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A Bettelheimian Interpretation of Chang Hsien-liang's Concentration-Camp Novels

In China, literature is still viewed as a group phenomenon. Criticism proceeds after a writer's works have been categorized by subject matter, genre, or presumed trend. Although seeking literary experiences from genres may be no better than seeking facts from truth, Chang Hsien-liang 張賢亮 (Zhang Xianliang) has already been pigeonholed: as a progenitor, after Ts'ung Wei-hsi 從維熙, of *ta-ch'iang wen-hsüeh* 大牆文學, or Prison and Prison-Camp Literature (lit. "Towering Wall Literature"; or, to render Chinese argot into English argot, "Big House Literature"). The term has been common coin in Chinese newspapers for some years. From October 1988 to June 1990, the Shanghai Reform-Through-Labor Bureau published a monthly magazine putatively devoted to *ta-ch'iang wen-hsüeh*, including both reportage and fiction. The journal took the name *Ta-ch'iang nei-wai* 大牆內外 (*Inside and Outside the Towering Walls*).[1]

Yet, far from conforming to a category, Chang Hsien-liang is very much an anomaly, even within the select circle of better writers who entered post-Mao China (the "new era," 1978–1989) already in middle age. Those of his novels that are narrated by an ex-convict alter ego named Chang Yung-lin 章永璘 expose shocking evils of the Chinese socialist system. The latest work to take the voice of that character, *Nan-jen te i-pan shih nü-jen* 男人的一半是女人 (*Half of Man Is Woman*, 1985), addresses the cloud of totalitarianism that hung, and to some extent still hangs, over all of Chinese life. Even when released from custody, Chang Yung-lin asserts that he (and all Chinese) have "never got out of jail."[2] The author's most recent novel, *Hsi-*

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[1] From the standpoint of intellectual history, trends in literary phenomena do of course emerge. And some Chinese literary fads, even the young people's "Searching for Roots," were officially organized. Lawrence L. Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1975), p. 22, opines that "perhaps it is time to begin thinking of [writing about the Holocaust, or what David Rousset calls '*l'univers concentrationnaire*' (15–16), even *sensibilité concentrationnaire* (89)] as a 'movement,' and to speak, however hesitantly, of an aesthetics of atrocity."

[2] Chang Hsien-liang 張賢亮, *Nan-jen te i-pan shih nü-jen* 男人的一半是女人, in *Chang*

kuan ssu-wang 習慣死亡 (*Getting Used to Dying*, 1989), narrated by a transparently autobiographical character who is unnamed, transcends the Maoist world view even further, rhetorically mocking Communist shibboleths and adopting antirealistic forms all too self-consciously, *pour épater le prolétariat*.[3] And yet, the Chang Yung-lin novels are (or were) intended ultimately to form a nine-volume series entitled *The Making of a Materialist*. Apologizing for having "indiscriminately absorbed feudal and bourgeois culture," Chang Hsien-liang declared the subject of the series to be "a young Chinese from a bourgeois family, brought up on hazy notions of humanism and democracy, who after a long 'ordeal' finally becomes a Marxist."[4]

Chang clearly depicts, and indeed lets his characters denounce, how Chinese creativity and individualism were ruined by the social system under "the old man" (Mao Tse-tung). *Half of Man Is Woman* is a plea for the spiritual liberation of humankind, and it has considerable psychological insight into its characters. Yet the same work creates sympathy for its hero, Chang Yung-lin, by evoking an age-old male fear that women drag men down to "their level," sapping them of creativity and vitality. The novel ends on this ambivalent and seemingly misogynistic note: "A woman is the most lovable thing on earth,/ But there is something that is more important./ Women will never possess the men they have created."[5] Chang's decision to leave his wife, who is just a poor sinner like himself, is presented as his triumph.

Moreover, the style of *Half of Man Is Woman*, though generally lyric and compelling — compared by C. T. Hsia to that of D. H. Lawrence[6] — is marred by ostentatious bons mots from intellectual authorities and celebrities ranging from Descartes to Louis Armstrong, and anachronistic monologues in which Cultural Revolution-era characters interpret China's evils in ways that occurred to people only during the "new era." There is also a whiff of cult sensationalism in Chang Hsien-liang's later novels. While some

Hsien-liang chi 張賢亮集 (Foochow: Hai-hsia wen-i ch'u-pan-she, 1986), p. 576; Zhang Xianliang, *Half of Man Is Woman*, trans. Martha Avery (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), p. 263. Translated passages from *Nan-jen* in this essay come from Avery, with minor changes.

