Anti-utopian Novels in Contemporary Chinese Literature: *The Utopian Dream and There Was a Country of Women Far Away*

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Eutopian literature in China seems to have stopped growing in the People's Republic of China (PRC) since 1949. Except those revolutionary romantic works which contain some idealized communist heroic stereotypes such as factory workers and soldiers can vaguely be said to be reflecting a sort of eutopian heroism, we cannot as a matter of fact identify any substantial work that can readily be classified as eutopian as the word is used in utopian studies. This phenomenon is not difficult to explain. If a utopia actually represents its author's iconoclastic criticism of reality, it is quite unlikely that such criticism would be tolerated by a rather totalitarian government which constantly keeps a jealous eye on the literary scene.

On the other hand, the founder of the PRC, Mao Zedong (1893–1976), described that the communist society promised by the Chinese Communist Party is an incarnation of the Chinese (Confucian) eutopian prototype, the World of Grand Union. It is, therefore, not very surprising that an anti-utopian tradition would have come on the literary scene when for the first time in 1978 Deng Xiaoping advocated and implemented an open door policy which simultaneously provided the Chinese writers with greater freedom to express their views in literature. Out of this new literary era since 1978 appear two prominent anti-utopian novels, *The Utopian Dream* (*Taoyuan meng*, literally *The Dream of Peach Blossom Spring*, 1987) by Mo Yingfeng and *There Was A Country of Women Far Away* (*Yuanfang you ge nüerguo*, 1989, hereafter *Country of Women*) by Bai Hua.

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It is perhaps well known that the traditional Chinese literary utopia is a rather restrictive genre as compared with the Western utopia.\textsuperscript{4} Whereas there are so many different variations of eutopias in the West which makes it difficult to come up with a comprehensive definition of utopia, the only real utopian tradition in Chinese literature centers on the theme of Peach Blossom Spring. Moreover, there are rarely any anti-utopian works in Chinese. While Aristophanes started the tradition of utopian criticism in \textit{The Ecclesiastae}, the first full-fledged Chinese anti-utopian novel came as late as 1933 when Lao She (1899–1966) published his \textit{Cat Country}.

In \textit{Cat Country}, Lao She aims to expose the dark side of the Chinese society in the 1930s. He ascribes all the socio-political problems then threatening the existence of China to the corruption of human nature. If there is no possibility to improve human nature, any revolution or utopian plan will turn out to be futile. In the novel, Cat Country has undergone several revolutions, some of them are of utopian nature, but at the end the entire population is eradicated in a foreign military invasion. All utopian endeavors have ironically served only to hasten the total dissolution of Cat Country.\textsuperscript{5}

\textit{Country of Women} by Bai Hua has inherited the anti-utopian spirit of Lao She's \textit{Cat Country}. In his novel, Bai Hua puts eutopia in its binary opposite manifestations of the primitive and civilized. The Mosuo society (i.e. the Country of Woman) represents a primitive or uncivilized eutopia. On the other polar lies the Chinese society at large during the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese society concerned, however, is not a \textit{bona fide} eutopia but represents only the transition from the mundane to the utopian stage during which the Chinese leaders were trying to realize the Communist end-state by the movement of the Cultural Revolution.

The hero of the story, Liang Rui, finds himself facing an irreconcilable dilemma. On the one hand, he witnesses a variety of absurd effects of the Cultural Revolution taking place in his society. On the other hand, he finds it impossible to completely integrate himself into the "noble savage" world as exemplified by the Country of Women. The conflict that Liang experiences symbolizes that the attempt to build a eutopia after either the civilized or uncivilized model is doomed to fail.

Lao She in \textit{Cat Country} has omitted the sacred prototype of the Chinese (Taoist) eutopia: Peach Blossom Spring. The first Chinese Aristophanes to raise a substantial criticism of this Chinese eutopian prototype, albeit a rather light-hearted one, is a proliferate but minor modern author, Zhang Henshui


\textsuperscript{5} For a discussion of \textit{Cat Country} as dystopia, see my "\textit{Cat Country}: A Dystopian Satire," \textit{Modern Chinese Literature}, vol.3, nos 1 & 2 (Spring/Fall 1987), 71–90.
(1895–1967), who recaptures the essence of Peach Blossom Spring in his Secret Valley (Mimi gu) published in 1941. Just as his Greek predecessor, Zhang presents an inventory of the realistic problems in running a eutopian community modeled after the prototype of Peach Blossom Spring so as to question its desirability and feasibility.

In Secret Valley, there is first the need for decision-making which has led to the establishment of a kind of government formed by the nine most senior inhabitants of the community. Under this so called Nine-Senior Assembly (Jiu liao hui) are chiefs of individual villages who function as police and report to the Assembly. Thus, a primitive social hierarchy of some kind is naturally and inevitably evolved from the originally classless community. Any artificial institution is, however, unacceptable to the Taoist eutopian ideals and is totally absent in Peach Blossom Spring.

Secondly, the utopians in Secret Valley are subject to the limitations posed by the physical environment of the valley. The climate, soil and agrarian land available set a limit to the choice of crops and their yield, while the community is constantly afflicted by natural disasters. The Taoist anti-civilization utopian spirit prevents the community from attempting any improvement in productivity and, of course, family planning is never thought of. As a result, the utopian community is under a crisis of population explosion after some four hundred years of existence. Shortage of food forces the Nine-Senior-Assembly to centralize the food supply for equal distribution. Although this policy is well in line with the utopian ideal of equal treatment among the utopians, it leads to social upheavals. A group of the utopians refuse to give up their own storage of food and rebel. They declare independence from the jurisdiction of the Nine-Senior-Assembly.

