critical realism (xianshi zhuyi xenxue) who are hopelessly backward and

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see the misery of society and not the hope of revolution, I did not know any revolutionary truths. The strict censorship of the period also made me careful not to say the poor should revolt. Shortly after the book came out I heard some working people comment, 'Judging by this book we are really too wretched and hopeless!' I feel deeply ashamed about this."

[14] Mao Zedong. *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art.* translated in *Modern Chinese Literary Thought*. ed. Kirk Denton. Stanford UP, 1996. p.462.

ignorant. Peasant girl Xi'er in the film *The White Haired Girl* (bai mao nu, 1950), which later became a ballet during the Cultural Revolution, is angelic before she is raped by her wicked master Huang Shi-ren, the landlord. She runs away and hides herself in the mountain until her hair turns white due to lack of salt in her primitive existence in the wild. Her story shows that "the old society turns humans into ghosts; and the new society transforms ghosts into humans." The wretched existence of the "peasants, workers and soldiers" seem to imbue the primitive with a sense of justice that allows them to hate and love in most authentic ways and totally redeems their violent actions. In the film *The Red Women's Brigade*, Wu Qiong Hua was another poor young peasant girl whose primitive emotions of hatred turns her into a valiant revolutionary soldier in the struggle against Nan Ba-tian and other "counter-revolutionaries." In *The Sentry under the Neon Lights*, the uneducated peasant soldiers like Zhao Dada successfully hunted down the remnants of "reactionaries" living in Shanghai. In the film *Breaking with Old Ideas* ("Jue Lie", 1976), Jiang Da-nian, an orphan and illiterate apprentice in the village blacksmith, is admitted to a university by virtue of the callous in his hands. Along with his fellow students and illiterate peasants, he is able to reform and improve the curriculum at his university. These experiments of Maoist genre (Mao wen2ti3) as a political mode of writing certainly constitute a change in the way Chinese represent themselves in relation to the project of modernity. The question of "bad national characters," deemed to be the cause of China's stagnation and social ills by the May Fourth intellectuals, rests at the foot of the elite and the educated bourgeoisie who are vilified and stereotypically portrayed as wearing glasses, holding books, dressed in elegance, talking with eloquence. Such a change in Chinese self-representation, if I could quote Carl Jung, ". . . is effected by the collective unconscious when a poet or seer lends expression to the unspoken desire of his times and shows the way, by word or deed, to its fulfillment—regardless whether this blind collective need results in good or evil, in the salvation of an epoch or its destruction."[15]

The uses of the primitive in the fiction and cinema of the mid-1980s and 1990s need to be studied and understood against the backdrop of modernism. In his *A Preliminary Discussion of Contemporary Narrative Techniques* (1981), Gao Xingjian devoted a chapter on "Contemporary Techniques and National Character in Fiction," in which he says,

> A writer creates through language; the national character of his work derives first and foremost from his ability to exploit the artistic potential of that

[15] Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature,* trans, R.F.C. Hull, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) p. 98.

> language. ….The more he grasps the essence of his national culture, the more distinctive will be the national character of his work. ….The appeal of a national literature lies in its ability to depict the life of the people as it truly is. Let's hope that the quest for a national form will not supplant this quest for truth.[16]

In 20/20 hindsight, we know Gao was not advocating new realism but, on the contrary, calling for subverting or even doing away with the stale language of socialist realism as a literary convention. Han Shaogong's article entitled "The Roots of Literature" (Wenxue de gen) soon appeared, in which Han used the term "xungen" ("seeking for roots", 1984) and defined it as the need of seeking oneself in the deep spirit of one's people and cultural essence. The openness in the post-Mao era of reform allows people to search for the spirit of Chinese culture, to reflect upon or even resist the project of modernity.

In her discussion of Orientals' Orientalism, Rey Chow analyzes well the tension and dynamic in many literary and visual works of the 80s and 90s when she says,

> The two sides of primitivism go hand in hand, the aestheticizing of old China as 'ancient' and 'backward' cannot be understood without the images of modern self-strengthening and community building that continue to pervade nationalistic cultural productions with the insistence on the first-ness and uniqueness of what is Chinese."[17]

Important in this analysis is the emotional identification on the part of cultural workers like Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Han Shaogong, with the very tradition they present as "primitive," "backward," and "barbaric." This analysis gives a much fuller view of what went on between May Fourth 1919 and June Fourth 1989, than the radical view many have used to define the modern, which says, "… since China's backwardness had deep roots in Chinese polity, society, and culture, the total transformation of Chinese-ness is a precondition for China's modernization."[18] This conscious attitude is brought into a greater harmony and balanced through images and symbols of the collective psyche, through artistic works in which ". . . the artist seizes on this image of the repressed primitive self and raises it from the deepest unconsciousness into relation with conscious

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[16] Gao Xingjian. "Contemporary Technique and National Character in Fiction" in Trees on the Mountain: An Anthology of New Chinese Writing. ed. By Soong and Minford. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1984. Pp.56-7.
[17] Rey Chow. *Primitive Passions*. Columbia UP. 1994. p.37.
[18] Tu Weiming, ed. *The Living Tree, the Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today,* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994) p. 5

values."[19] It is true that, to some extent, such films as *Yellow Earth* (Chen Kaige, 84),*Old Well* (Wu Tianming, 87), *Red Sorghum* (Zhang Yimou, 87)*, Ju Dou* (ZY, 89) *Raise The Red Lantern* (ZY, 91) *Farewell My Concubine* (Chen Kaige, 93), *Story of Qiu Ju* (ZY, 93), *To Live* (ZY, 94), *Ermo* (Zhou Xiaowen, 95), *Not One Less* (ZY, 99), continue to display the Chinese as a species of barbarism that need to be raised to a "higher" plane. But as emotional events, the significance of these visual works is far from being clear. They stand collectively as China's needs for psychological readjustment; the individual failures we find in these cinematic productions help express those "psychic elements that could play their part in life but are denied the right to exist because they are incompatible with the general attitude."[20]