[3] Chang Hsien-liang, *Hsi-kuan ssu-wang* 習慣死亡 (Tientsin: Pai hua wen-i ch'u-pan-she, 1989); Zhang Xianliang, *Getting Used to Dying*, trans. Martha Avery (New York: HarperCollins, 1991). Avery's notes to this and *Half of Man Is Woman* (the latter even has maps of the prison camp layout known to Chang Hsien-liang as an aid to reading his novel), clearly mark the autobiographical nature of the narrator-characters.

[4] [Author's introduction to] Zhang Xianliang, *Mimosa*, trans. Gladys Yang, *Chinese Literature* (Spring 1985), p. 5.

[5] Chang, *Nan-jen*, p. 592 (English edn., p. 285).

[6] Comments made when I was a participant in a panel organized by Diana L. Kao at the Chinese-American Academic and Professional Association Convention, New York, September 27, 1986.

critics' attacks on his best-selling works can be attributed to envy, Chang does have a flair for publicity: he was the first Chinese author to take out an advertisement for his fiction.[7] *Getting Used to Dying* is filled with references to sexual intercourse, the narrator's penis, even AIDS, and it delights readers with what they presume to be true confessions, much as Yü Ta-fu's 郁達夫 works once did. It also has its prison camp survivor-hero commit suicide in the year 2001. As that now specially marked date draws near, the novel's prophecy may bring much publicity to the author. Chang Hsien-liang's works confront the scholar and the critic, however receptive to nonconformism, with simply enormous doses of "cognitive dissonance."

Though loath to put Chang Hsien-liang's oeuvre into a category, especially the very "confining" one of Prison-Camp Writer, I take seriously the fact that he is a prison-camp survivor. I shall argue that he and his prison heroes (notably his alter ego, Chang Yung-lin) are in effect *concentration-camp* survivors — survivors of an "extreme situation," to use the term coined by the Austrian-American psychologist Bruno Bettelheim in reference to the trauma of the Nazi camps — and that the psychological peculiarities of this status are visible in Chang Yung-lin.[8] They impart meaning to some of the anomalies.

Dr. Bruno Bettelheim (1903–1990), trained in Freudian psychoanalysis at the University of Vienna, is best known for his treatment of autistic children at the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School, which he directed at the University of Chicago from 1944 to 1973. Bettelheim was a professor of psychology and psychiatry at the university, and wrote a book in 1976 often praised in literary circles, *The Uses of Enchantment*. There he criticized fairy tales according to their resourcefulness as nurturants or outlets for children's subconscious fantasies and anxieties. His contention that the modern world was "denying" evidence that it had the means and will to alter personalities and destroy millions, and might well do so again, was also delivered in several of his film and drama criticisms.[9]

[7] Unsigned article, "Zhang Runs a Self-Advertisement," *Beijing Review* 29.27 (July 7, 1986), p. 20.

[8] I refer mainly to Bruno Bettelheim's *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), and *Surviving and Other Essays* (New York: Knopf, 1979), which includes "The Ultimate Limit," pp. 3–18, "Trauma and Reintegration," pp. 19–37, "German Concentration Camps," pp. 38–47, and "Remarks on the Psychological Appeal of Totalitarianism" (1952), pp. 317–32.

[9] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1977). In 1960 Bettelheim criticized the dramatized *Diary of Anne Frank* in his essay "The Ignored Lessons of Anne Frank," in *Surviving*, pp. 246–57; in 1976 he took Lina Wertmüller to task for her film *Seven Beauties* in his essay "Surviving," in *Surviving*, pp. 274–314.

In this essay I am drawing mostly, however, on Bettelheim's initial fame. In 1943 he wrote "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations," the pioneer analysis (originally unbelieved and unpublishable) of inmate personality distortions in German concentration camps.[10] For this, he focused his professional analytic powers on the traumas he felt and witnessed as a Jew imprisoned for a year in 1938–1939 at Dachau and Buchenwald, before he was released on an outsider's appeal and allowed to emigrate to America. Bettelheim attributed his own psychic survival to a severe head wound he suffered en route to his first camp, which sent him to the hospital and broke the pace of the initiatory degradation. In "Schizophrenia as a Reaction to Extreme Situations," he claimed that parallels he perceived between autism and schizophrenic adaptations to concentration camp life, and between the powerless existential condition of the child and the inmate, motivated him to work with autistic children.[11] However, popular press accounts that his therapies were a "reversal" of Nazi procedures of personality disintegration seem fanciful.[12] Suffering from physical decline and the death of his wife, and still haunted by nightmares of Dachau and Buchenwald, Bettelheim ultimately took his own life.[13]