Although the rebellion in Secret Valley is finally subdued with the help of the modern weapons of the explorers who discover the community, it does not mean that the eutopia will be saved. First, once being discovered, it is no longer isolated and is therefore in a danger of being contaminated by the civilization outside. Secondly, the problems of population growth and inadequate supply of food and agrarian land are not solved by the subduing of the rebellion. What would be the future of the community in Secret Valley? It is unfortunate that the author is after all not a serious anti-utopian critic. The anti-utopian theme only forms a background for his dominant love story. It is submitted that this attitude of Zhang helps to explain that Secret Valley was not often recognized as a major work of the author, while it actually could be seen as a milestone in the history of anti-utopian literature.6

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6 For a brief discussion of Secret Valley as dystopia, see my "Spatial and Temporal Ramifications in Modern Chinese and English Dystopias," Proceedings of the XIIth Congress of the
Zhang's anti-utopian spirit is finally picked up by Mo Yingfeng about 40 years later in his *The Utopian Dream*. As a great contrast to his predecessor, Mo seriously criticizes the desirability and feasibility of the Peach Blossom Spring kind of eutopias. Realistically, the Peach Blossom Spring kind of eutopias could not be a stable society. In its prototype, ruling and management of society are not mentioned. As such, it is difficult for the social order to be maintained. Without the help of a social institution of some kind, it seems that stability can be achieved only if its members can constantly exercise their self-discipline.

In *The Utopian Dream*, Mo highlights not only the limitations posed by the physical environment of the Peach Blossom Spring kind of eutopias, but also the danger of putting too much reliance on self-discipline as an effective means to safeguard the social order. In Mo's dramatization, the most formidable enemy of these eutopias nevertheless roots in human nature itself, especially selfishness, jealousy, ambition, desires, etc. The fact that the Peach Blossom Spring kind of societies are usually not subject to the rule of law makes the situation even worse. The dark side of human nature finds it easier to defeat self-discipline when punishment is absent.

The constraints of the physical environment and the depraved human nature are two important elements that the author of Peach Blossom Spring or his followers have never taken seriously or ignored deliberately. They, however, represent some insurmountable obstacles for any such eutopian societies. If these obstacles are not fully overcome, happiness and stability could only be transient and illusionary. Zhang in *Secret Valley* has already put some of these issues on the stage. Mo only brings a more far reaching picture by sketching also the final dissolution of the eutopia in his novel.

To the extent that a eutopia can be seen as its author's vision of how history should have worked out under a specific eutopian blueprint, an anti-utopia can be taken as what its author sees as how history would have worked out under an eutopian plan. If this analysis is correct, it follows that if the story of Peach Blossom Spring consists of an account of what its author Tao Yuanming (365 or 372 or 376–427) believes as to how his version of eutopia should have worked out, *The Utopian Dream* is an account of what Mo from his critical standpoint predicts how a Peach Blossom Spring like society would actually have worked out. Similarly, if those Chinese leaders who initiated the Cultural Revolution had in mind how this eutopian revolution should work out, *Country of Women* represents Bai Hua's fictional record of how the Cultural Revolution actually worked out. Both novels share the common belief that eutopia is not consistent with human nature.

If utopian literature really has something to do with history, *The Utopian Dream* certainly contains more historical elements than similar utopian literature. The narrator of the story claims in the Introduction to the novel that the novel is a true story of the rise and fall of an eutopian community once resided in a mysterious mountain area called "Heaven beyond Heaven" in China. The record is derived from an oral report by an insane who is supposed to be the only survivor of the community.

As if he wants to reinforce the non-fictional aspects of the story, the narrator deliberately adopts or imitates the generic style and structure of official Chinese history with a view to inviting the readers to treat the novel either as a record of real facts or as a historical allegory. For this purpose, the narrator divides the novel into three parts: (1) The beginning of the century (*Shiji zhi chu*), (2) The biographies of the extraordinary persons (*Qiren liezhuan*), and (3) The requiem for the isolated land (*Jueyu beige*).

It is impossible to go into a detailed account of Chinese historiography here. But without some reference to Chinese historiography a reader unfamiliar with this subject will miss the point of the narrative design of *The Utopian Dream*. It is agreed that it is *Shiji* or *Records of the Grand Historian* by Sima Qian (145 B.C. – c. 90 B.C.) which laid down the generic paradigm of Chinese history writing. The generic form is known as *jizhuan ti* or the Form of (Imperial) Records and Biographies. One seminal characteristic of this form is that the actual sequence of historical time is not the most important factor in history recording. Instead, history is unfolded through different biographies of important figures ranging from the members of the imperial family to selected prominent figures in society. Readers only get an entire picture of the history of a particular time span by integrating the different biographies together. *Ji* refers to *benji* meaning the emperors' own biographies, whereas *zhuan* refers to *liezhuan* meaning biographies of the prominent figures.

The original Chinese titles of the first two parts of the novel contain both the words *ji* (*shiji zhi chu*) and (*lie*)zhuan (*qiren liezhuan*). The correspondence between the novel and official Chinese history is further enhanced by the fact that the first part of the novel is actually an account of the formation of the eutopian community as reflected in the founder's biography. As such this part resembles a typical *benji*. The second part, as the title suggests, contains only the biographies (*liezhuan*) of seven extraordinary members of the community, which is exactly the format of *liezhuan*.

One special feature characterizing Chinese historical writings is their mythological elements. Although history by definition means a record of real happenings, in the imperial records, especially the biographies of the founders of a dynasty, it is not unusual to find some kind of mythological and supernatural stories. The seemingly inconsistency is a result of the traditional Chinese belief that emperors were Sons of Heaven. They were given the mandate of Heaven to
rule the human world. In order to justify overthrowing a former dynasty the founder of the new dynasty had to convince his people that the last emperor was corrupted and therefore having Heaven's mandate being taken away while he himself was chosen to receive the mandate. Above all, it is all pre-determined. The founder was determined to be a future emperor early before he was born.