The uses of the primitive that we discern in many literary and visual works of art are not just ways of developing the discourse of modernity but also a means of organizing the emotional life flowing out of China's experience of modernization. "The modern primitivist fantasy of identification with the primitive runs deep in the modern psyche, where it plays a compensatory role of major proportions. It compensates for the stresses of the industrial and corporate workplace, for the destruction of the natural world, for the loss of small-scale community life, and for the loss of leisure and the spirit of playfulness."[21] The recurring theme that has preoccupied and resonated with the modern Chinese seems to be a "return to origins" or "search for roots" found in such works as *Border Town* by Shen Congwen (34), *The Story of Oldman Xing and His Dog* by Zhang Xianliang (79), *To Live* by Yu Hua (85), *Bababa* by Han Shaogong (85), and *Soul Mountain* by Gao Xingjian (97). *Soul Mountain* represents an inward journey to the primitive psyche that the modern man must undertake to be a full human being. Plagued by the absurdity of the modern life and haunted by the memory of social revolutions, the hero goes to the backwaters of China to collect ancient myths, legends, songs, and superstitious rituals that, though primitive, have far more life in them than the outworn political phrases of authorities. His contacts with Buddhist monks, Daoist priests, and uneducated peasants, enable him to see his spiritual poverty in a country committed to the ideology of progress and historical materialism. Modern China seems to be wearing the carved wooden mask the narrator accidentally finds, a mask of an animal head with a human face, which "accurately expresses the animal nature in human beings and the fear of this animal nature within themselves. . .Man cannot cast off this mask, it is a project of his own flesh and spirit. He can no longer remove from his own face this mask which has already

[19] Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature,* trans, R.F.C. Hull, (Princeton University Press, 1966) p. 83
[20] Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature,* trans, R.F.C. Hull, (Princeton University Press, 1966) p. 83
[21] Steven Walker. Jung and the Jungians on Myth. p.136.

grown like skin and flesh so he is always startled as if disbelieving himself, but this is in fact himself."[22] In the eyes of Gao Xingjian, human endeavors to conquer and control the world have resulted in the creation of a society incomprehensible to humans. "I'm not a wolf but would like to be a wolf, to return to nature, to go on the prowl. However, I can't rid myself of this human mind. I am a monster with a human mind and can find no refuge." Such identification with the primitive is key to the modern man's deepest sense of identity.

The wholeness of the primitive is to be found in between heaven and earth, a position humans were to occupy as decreed by the trigrams of the I-Ching, "A source of inner harmony and of communion with those great forces, whose interplay creates all visible and invisible worlds."[23] In this holistic cosmology, man does not choose but is the product of chance; his life is inextinguishable in the continuity of all life. This ancient Taoist myth, which shapes the style(s) of pre-modern fictional and historic narratives, gives the Chinese "an essentially affirmative view of the universe of experience."[24] Let me close with the story of Jung's encountering Ochwiay Biano, the Pueblo Indian chief who protested to him America's hostility to his traditional religion. He believed that living "on the roof of the world as the children of Father Sun," the Pueblo Indians helped the sun across the sky every day and were therefore of benefit to all human beings. "I then realized," wrote Jung, "on what the dignity, the tranquil composure of the individual Indian was founded: it springs from his being a son of the sun; his life is cosmologically meaningful, for he helps the father and preserver of all life in his daily rise and descent. If we set against this our own self-justifications, the meaning of our own lives as it is formulated by our reason, we cannot help but see

[22] Gao Xingjin. Soul Mountain.
[23] John Blofeld. *The Book of Change*. p.24
[24] Andrew Plaks. *Chinese Narrative, Critical and Theoretical Essays*. p.279. "The Chinese [narrative] tradition has tended to place nearly equal emphasis on the overlapping of events, the interstitial spaces between events, in effect on non-events alongside of events in conceiving of human experience in time. In fact, the reader of the major Chinese narrative works soon becomes conscious of the fact that those clearly defined events which do stand out in the texts are nearly always set into a thick matrix of non-events: static description, set speeches, discursive digressions, and a host of other non-narrative elements. . . . . The ubiquitous potential presence of a balanced, totalized, dimension of meaning may partially explain why a fully realized sense of the tragic does not materialize in Chinese narrative. Such characters as Prince Shen-sheng, Hsiang Yu, Yueh Fei, and even Chia Pao-yu clearly possess the qualities of the tragic figure to one extent or another. But in each case the implicit understanding of the logical interrelation between their particular situation and the overall structure of existential intelligibility serves to blunt the pity and fear the reader experiences as he witnesses their individual destinies. In other words, Chinese narrative is replete with individuals in tragic situations, but the secure inviolability of the underlying affirmation of existence in its totality precludes the possibility of the individual's tragic fate taking on the proportions of a cosmic tragedy. Instead, the bitterness of the particular case of mortality ultimately settles back into the ceaseless alternation of patterns of joy and sorrow, exhilaration and despair that go to make up an essentially affirmative view of the universe of experience."

our poverty. . . Knowledge does not enrich us; it removes us more and more from the mythic world in which we were once at home by right of birth."[25] This view of our primitive self is key to understanding many heroes in modern Chinese fiction and cinema who represent for us "the journey through the psychic history of mankind [which] has as its object the restoration of the whole man."

[25] Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* ed. Aniela Jaffe, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1963) p. 247