I take Bruno Bettelheim as my chief authority on the concentration camp experience (recognizing the large amount of literature on the Holocaust and Soviet Gulags) not only for his professional unromantic commentary on camp and survivor psychology, but because he, like Chang Hsien-liang, grappled with the camps as reflections of the societies that made them. His writings are action-oriented and indeed speak of morality, though as a psychosocial force rather than an ethical one. Upset with the

[10] Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations," in *Surviving*, pp. 48–83.

[11] Bettelheim, "Schizophrenia as a Reaction to Extreme Situations," in *Surviving*, pp. 112–24. This essay was first published in 1956.

[12] *Time*, March 26, 1990, p. 65.

[13] After Bettelheim's death, and only then, a handful of former students from the Orthogenic School raised a scandal by claiming that he had humiliated and even beat them. Bettelheim was a gruff man who deliberately sought to be a "stern and loving" "surrogate father"; his round-the-clock intensive therapy may have suffocated some of his wards. Far from doubting his insights into totalitarianism, however, accusing students charged him with having mastered its techniques. Richard Bernstein reviews posthumous charges against and defenses of Bettelheim in "Accusations of Abuse Haunt the Legacy of Dr. Bruno Bettelheim," *New York Times*, November 4, 1990. Former Orthogenic students Alida Jatich, Roberta C. Redford, and Ronald Angres generated much of the anti-Bettelheim literature in a campaign of writing in such serials as *The Chicago Reader* (a weekly newspaper), *The New York Times* (November 20, 1990), the *University of Chicago Magazine* (October 1990, February 1991), and *Commentary* (article, October 1990). At last notice, the University of Chicago intended to name a new research facility after Bettelheim, and Richard Pollak of New York City was writing his biography.

film *Seven Beauties*, Bettelheim pointed out that a shred of morality was necessary for inmates' short-term psychological integration (and survival), as it was for children's; and also for their short-term social survival, since inmates killed the greedy among them. He stressed, moreover, that the ultimate survival of all inmates came from moral outside forces that destroyed the camps or influenced their operation, not from anything inmates did themselves.[14] By viewing concentration camps in both social and psychological contexts, Bettelheim provided valuable criteria for distinguishing them from other severe labor camps.

The question of totalitarian techniques of destroying human personalities is a large and controversial one, with implications not just for a body of writing but for a huge state and its population. I do not mean to make virtues of the seeming lapses in Chang Hsien-liang's novels. Nor can I claim to be presenting a psychoanalysis of the author, a comprehensive criticism of his art, or the "key" to its meaning. I do wish to show these singular novels in a new light. Perspectives on what humanity did to itself in the 1930s and 1940s, applied to Chang Hsien-liang's creative works, may yield a new dimension to our understanding of what China has suffered.

CHINESE PENAL LABOR CAMPS AS CONCENTRATION CAMPS

"*Chi-chung-ying*" 集中營 (concentration camp) is a neologism used very loosely in official and orthodox Chinese writings to describe any prison camp run by past or present enemies of the Communist Party and state apparatus. One need not simply turn the tables on the Communists and indiscriminately name their penal system a concentration-camp system, but neither can one assume that only Germans were capable of constructing such abominations. When reading Chang Hsien-liang's *Lü-hua-shu* 綠化樹 (*Mimosa*) in the English translation by Gladys Yang (herself a survivor of long, inhuman imprisonment in China), one sees Chang Yung-lin actually speak of having been four years in a "concentration camp." The original Chinese is not however *chi-chung-ying*, but the slang expression *ta hao-tzu* 大號子. This is not to say that "concentration camp" is an indefensible

[14] Bettelheim, *Surviving*, pp. 286–89. Other lines of Bettelheim's thinking, which Jews hated to hear but could not ignore—and which survivors of Mao's China may actually be disposed to accept—are that greater victim resistance might have lessened the effects of the Holocaust, and that victims sometimes unconsciously provoke their own doom. Bettelheim, *Surviving*, pp. 241–45 ("Unconscious Contributions to One's Undoing"), and pp. 246–73 ("The Ignored Lesson of Anne Frank"; "Eichmann: The System, the Victims," 1963).

rendering of the term he used. The Chinese gives a hint in that direction by referring to the four years a second time, using the unusual wording, "four years of *concentrated* (*mi-chi-hsing te* 密集性的) labor."[15] It would be better, in any case, not to rely on etymology but to analyze, as well as we can, the real predicament of Chang Hsien-liang and his autobiographical hero.