In order to comply with this "mandate theory", historians sometimes drew a picture of the birth of such dynasty founders with strong mythological colors. In Shiji the birth of the founder, Gaozu, of Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220) is described as follows:

[Gaozu's] father was known as the "Venerable Sire" and his mother as "Dame Liu." [Before he was born], Dame Liu was one day resting on the bank of a large pond when she dreamed that she encountered a god. At this time, the sky grew dark and was filled with thunder and lightning. When [the Venerable Sire] went to look for her, he saw a scaly dragon over the place where she was lying. After this she became pregnant and gave birth to [Gaozu]. [Gaozu] had a prominent nose and a dragon like face, with beautiful whiskers on his chin and cheeks; on the left thigh he had seventy-two black moles. He was kind and affectionate with others, liked to help people, and was very understanding.\(^7\)

This Chinese version of "Leda and Swan" suggested that Gaozu was not an ordinary person but of supernatural descent. The fact that he was the son of a dragon is full of significant symbolic overtones, because the Chinese emperor is supposed to be an incarnation of a dragon in human form.

Compare this "historical record" in Shiji with the birth scene of the founder, Lung Juzheng, of the utopian community at Heaven beyond Heaven. It is first of all worth pointing out that his family name "Lung" literally means "dragon" and his first name literally means "living in the center". In traditional Chinese cosmology, there are altogether five directions: East, West, South, North and Center. The Center is the direction belonging to the emperor. The name Lung Juzheng therefore symbolizes that the person bearing such name possesses some seminal attributes of an emperor.

Lung (hereafter referred to as Dragon)\(^8\) is born in this way:

In early 1860s, Mr and Mrs Lung gave birth to a baby at their old age. The mother of the baby claimed that she made a dream before giving birth to the baby. She dreamed of a great snake with a cock's comb on its head coiling on the steps leading to their door, crying like a hen. The old people in the community said that the child that was born after the dream would

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8 Since most of the names of the characters in the novel have certain meanings, I prefer to translate these names according to their meanings instead of simply romanizing them. Thus, in this case, Lung is translated as Dragon.
become a leader. Either he would become a founding emperor of a new
dynasty or a king ruling a certain area of land.\textsuperscript{9}

Dragon and Gaozu share further similarities. Whereas Gaozu had some special
physical features and was kind and affectionate, Dragon will faint whenever he
sees blood. All these features are interpreted as characteristics of an emperor.

Summing up, it is highly arguable that the narrator of \textit{The Utopian Dream}
intends to imitate the generic style of official Chinese history in his narration of
the story. The significance of writing the novel as history is that the narrator
perhaps wants readers to compare the story with the history of the PRC (I shall
come back to this point later).

As it is common in the East and the West, the wish to reorganize society for
a eutopian end often arises out of utter dissatisfaction with reality. Dragon and
his people are compelled to abandon their homes to escape from a gang of
bandits who constantly persecute them. The escape is not planned but is a rather
spontaneous action. Thus, the eutopian experiment at Heaven beyond Heaven
actually sprang from impulse rather than ideological formulation.

To say that the community at Heaven beyond Heaven is a totally spontane-
ous product is somewhat misleading, for Dragon does all along have a eutopian
plan in mind, however primitive it is. After they have settled at Heaven beyond
Heaven, Dragon actually intends to make use of the opportunity to put his
eutopian plan into practice.

Dragon's eutopian ideas come from a primer entitled \textit{Trimmetrical Classic}
\textit{(Sanzijing)} formerly the first textbook given to students in traditional Chinese
primary education. The first two lines of this classic read like this: "In the be-
ginning of human history, man was born with a benevolent nature." Dragon's
eutopian theory is entirely based on this particular idea that "man was born with
a benevolent nature". When he was eighteen years old, he "made a prophecy
that the principle of benevolence would one day prevail in the world. Then,
society would return to the beginning of human history when all men were of
benevolent nature."\textsuperscript{10} In his prediction, when the time comes, everyone will
value the virtues of righteousness and despise monetary wealth, uphold virtuous
life and get rid of evil thoughts, and suppress the strong and uplift the weak. It is
a time when men and women are in harmony with each other, and there will be
enough food and clothing for everyone. Dragon's prophecy sums up the euto-
piam ideals of the World of Grand Union that China had been dreaming of for
thousands of years. In this way, the eutopian community at Heaven beyond
Heaven comprises both the characteristics of the Confucian and Taoist proto-
types of the Chinese eutopias. The novel in effect provides a critical review of
both prototypes in one shot.

\textsuperscript{9} Mo Yingfeng, \textit{Taoyuan meng} (The Utopian Dream) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1987), p.3.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Taoyuan meng}, p.4.
No matter if it is the description of the World of the Grand Union or the story about the eutopian community at Peach Blossom Spring, the authors only present us with a bird eye's glimpse of some selected eutopian features, omitting the processes of formation of these eutopias. It seems that they treat the transition from the non-eutopian to the eutopian stage as if it is a natural and inevitable growth or evolution. Even the Chinese Aristophanes, Zhang Henshui, has ignored this transition in his Secret Valley. Mo, however, closely examines the transition, and develops from it a strong anti-eutopian statement.

As mentioned, the utopians retreat to Heaven beyond Heaven in order to escape from the constant harassment of a gang of bandits. As a result, the transition to the eutopian society is not smooth or peaceful. First of all, the utopians have to stop the bandits' invasion by throwing stones to kill some of them. In other words, in order that they will live in peace and harmony, they have to cause others to shed blood in the very first place.