Bettelheim held that the Nazis ran three different kinds of camps. The death camps, dedicated to the "final solution," were organized only in December of 1941. Another latecomer was the slave-labor camp. "Terrible as they were," Bettelheim said, these camps "were not that different from the worst of other slave labor situations known throughout history." Conditions were much worse than "those prevalent in even very bad prison labor camps, because the inmates did not enjoy even those small human considerations and the significant protections of the law which are the prerogatives of common criminals. But dreadful as life in the slave-labor camps was, these camps did not present new or unique theoretical or psychological problems. Quite the opposite is true for the Nazi death camps, and for the concentration camps."[16]

Concentration camps fall between the categories of death camp and slave-labor camp. Bettelheim did not consider concentration camps to be unique phenomena of Nazism, but rather a function of the modern totalitarian state, as existed also in the Soviet Union. In a perhaps incautious mood in the 1960s, he said that "the majority of mankind is ruled by totalitarian governments,"[17] evidently including the Chinese. The purpose of concentration camps as he saw them in Germany was "mainly to terrorize those who might try to oppose the Nazis, and also to spread terror of retribution for opposition among the rest of the German population." Jews were to be terrorized into emigrating immediately, leaving their possessions behind. The Germans "maintained all along to some degree the fiction that the purpose of these camps was to reeducate opponents of the regime." But though they incidentally killed many prisoners and provided some slave labor, the camps' basic purpose was "total control in a mass society."[18] Chang Hsien-liang would surely see his point, for the thesis of *Half of Man Is Woman* is that Mao and his followers made China into one great prison camp, where everyone lived in fear and paranoia, and in which normal human relations were impossible.

There are, however, several difficulties in establishing that China had

[15] Chang Hsien-liang, *Lü-hua-shu* 綠化樹, in his *Chang Hsien-liang chi*, p. 261; English translation by Gladys Yang, in *Chinese Literature* (Spring 1985), p. 33. My emphasis.
[16] Bettelheim, *Surviving*, p. 39. [17] Ibid., p. 258. [18] Ibid., pp. 38–41.

concentration camps like the German ones. Bettelheim's own definition of the camps is complex, invoking three sorts of criteria that may to some extent vary independently. He cites the severity of camp conditions; the camps' social function — terrorization of a population; and their psychological effect — the remolding of personality by putting it in an extreme situation. To the German prisoners, the "S.S. and Nazi state made it amply clear that the life the person had been living was ended; they denied one's former life all validity, now and forever."[19] Tortured prior to their internment, in camp the prisoners' personalities became progressively disintegrated, until, as "old prisoners" (those in the camp three years or more — but still "normal" prisoners of that status, as opposed to the ["fatalistic"] "moslems" or walking corpses, who no longer took pains to maximize their chance for survival), they not only cared little about events outside the camp, but also were upset to receive news of their own families and unable to form friendly human relationships. Finally, "old prisoners" identified with and accepted many of the values of the S.S. (to the extent of accepting Nazi racial theories, and wanting to wear scraps of S.S. clothing, even at the risk of being discovered and punished), and became unable to imagine or hope for life outside the camp. The psychological effect is the crux, and it should be observable across cultures, but of all the conditions it is the most hidden.

Conceptual difficulties on the Chinese side begin with the variability of penal-camp conditions according to period, geography, leadership, and the place of a particular camp within the Gulag system. And there are paradoxes of Chinese society: the benign nature of the Chinese Communist Party and its "serve-the-people" psychological remoldings as perceived by millions of Chinese in the 1950s, whence the main brainwashing studies originate; and the ability of the Chinese leadership to will itself into being unable to distinguish between enemies, dissidents, and criminals, which sorts of distinctions the Nazis utilized so skillfully. The People's Republic has always confounded the Foucaldian theory that the spectacle of public punishment and torture gives way in modern times to a penal system that is an "economy of suspended rights" for prisoners whose very "souls" have been probed by bourgeois judges.[20] As in Foucault's modern Europe, Chinese social and political criminals are put on detailed timetables of work and regulation; they are reformed — "cured"; and even so, again as in the modern world as Foucault sees it, the object of punishment is society as a whole, chiefly "those

[19] Ibid., p. 31.
[20] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), pp. 11, 19.

who have not committed the crime."[21] Yet in China, on the other hand, torture, secret investigation, confession, theatrical public punishment, and representation of malefactors as a conspiratorial gang remain important, as in medieval societies. Bettelheim, who does present the concentration camp as a logical outcome of modern penal development, erases the Foucaldian dichotomies to begin with. Torture of the body has a psychological effect; the "soul" is reconditioned, but to no great "theological" end, since the prisoner as such is expendable; and although society as a whole is the object of the punishment, it is terrorized, not subjected to a rational and measured regime.

The physical horrors of the Nazi concentration camps, Bettelheim attests, began with constant deprivation of food, sleep, and even opportunities to eliminate. There were frequent physical tortures and murders, hence constant death anxiety in the prisoners. All inmates had experienced torture during transit to the camp, as an initiation, and afterwards seemingly at random. It was a world of forced socialization, utter lack of freedom to direct one's life or even urinate, punishment of the group for the disobedience of an individual, and the use of foremen or cell bosses (kapos) from among the inmates, who tried to anticipate prison-guard demands and therefore often exceeded them in severity. Labor was hard and often meaningless: undoing a project previously accomplished, digging holes with bare hands when tools were available, or simply rolling in the mud.[22] Prisoners were forced to degrade each other. And they lacked goals related to the world outside of the camp, particularly since they had no definite sentences; this contributed to ambivalence about being released from the concentration camp system. Kapos and favored prisoners could on the other hand be given meaningful and comfortable work, as well as extra rations. This only deepened their pathological adaptation to camp life.

Even the physical conditions in Chinese prison camps vary greatly and are shrouded in a secrecy alleviated mostly by underground manuscripts; Chang Hsien-liang, a novelist rather than a social scientist, helps only marginally. Exemplifying the variability, Pao Jo-wang (Bao Ruo-wang, or Jean Pasqualini) found himself relatively free and well-fed in Hei-lung-chiang, but consigned to a virtual "death camp" in Ho-pei, in which he, as part of a human disposal detail, buried about two men daily. Prior to that he was

[21] Ibid., p. 95. On the importance of Chinese punishment as "prevention" (warning the public not to commit crimes) rather than "cure" of those who have committed crimes, see Jerome Alan Cohen, *The Criminal Process in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1963* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1968), pp. 80–81.

[22] Bettelheim, *Surviving*, p. 77; Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 207.

paradisiacally happy in the model Peking Prison No. 1, after being driven to near desperation by *non*-heavy labor at another prison, because of monotonous work with enforced quotas and insufficient rations.[23] Chang Hsien-liang's novels likewise show great disparities in food rationing between the camps of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution eras.

Ironically, if one accepts Bettelheim's distinctions, post-Tiananmen Massacre exposés of Chinese penal camps that emphasize the cynical use of prison labor to manufacture goods for export clearly "drop" the camps to the category of "slave-labor camp"—the more terrible, Nazified end of the slave-labor spectrum, to be sure, with torture, solitary confinement, and denial of medical treatment being used on nonproducing "recalcitrants" and preliminary detainees—but that, too, is common enough practice in this world.[24] Camps of the 1980s are generally assumed to have been more "humane" than those of the Mao era. Still, one might object that even in the 1950s and 1960s, Chang Hsien-liang lived in slave-labor camps, not concentration camps. Apart from mining camps, however, which according to Ts'ung Wei-hsi were favored by 1950s prisoners despite the danger because their important productive function did indeed mean better rations, the old camps seem to have been limited to the most primitive and inefficient kinds of work on the land. Laboring took precedence over production, and personality change took precedence over laboring. Chang Hsien-liang notes

[23] Bao Ruo-wang (Jean Pasqualini) and Rudolph Chelminski, *Prisoner of Mao* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1973, 1976). See also Allyn and Adele Rickett, *Prisoners of Liberation: Four Years in a Chinese Communist Prison* (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, 1973).

[24] This essay was completed while two major books were unfortunately still in preparation: Harry Wu [Wu Hung-ta 吳宏達], *Laogai: The Chinese Gulag*; and Human Rights in China, with Fergus M. Bordewich, *Bamboo Gulag*. Judging from Wu's research published in *Human Rights Tribune* 2.6 (February 1991), pp. 3–5, the author is using statistics to analyze the economic function of the camps, as does the previous major study, *Political Imprisonment in the People's Republic of China* (London: Amnesty International, 1978). See also James D. Seymour, *China Rights Annals* 1 (Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1985). Descriptions of the Chinese Gulag, particularly in the 1980s, as found in such works, do not, I believe, prevent us from making a separate category of true concentration camps and torture prisons, which have also existed in China at least in the late 1950s and Cultural Revolution years. For more horrific descriptions of prison conditions, see Geremie Barmé and John Minford, eds., *Seeds of Fire*, 2d edn. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1989), esp. pp. 271–312, 417–32. For a description of a torture prison for the regimes's worst enemies, see Wei Jingsheng, "Q1—A Twentieth-Century Bastille," pp. 279–89.