When the safety of the community is secured, the utopians fight among themselves in order to get the best and most valuable land available to build their homes. The fight ends only after Dragon sacrifices his arm in trying to stop a member attacking others by an axe. If the killing of the bandits has a grand purpose for preserving the community as a whole, the fighting among themselves is clearly carried out with the sole motive of self interest. Given that selfishness is perhaps part of human nature, the implication seems to be that benevolence is also only part of human nature but not its entirety. It is therefore unrealistic for Dragon to rely solely on this particular part of human nature to regulate the social order. Unfortunately, the premise that human being is born with a benevolent nature is actually one of the fundamental assumptions of most traditional Chinese eutopian thoughts. The transition from non-eutopian to the eutopian stage of the community at Heaven beyond Heaven spells out that such an assumption is invalid.

In The Utopian Dream, an eutopian society of some kind is finally established. This is the Community of Benevolence (Shanhua zhi bang), in which benevolence is upheld as the first and foremost social and moral principle. Derived from this ultimate principle are some secondary guiding principles such as self-denial and self-sacrifice for the sake of collective purposes. Under this grand principle of benevolence, everyone is equal, everyone loves each other, everyone receives the same fair treatment as everyone else, etc. They even extend the principle of benevolence towards animals. For that purpose, they abstain from killing any life and all become vegetarians.

But what ends the transition is not the utopians' willful submission to Dragon's eutopian theory but rather to a superstitious cult of the Boy of Great Benevolence (Dashan tongzi). The Boy of Great Benevolence is actually a child of one of the utopian families who is held hostage by the bandits. In order to defend their lives, the utopians throw stones at the bandits regardless of the fact...
that the child is among the attackers. This boy is killed by the stones as a result. The death of the child has for once created a tremendous sense of guilt among the utopians. Dragon, however, explains that in a dream visited by the spirit of the child, he is told that the child is actually a messenger sent by Heaven with a mission to shed blood for the salvation of the utopian community. The Boy of Great Benevolence is made a model of self-sacrifice for the sake of collective goals. In such a way, Dragon successfully uses the myth to purify the guilty feeling of the utopians and further uphold the principle of benevolence as the highest ideal of the utopian community.

While the principle of benevolence and the cult of the Boy of Great Benevolence help Dragon to establish a society similar to the utopia he envisaged, they are found inadequate as the means to maintain the social order as time passes and the population grows. In the second part of the novel, "The biographies of the extraordinary persons", the narrator discloses the problems arising in the community, of which the solutions lie beyond the principle of benevolence and the cult of the Boy of Great Benevolence. From that perspective, the biographies actually contain the anti-utopian essence of the novel.

In the biographies, human nature is dramatized as a complicated mixture of a variety of elements. Apart from the positive parts such as benevolence, there exist also the elements of ambition, selfishness, self-indulgence, defiance, sexual desire, etc. In short, it is simply an oversimplification to say that human nature is benevolent. Furthermore, in the author's dramatization, if the principle of benevolence is applied indiscriminately, undesirable and even absurd results may follow. It is therefore not appropriate to rely on the principle of benevolence as an elixir for all social problems.

The biography of Gardenia (Zhimei), the "Benevolent Woman", explains the possible abhorrent results of indiscriminate benevolent actions. Gardenia is a living symbol of self-denial and self-sacrifice for collective purposes after the Boy of Great Benevolence. Her benevolent actions, which are absurd when judged objectively, win her the honorary title of "Benevolent Woman" (sharen). Among Gardenia's benevolent actions is a futile attempt to retrieve a bag of salt dissolved in a lake at Heaven beyond Heaven. The bag of salt falls into the lake while the utopians fight among themselves for land. The most dramatic benevolent action of Gardenia, also the main reason for her canonization as "Benevolent Woman", is to give her breasts to milk a baby cow which survives her parents. In so doing, she sacrifices her own eight month old baby who starves to death because the baby cow takes all milk from Gardenia. In addition, this particular benevolent action leads to another more absurd "benevolent action" – human-cow intercourse – later in the story.

Another example of benevolent actions that gives rise to undesirable results is the rite of "feet warming" (nuanjiaoli). Since the utopia was built in a place high in the mountains, the weather is rather cold all the year round. From the
concepts of self-denial and self-sacrifice develops a strange custom that whenever some guests are staying overnight, the wife of the host family has to sleep on the other end of the same bed with the guests to symbolically warm their feet with her body as a benevolent gesture to the guests. The practice of this custom, however, has underestimated the power of sexual desire in human nature. In the “Combined biographies of one man and two women”, one of the female protagonists, Cockcrow (Zaoti), commits infidelity after she has performed the custom of “feet warming”. Since punishment is inconsistent with the principle of benevolence, Cockcrow is not punished at all. The absence of sanction encourages her to continue her affair half overtly, which in turn sets an example for other women. As a result, adultery becomes common in the community.

There is no question that Cockcrow has committed adultery, but she herself is also a victim of the principle of benevolence. Young and beautiful though she is, Cockcrow is made the wife of a handicapped dwarf called Underdog (Goujian). Underdog is a symbol of selfishness and self-indulgence. Since he is born handicapped, the benevolent utopians crown him “everybody’s son” (gongzi). They do not require him to work and try to satisfy all his needs as a compensation for his innate deformity. Underdog, however, takes advantage of the kindness of his fellow utopians for his own selfish end. Although he is born sexually impotent, he demands to have the beautiful Cockcrow to be his wife. After marriage, he frequently sexually arouses her notwithstanding his own impotence, leaving Cockcrow each time being tortured by her own aroused sexual desire.

The “feet warming” custom which may not have been so dangerous to other women with healthy sex life proves to be an irresistible temptation for Cockcrow. Cockcrow’s choice of infidelity underscores the fact that no matter if it is for the purpose of equality or benevolence, love and sex in human nature can never be molded at will.

There is a biography of another handicap, Hempstalk (Magan), the “Oxman” (niuren) in the “The biographies of the extraordinary persons”. Hempstalk is a dwarf with great ambition. In contrast to his friend Underdog who takes advantage of his own misfortune to enjoy life, he treats Gardenia as his model for emulation with a view to achieving the title of “Benevolent Man” by practicing self-denial and self-sacrifice. For this end, he works to the minute details all the benevolent rules laid down by Dragon.