A short story by Ch'iu Feng criticizes the diversion of penal labor camps from ideological remolding (their original function) due to imperatives of production, and indicates how difficult it was for the camps to be self-sufficient; Ch'iu Feng 丘峰, "Chui-pu chih yeh" 追捕之夜, *Tien-shih tien-ying wen-hsüeh* 電視電影文學 (May 1990), pp. 61–72. I thank Hua Chien 花建 of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences for pointing out this article to me.

that "in the labor camps men did not say they had 'worked for a day,' they said they had 'reformed for a day.'"[25]

In the Great Leap Forward era, starvation haunted the camps that Chang Hsien-liang and his characters inhabited, as is touchingly indicated at the outset of *Mimosa*. Pao Jo-wang's memories of food in Chinese prisons and camps mimic Bettelheim's especially closely: the *wo-t'ou* 窩頭 (coarse corn cakes) and gruel "became the center of our lives and the focus of our deepest attentions. . . . Rumors and desperate fantasies circulated [about rations]. . . . After a year of this diet I was prepared to admit virtually anything to get more food." His hair and nails fell out; his vision and thought blurred; his joints bruised from contact with the communal bed—and all this, before the Great Leap Forward, when rations could not so carefully be calculated "to keep us alive but never . . . let us forget our hunger." Indeed Chang, the novelist, is no more eloquent than Pao (or Wang Jo-wang 王若望, Ts'ung Wei-hsi, or Yüeh Tai-yün 樂黛雲) in conveying how the desire for food governed every waking thought.[26]

Chinese prisoners were deprived of sleep and lacked sufficient strength to labor, which amounted in many cases to torture. Some were cold-bloodedly killed, we can be certain, at least during major political campaigns.[27] And yet, mutilation, murder, forcing of prisoners to soil themselves, and complete denial of medical help were not always the rule (though Chang's short novel *T'u-lao ch'ing-hua* 土牢情話 or *Passionate Words from a Village Gulag* highlights deliberate and fatal medical neglect).[28] Punishment and indoctrination, while usually done by a group, were directed at the individual—painfully so, to destroy individual thought. Few prisoners expected liberation by a foreign army, but some had a release date to dream about, however far off, although it might be ignored when it arrived. There was even talk, in reeducation sessions, of rebuilding prisoner esteem on the

[25] Ts'ung Wei-hsi 從維熙, *Tsou hsiang hun-tun* 走向混沌 (Peking: Tso-chia ch'u-pan-she, 1989), p. 177. Chang Hsien-liang's comment is cited by Avery in a footnote to her English *Getting Used to Dying*, p. 148.

[26] Bao and Chelminski, *Prisoner of Mao*, pp. 46–47. Wang Ruowang, *Hunger Trilogy*, trans. Kyna Rubin with Ira Kasoff (Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1991). Ts'ung, *Tsou hsiang*, pp. 179–80, on prisoners' neurotic ways of cutting up *wo-t'ou*. Yue Daiyun and Carolyn Wakeman, *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1985), pp. 8–83, 89–90. Also see Tenzin Choedrak's particularly horrifying account of Tibetans starved by the Chinese in a camp in Ch'ing-hai province during the Great Leap Forward: "Jiuzhen Prison: A Tibetan Account," in Barmé and Minford, *Seeds*, pp. 417–32.

[27] Liu Binyan, "Murder at Nenjiang Camp" (excerpt from "A Second Kind of Loyalty"), in Barmé and Minford, *Seeds*, pp. 65–67.

[28] Chang Hsien-liang, *T'u-lao ch'ing-hua* 土牢情話, in his *Chang Hsien-liang chi*, pp. 12–23.

basis of new socialist standards. Above all, Chinese prisoners ordinarily performed what the regime considered useful if not terribly efficient hard labor. Unlike German prisoners, Chinese inmates who survived the rigors of captivity could imagine that their work was accomplishing something, provided that they could rationalize this with the thought that they were helping the whole Chinese people, not simply their oppressors—the camp administrators and guards. Learning to enjoy "labor" was an important part of the prisoners' education.

On the other hand, Chinese wardens were exquisite in their organization of cooperative prisoners relentlessly to boss those inmates whose spirit was not yet completely "reformed." And during some periods, Chinese inmates had little opportunity to withdraw into a private mental space of their own, as jailed prisoners may in most countries. Ts'ung Wei-hsi recalls that during intensive "study sessions" he was not just directed to maintain a certain position when sitting, he had to direct his gaze in a certain way.[29] Prisoners had little *time* to themselves; *Mimosa* testifies quite eloquently to this in the exultation of its protagonist Chang Yung-lin on the day of his release from a prison camp—to a farm where the labor and deprivations were actually worse: "*Today* I could catch up with the cart whenever I pleased, *could do whatever I pleased* instead of being at the beck and call of the team leader."[30] Furthermore, so that they would confess and reconfess their crimes, prisoners were often subjected, in prison prior to assignment to a camp, to something reminiscent of the S.S. initiatory torture: "struggle" (round-the-clock interrogation, combined with sleep deprivation, uncomfortable postures in chains, and beatings), during which they could not even escape into daydreams. Interviewing Westerners allegedly brainwashed in China in the early 1950s, Robert J. Lifton found that they had been continuously and rather uniformly tortured until they produced their initial confession. They went for days without sleep. Ten-hour sessions in which interrogators hinted at the death penalty and took handcuffs and leg irons on and off in response to prisoner "sincerity" alternated with round-the-clock verbal abuse back in the cell that was organized by more "advanced" cellmates working seriatim. The handcuffed prisoner was not only humiliated by having to lap up food like a dog, but tortured by being forced into injurious postures in which the weight of the body fell on the fetters.[31] Chinese intellectuals Lifton interviewed, who

[29] Ts'ung, *Tsou hsiang*, p. 150.

[30] Chang, *Lü-hua-shu*, p. 226 (English edn., p. 12), emphasis in the original.

[31] Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961, 1969), p. 40.

had been through revolutionary universities, were treated less severely. Yet the pattern of their reformation was similar in form, and they were not even accused of crimes.

Prisoners in China are not generally thought to have been forced to soil or torture each other, though they may have been sometimes, under their own kapos, and though access to latrines was strictly regulated and often inadequate, as Pao Jo-wang's and Lifton's interviewees all indicate. One Western prisoner Lifton interviewed was beaten in his cell until his spine was cracked, then left lying helpless on the floor for months and frequently refused assistance in urination and defecation, so that he soiled his bedclothes and the cell, incurring still more criticism from his cellmates.[32] The relentless intrusion on the prisoners' private thoughts may in some instances have ensured a minimal self-esteem (by implying that they remained capable of integrated thought, and that this thought mattered to society as a whole), but it surely hastened the most surprising psychological effect of concentration-camp imprisonment observed by Bettelheim in Germany, namely identification of the inmates with the camp guards and their values.

Hence the mind-numbing *social function* (or at least intent) of the Chinese camps is perhaps the strongest point of comparison with the Nazi camps, as Chinese informants tell it today. The Communist Party never acknowledged "terrorization" as a policy, preferring even more than the Nazis to dwell on "reformation." But it did come remarkably close when it removed certain categories (landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, and, later, Rightists) from the ranks of the people and made them exclusively subject to "dictatorship of the proletariat," a term which to Chinese both inside and outside the camps came to have much the same force as "terrorization." Lifton indicates that the most severe Chinese thought reform brought about "breakdown" through "coercion." The trouble is that it also drew upon "inner enthusiasm through evangelistic exhortation." By appealing to the reform object's own sense of guilt and inadequacy, it left him or her with the feeling of rebirth—into a new, more *moral*, personality, at harmony with the group.[33] To the "reformed" subject, then, Chinese Communist reformation was both more benign in intentions and more fully disintegrative of the old personality than simple terrorization. Perry Link rightly points out that a major problem in analyzing Chang Hsien-liang's post-imprisonment psychology is that he had strong guilt feelings about his prosperity under the old society even before entering

[32] Bao and Chelminski, *Prisoner of Mao*, pp. 48–49. [33] Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 13.

camp.[34] That would, on the other hand, have rendered him particularly vulnerable to further, pathological "remolding."