The ambition to emulate Gardenia, however, leads Hempstalk astray. Inspired by Gardenia’s benevolent action of giving her breasts to the baby cow, Hempstalk commits sexual intercourse with the cow when she grows up and the mating season comes. He boasts of this “benevolent action” and demands some kind of reward from Dragon. Indeed, under the great principle of benevolence, if Gardenia is rewarded after she stands in loco parentis to the cow by giving it her breasts, it is inconsistent of Dragon if he does not also give some kind of recognition to Hempstalk. The problem here is that it is simply against human
instinct to reward such an unnatural human-animal relationship. Finally, Dragon bestows upon Hempstalk a label of "Ox-man" which officially recognizes this absurd relation of man and cow, and at the same time, further reduces this poor dwarf to the level of animal.

The fact that in a community of a small population there exist two deformed characters who bring great challenge to the principle of benevolence deserves our special attention. David Wang observes that deformed characters are one of the most notable features in the characterization of contemporary Chinese fiction. He argues that in the history of modern Chinese literature one cannot find as many ugly and deformed characters who are also so rich of symbolic overtones as in contemporary Chinese fiction since 1978. These deformed characters actually constitute a critical reaction to the "eutopian" idealization of certain communist stereotypes such as workers, farmers and soldiers as is common in the revolutionary romantic literature in the PRC since 1949. If the deformed characters in contemporary Chinese fiction have some kind of anti-utopian overtones, it is not surprising to find them in an anti-utopian novel as the present one.

Another important figure in "The biographies of the extraordinary persons" is Cucumber (Guoqing), the prodigal (langzi). Cucumber represents a direct challenge to the very fundamental theory of Dragon that "man was born with a benevolent nature". Born with a rebellious and defiant nature, he does not believe in the myth of the Boy of Great Benevolence, nor has he ever taken seriously the principle of benevolence.

If we judge Cucumber by our usual standards, however, he is not a bad person at all. His problems are simply that he likes to eat meat, does not like to work and does not readily obey orders. The difficulty is that the Community of Benevolence is not a normal society which can tolerate the existence of differences and varieties. That is why Cucumber would have become a serious problem to Dragon as the leader of the community.

Hempstalk and Cucumber expose the inadequacy of the principle of benevolence as an effective means to regulate the order in society. Reforms must be introduced before such problems could be coped with. First-born (Tousheng), the "Benevolent Man" in "The biographies of the extraordinary persons", is the one who initiates reforms in the community. Bestowing the label of "Ox-man" to Hempstalk is the idea of First-born. Unlike the real honorary title of "benevolent man", "Ox-man" is a label which does not serve the function of a reward. The merits of conferring this label on Hempstalk consist in that Dragon would be seen consistent in his treatments of Gardenia and Hempstalk without really rewarding the absurd interpretation of the principle of benevolence by Hempstalk.

11 Same as note 1.
First-born has also designed an ingenious scheme, "benevolent rite" (quan-shanli), to deal with Cucumber. The person to receive the rite has to be locked up in a stone house for 99 days and subject to the mechanical admonition by some performers without any food and rest. No matter how the person reacts, the performers are trained to mechanically repeat their lines without further ado. Cucumber dies just three days after receiving the rite. In this way, the rite does circumvent the prohibitions of using any force or violence against the utopians as required by the principle of benevolence, but its actual effect could only be seen as a corporate punishment in its most cruel sense.

Bestowing the label of "Ox-man" on Hempstalk and performing the "benevolent rite" upon Cucumber can be understood as two major reforms that First-born brought into the eutopia. With such reforms introduced, the Community of Benevolence ceases to be the original eutopian community which is purely founded on the principle of benevolence. The necessity of change and reform in any eutopias poses a fundamental challenge to any eutopian planning in which change is prohibited. It is true that a static society would ensure the preservation of the original eutopian ideals. The problem in this approach is that no matter how wise a utopist is, he can never predict all possible needs in a society in the indefinite future to come. Once any problem out of the scope of the utopist's prediction arises, the original eutopian plan would not be able to provide effective solutions. Either the eutopia has to live with the problems or it brings in reforms. But in either case, the original eutopia ceases to exist. In this sense, the Community of Benevolence is killed by the reforms by First-born.

In *The Utopian Dream*, problems are not entirely solved by the reforms, which only give the community a chance to last a little longer. "The requiem of the isolated land" records the final disorganization of the Community of Benevolence. The incident that triggers the collapse is that Hempstalk's cow wife becomes mad and kills a few utopians. In revenge, the victims' families kill the cow and eat it. These group of utopians who kill life and eat meat are treated as traitors of the principle of benevolence. The conflict between the vegetarians and non-vegetarians ends up with a civil war during which all except one utopian die.

The cow can be seen as a powerful symbol of the forces of nature. Naturally, the baby cow should have died soon after its parents died. The attempts to raise the cow with human milk and satisfy its sexual need with human husband so as to prolong its life symbolize some artificial efforts to defy the rules of nature. As such, they are not fundamentally different from Dragon's eutopian ambition to curb human nature under the single principle of benevolence. In both cases, the human endeavors are totally defeated by the forces of nature.

The Community of Benevolence is dissolved. Ironically the only utopian left alive is having the same dream every night. In his dream,
all the utopians killed revive and live harmoniously in a place where there is plenty of sunshine and it is spring all the year round. There is a hill of salt (there is no salt at Heaven beyond Heaven), providing an endless supply of salt. There are different kinds of sweet fruits which can be picked easily. There is endless supply of rice. There is always a fire lighting in the kitchen where the pans are filled with delicious food. The people there eat meat, but the meat is not obtained from animals but grows by itself from the ground. There is a long hall connecting all the houses so that no matter which house one is in one finds himself at home. The people there never grow old and get sick. The children there never fight for food, the girls there love each and every man.12

It is obvious that while the author rationally rejects the feasibility of eutopia, he simultaneously expresses an nostalgia to the myth of eutopia, suggesting that the wish to realize or live in a eutopia is after all part of human nature itself.

We can come back to the relationship between The Utopian Dream and history. Since Mo Yingfeng imitates the generic style of official Chinese history, it is arguable that Mo invites his readers to treat the story as a historical allegory. If that is the case, readers are tempted to draw comparisons between the story and the history of the PRC. From this perspective, a reader may gain a better understanding of the novel if he can compare and contrast some episodes in the novels with some historical incidents, such as compare and contrast the principle of benevolence with the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist tenets, compare and contrast the eutopian theory of “man is born with a benevolent nature” with the theory of class determinism as exemplified by the slogan “dragons give birth to dragons, phoixes give birth to phoixes, and mice give birth to offspring which can burrow”, compare and contrast the kinds of self-denial for the sake of collective goals in the two societies, compare and contrast Gardenia the Benevolent Woman with the idealized heroic figures like Lei Feng,13 etc.

If The Utopian Dream imitates the generic style of traditional official Chinese history, Country of Women adopts more of modern literary techniques. In the latter novel, Bai Hua juxtaposes the civilized and uncivilized forms of eutopia for the readers to compare and contrast. The action of the story also jumps to and fro the civilized and uncivilized worlds. It is the purpose of Bai Hua to raise his anti-utopian arguments by contrasting the two modes of eutopia.

It has been argued that a typical Western eutopia can be defined as civilization-only-more-so whereas the Peach Blossom Spring kind of eutopia should be described as civilization-only-less-so.14 In short, the typical Western eutopia

12 Taoyuan meng, p.267.
13 Lei Feng is a well known hero being idealized by Mao Zedong during the Cultural Revolution. He represents a totally unselfish and altruistic figure. He is still upheld as a model for emulation by the communist government even until today.
14 Same as note 6, p.474.
represents a “complex cultural condition” in which there exists a “systematic intensification of all repressive restraints of actual civilization”. The Chinese utopists take an opposite view. In a typical Chinese eutopia, restraints of actual civilization are reduced to their minimum. In *Country of Women*, both kinds of eutopia can be found.

Since the Western eutopia represents some form of intensification of civilization, the anti-utopia usually employs “primitivism” as an anti-utopian weapon. As a result, “the central mythos of the dystopian novel [are] natural man in revolt against the rigid and reductionist rationalism of [e]utopia”. In effect, the anti-utopian or dystopian novel typically dramatizes a non-euopian community alongside the eutopia/dystopia to stand for the values of nature and primitivism so as to question the desirability and feasibility of eutopia. In the anti-utopian sense, nature and primitivism usually mean “those modes of human desire, emotion or behavior which are instinctive or spontaneous, in contrast with those which are due to the laboring intellect, to premeditation, to self-consciousness or to instruction”.

At the first sight, *Country of Women* looks like such a typical Western anti-utopia such as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, where the civilized (eutopian) and natural (non-eutopian) worlds are put side by side. Under close examination, it is clear that Bai Hua has a different plan. First, the natural world represented by the Country of Women is eutopian by itself. Secondly, it seems that Bai Hua goes one step further than contrasting the eutopian/dystopian and the natural so as to highlight the undesirability of the eutopian/dystopian. When he puts his civilized and primitive eutopias side by side, Bai Hua rejects both of them regardless of their different accouterments.

In *Country of Women*, the civilized and primitive eutopias are respectively represented by the Chinese society under the Cultural Revolution and a minority community, Mosuo, which inhabits an area along the border of the Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. It is now impossible to fathom the real intention of Mao Zedong when he initiated the Cultural Revolution. Among the overwhelming propagandizing literature of that period of time and some recent revaluation of the Cultural Revolution, we can find supports to interpret that the Cultural Revolution was (at least initially) a eutopian attempt to realize the communist end-state in China. According to the orthodox Marxist theory, social advancement is determined by the basic structure such as economic growth. The Cultural Revolution, by definition, which tries to change the world through a revolution at the level of the superstructure is contradictory to the orthodox Marxist

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social theory. This attempt therefore can be seen as an iconoclastic approach, and in this sense the Cultural Revolution could be seen as a eutopian revolution. Of course, the Chinese society during the Cultural Revolution has not reached the final eutopian stage. At the most it represents that of the transition from the mundane to the eutopian. The fact that the Cultural Revolution failed to materialize the communist end-state implies that this eutopian revolution is not practical. *Country of Women* dramatizes how impractical the Cultural Revolution was.

On the other hand, the matriarchal Mosuo society stands for the primitive or uncivilized form of eutopia. For hundreds of years, the Mosuo people have led their lives according to their own cultural traditions and have not been significantly influenced by the surrounding patriarchal societies. Starting from the Yuan Dynasty (1206–1368), the central Chinese government of different dynasties has sent their officials to rule the community with a view to converting it into a patriarchal society and has never succeeded. In the novel, readers witness that even the most destructive Cultural Revolution finds itself impotent before this small community: the community remains intact regardless of the vigorous political movements imposed on it. The fact that it remains static and immune against outside influence for so many years and the people there are happy and contented seems to suggest that the Mosuo community is perhaps a living eutopia. The failure of the hero in the novel to integrate himself into the community, however, implies that such primitive eutopia may not be suitable for civilized people. Once we have gone through the baptism of civilization, we may never be able to return to the primitive stage of innocence.

There is a common eutopian assumption in the West that human being is born depraved. In order to maintain a eutopia, it is not possible to adopt a completely *laissez-faire* policy. From this perspective, the civilization-only-more-so mode of reductionism in a typical Western eutopia has something to do with the awareness of the existence of what Lyman Tower Sargent calls "the other side of human nature". The primary purpose is to keep that other side of human nature in control, if not also to get rid of it altogether. It is perhaps also on this point that the Cultural Revolution shares some eutopian color. According to the editorial of the *People's Daily*, June 1, 1966, the Cultural Revolution is said to be a war between the bourgeoisie ruling class and the proletarians. The ultimate aim of this war is to "abolish all the old ideology, old culture, old customs, and old habits created by the exploiting class, which had contaminated the proletarians for several thousand years". One of the various ways to achieve that ultimate aim is by a study of politics and economics whereby one can "summon the most furious and disgusting emotions of human being and the roots of hatred"

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that represent self-interest to the battlefield for them to be opposed”. The emotions to be opposed are not very different from the aforesaid anti-utopian senses of nature and primitivism. In *Country of Women*, however, even the Cultural Revolution, the so called “great revolution that touches deep inside man's soul”, finds itself completely inadequate to deal with its enemies.

Although the story of *Country of Women* covers nearly the entire period of the Cultural Revolution, it has not faithfully recorded the real historical incidents taking place during those ten years. Even the most dramatic scenes of political meetings of criticism and self-criticism are not given much attention. This is because the author does not aim to write a faithful history of the Cultural Revolution but to unfold the history from a special point of view. Inspired by the official purpose of the Cultural Revolution which is to improve human nature, Bai Hua focuses his attention on manifestations of human nature as seen in those ten years. In so doing, his novel presents an inventory of human relationships, especially the relationships between man and woman and husband and wife, in China during the Cultural Revolution whereby he reflects how human nature remains unimproved despite that vigorous and formidable political movement.

With respect to the relationships between man and woman, Bai Hua has chosen sexual relationships to be his anti-utopian weapon. If *Country of Women* can be read as a history of the Cultural Revolution, it is a history of abnormal sexual relationships during that period of time. It is indeed no exaggeration to say that the novel is composed of a series of stories about abnormal relationships between man and woman or husband and wife. The characters coming on the central stage include unfaithful wives, wives who sell their bodies for the benefits of their husbands, high officials who take advantage of their positions to obtain sexual gain, prisoners who dare to commit sexual intercourse with other prisoners even though they are under close examination, etc. These characters come from different background but they all become the victims of their own or others' sex instincts.

Gu Shuxian and Liu Tiemei are examples of unfaithful wives. They do not love their husbands and are not loved by their husbands. Instead of agreeing to divorce, they add grievance and animosity to their husband-wife relationships by preventing their husbands from developing another love affair. In the end, however, they themselves become the victims of their own desire for love and/or sex.

Gu Shuxian is the vice captain of the Work Team appointed by the Chinese central government to implement the Cultural Revolution in the Mosuo society. Her husband married her not for love but for “sexual need” sometime during the

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19 See the Editorial of *Renmin ribao* (People’s Daily), June 1, 1966, p.1.
Sino-Japanese war. Early in her political career, she was appointed as the government representative in a subsidiary school of the army as a recognition for her achievements in investigating and discovering the infidelities of her fellow students. Although she is famous for her ability to defend the institution of marriage, she finds herself totally impotent in the Mosuo society. All her efforts in the attempt to establish the modern institution of monogamy in the community are wasted. She is instead influenced by the “shameless women” there and finds her suppressed sexual desire being aroused. On her way of leaving the Country of Women, she “suddenly realizes that she has a certain psychological inclination of envying [the Mosuo women]... She is startled that the [sexual] desire she experienced years ago suddenly would overwhelm her entire body and mind.” She loses all her self-discipline and cannot help grasping the hand of the young guard sitting besides her and “pulls it towards her body while rubbing it with force...”21

Bai Hua uses ellipsis to omit the actions following this scene, but he overtly dramatizes how Liu Tiemei commits adultery. Although Liu guards jealously her husband lest he would find another lover, she seduces her colleague and kills his wife so that she can be the only lover of him. Liu's original given name is Mei. She changes it to Tiemei after the heroine Li Tiemei in the famous revolutionary opera The Red Lantern. The word tie literally means “iron”. Adding this word to her name is an expression of loyalty to Mao Zedong and his wife Jiang Qing (the patroness of the revolutionary opera) and her firm attitude towards the Cultural Revolution. It is unfortunate that this iron lady would be melted by her own sexual desire.

Gu and Liu are perhaps only victims of their own human instincts. There are stories about two wives who are even more “abnormal” and whose behavior is even more difficult to explain. The first one is the wife of an unnamed “revolutionary hero”. She assists her husband who is old and crippled to rape a half-Chinese-half-Western woman right before her so as to satisfy her husband's lustful desire to have sex with a woman of Western origin. The second one is the wife of a prisoner. In order to earn some “special treatments” for her husband in the prison, she sacrifices herself to the sexual satisfaction of the head of the prison. If such abnormal behavior is done out of love of their husbands, it seems that during the Cultural Revolution even love had to be expressed in a way which is against the fundamental principle of love.

The above mentioned “revolutionary hero” is already old and crippled, but he cannot suppress his own sexual desire but makes wrong use of his power to satisfy his own selfish ends instead. He is not alone in the novel. The head of

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21 Bai Hua, Yuanfang you ge nüerguo (There was a Country of Women far away) (Hong Kong: Nanyue chubanshe, 1989), p.26. The novel was first published in Haineiwei wenxue (Literature: Local and Abroad), vol. 1 (Feb. 1988), p.4–111.
the prison mentioned above of course is another similar example. The only difference is perhaps that the head of the prison has not used force in obtaining the prisoner's wife. There is one further example of such a person in the novel. He is the head of the revolution party in a hospital. In the first year of the Cultural Revolution when he was still a medical student, he responded to the call for rebellion and power seizure of the Cultural Revolution and became a rebel leader. He then makes use of his position to rape a former classmate whom he tried to woo for five years and failed.

These three men are put in a position of authority because they have impressive performances in the political movements in the Cultural Revolution. According to the June 1, 1966 editorial of the People's Daily, their ultimate responsibility as revolutionary leaders is to lead the others to get rid of "the other side of human nature". They themselves are ironically victims of this side of human nature. It is true that Bai Hua has not directly pointed out why the Cultural Revolution would have failed to bring out the ideal world as promised. Judging from the above stories, one is tempted to conclude that the main reason for the failure of the Cultural Revolution is the indelibility of human nature.

Except the wife of the prisoner, all the characters referred to are either themselves holding a position of authority or are the spouses of persons in authority. The fact that they could do whatever they like is perhaps understandable. What is really astonishing is that even those who have become the targets of revolution would dare to indulge in sexual relationship. The protagonist of the novel, Liang Rui, is kept in a prison-farm for reform where he meets a girl, Fang Yunxi, who happens to come to the farm. With great courage he pretends to be sick to get a chance to leave the farm and goes to visit the girl in the city. It is not a matter of love at first sight but more for the purpose of getting a sexual outlet, Liang lives with the girl while forging documents that he is staying in the hospital in the city. In the prison ruled by the aforesaid head of prison, there is a prisoner who is caught making love with three woman prisoners when he is sent to the woman's prison to fix a window. Once again, these two examples show the great power of sexual need in human nature.

Moreover, there are two more women who deserve our special attention. They are outstanding revolutionary heroines. The first is the wife of a deputy mayor, also the step mother of Fang Yunxi. Early in the Cultural Revolution, she leaves her husband in response to the Revolution. In the rally for criticizing her husband, she comes forward and discloses all her husband's counter-revolutionary sayings and actions and was upheld as a woman warrior of firm will. But after the Cultural Revolution, she just comes back and resumes her position as the lady of the deputy mayor who has gained back his reputation and position. She may be blamed for betraying her husband when he is in trouble. But her choice of returning to her husband is not different from her step daughter's for-
saking Liang Rui, her *de facto* husband, who no longer deserves her hands after her father's coming back to power.

The second wife is another outstanding woman warrior who has impressing performances in all important political movements in the history of the PRC. This woman warrior, however, forces a prisoner to marry her because the prisoner, being a famous scientist and having overseas connections, is given a magnificent and cozy house for the purpose of receiving foreign visitors. For these two woman warriors, the relationship between husband and wife is simply a matter of benefits.

When these stories about husband and wife and about man and woman in general appear recurrently in the novel, they become a dominant theme. In short, this theme explains why the Cultural Revolution would have failed. Although the ultimate objectives of the Cultural Revolution might have been set very high, those who were warranted to implement the revolution were however people of very low or no scruple. One of the objectives of the Cultural Revolution might have been to get rid of the dark side of human nature, the leaders of the Revolution were however themselves slaves of such human nature. In the novel, however, the Cultural Revolution at least succeeds in one aspect: it succeeds in renewing the old ideology of the relationships between husband and wife. The traditional notions such as that husband comes before wife, husband and wife should be complementary and in harmony, etc., are overturned by the few woman warriors/wives. But the new ideology which replaces it is not any loftier but only serves to reduce the husband-and-wife-relationships to a matter of animal sex or mere benefit.

Comparing with the Chinese society during the Cultural Revolution, the Mosuo society could be seen as a eutopia in some way. In this matriarchal society where polyandry is practiced, since “there is no marriage but only love”, 22 there exist no family tragedies as we find in the civilized world. Since there is no concept of monogamy while women are made leaders in society, there exists no adultery or raping, or sex purely in exchange for benefits.

It is true that the sexual relationships in the Mosuo community might be even looser or freer, but it is a fair deal. Every man and woman enjoys the same fair chance to obtain his or her choice of sexual partner as anyone else. As compared to the ugly phases of man and woman relationships in the Chinese society at large, the Mosuo society can be seen as a living eutopia. The problem is that it is impossible for the civilized people to go back to such a primitive stage of innocence.

Being tired of the ugly and abnormal human relationships in the civilized world during the Cultural Revolution, Liang Rui marries a Mosuo woman and decides to settle with her in the Mosuo community. Although he soon loves the

people and society and considers himself almost one of them, he cannot really integrate himself into the community. He makes fun of the religious cult of the people which has been handed down for thousands of years and does not really respect their institution of polyandry. He believes that since he married his wife under the proper legal procedures of the civilized world, his wife would necessarily abandon her polyandry tradition and treat him as her only lover-husband. Thus, when he discovers that his wife makes love with her former lover, he cannot help but treat it as adultery. He breaks in the door and strikes his wife in order to assert his authority as her legal husband. His "action is totally not what a modern [civilized] man with rational control would do and perhaps is done only by a so-called modern man". Striking a woman lover is not accepted by the Mosuo society at all. Deserted by the entire community, Liang Rui has nowhere to go but regretfully leaves the community.

As Gu Shuxian fails to establish the institution of monogamy in the Mosuo society, Liang Rui fails to accept the institution of polyandry of that society. The story of Liang Rui suggests that whereas the civilization-only-more-so mode of reform may not bring about a eutopia, a civilization-only-less-so society does not necessarily represent a eutopia. The Mosuo society may in this sense be compared with the eutopian dream made by the only survivor of the Community of Benevolence: the community may be a eutopia by itself but one which is beyond the reach of modern man.

Although the two novels have inherited different anti-utopian traditions and adopted different literary techniques, their main anti-utopian premises are based upon the depravity and indelibility of human nature. As such, while it is true to say that the two stories are set in the PRC, the anti-utopian arguments they raised transcend the physical boundary of the country and assume some universal significance.

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23 Ibid., p.322.