The Chinese world outside the camps seems to have been just as ambivalently evangelized and terrorized. The memoir literature from China's "new era" bears witness to the fact that most Chinese outside the camps behaved as the regime wanted them to because they lived in great fear of punishment (including social costs, to the ego and to the family), and that Rightists who never even entered such camps not only drastically altered their behavior so as to conform, but sometimes were convinced of their own guilt.[35] On the other hand, the "brainwashing" inherent in such changes in personality structure may have in many instances been partly self-willed.

One may also question how many Chinese in the camps, and dissidents outside, actually viewed the camp wardens as "enemies," as did Jews and other "undesirables" in the Nazi camps. Yet *Half of Man Is Woman* itself offers interesting and rare testimony that many Chinese prisoners did in fact sabotage camp projects, as did the prisoners of the Germans.[36]

Finally, the psychological crux: were Chinese camp inmates in an "extreme situation"? Professional psychological analyses of Chinese prisoners are lacking, except for Lifton's, of former Western prisoners who had been released to Hong Kong. As he characterized the brainwashing process, the prisoner was "totally cut off from the essential succor of affectionate communication and relatedness, without which he [could] not survive. And at the same time, his increasing self-betrayal [false confessions to acquire lenient treatment], sense of guilt [from his past life], and loss of identity all join[ed] to estrange him from himself—or at least from the self which he [had] known."[37] Then, suddenly, "leniency and opportunity" were dangled before the prisoner. His guilt was "logically" rechanneled into a dishonoring of himself within larger forces of history, and he was reborn. As in the Nazi experience, the old life was wholly negated. Later expelled back into the "free world," the survivor felt "grief" at separation from the prison environment; he even "longed nostalgically for the relatively simple, ordered, and meaningful prison experience, now glorified in his memory."[38] Chinese prisoners, in fact, were condemned to remain in a series of camps and farms, never

[34] Perry Link, personal communication concerning an earlier draft of this paper.

[35] See Hsiao Ch'ien [蕭乾], *Traveller Without a Map* (London: Hutchinson, 1990); Hsiao Ch'ien did not serve in a camp like Chang Yung-lin's, but on a state farm, mostly with Korean War veterans. See also Chen Xuezhao [Ch'en Hsüeh-chao 陳學昭], *Surviving the Storm* (Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1990). Ch'en largely accepted her "guilt" as a Rightist.

[36] Chang, *Nan-jen*, p. 418 (English edn., p. 40). [37] Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 70.

[38] Ibid., pp. 85, 227.

really released from the cycle of guilt and confession until their glorious coming out, in the "new era."

If one's psychological integration snaps in an extreme situation, does it partially disintegrate under lesser approximations of the extreme situation? Bettelheim at times encouraged such a view, as when he wrote, after his 1955 return to Germany, in phraseology much like Chang Hsien-liang's: "After a few weeks of talking to natives in all walks of life . . . the conclusion became inescapable that every German had in some way or other been an inmate of that wider concentration camp which was the Third Reich."[39] Whether the idea of a partially extreme situation renders his theory more flexible and powerful for comparative purposes, or weakens it, is beyond my power to judge. But I submit that many Chinese approached and indeed entered into extreme situations however defined; some were clearly mentally broken.

Major grounds for *not* likening the Chinese camps to the German ones are the strangely complacent statements about the Chinese camps voiced by the hero Chang Yung-lin at the outset of *Half of Man Is Woman*. But these are set amid contradictory evidence about the horrors of the camps. I take Chang's ambivalence to represent precisely the internalization of camp-taught values that Bettelheim and Lifton observed. Surely it is a complicated phenomenon, and it lies at the heart of the later argument of this essay.

Although we know Chang Hsien-liang only through his novels, I surmise that, given his and his alter ego Chang Yung-lin's three confinements to prison camps at different periods in China's Communist history (during their more than twenty-year loss of freedom in jail, in camps, and under surveillance in state farms), they must have experienced, in real life and in fiction, respectively, an "extreme situation," or something very close to it. Parts of *Passionate Words from a Village Gulag* offer especially convincing evocations of concentration-camp phenomena: numbing death anxiety among the prisoners; starvation rations; vengeful sadism by guards; inmates gone mad from their experience who, as in Germany, are left to fend for themselves; and the importance to the emotional lives of the prisoners of fragmentary rumors about *changes in personnel in the camp* (not changes in the Central Committee, as in *Half of Man Is Woman*, an anomaly Bettelheim might have quickly noticed). *Passionate Words from a Village Gulag* ultimately succumbs to a quite incredible and mawkish plot line about love between the prisoner-narrator Shih Tsai 石在 and his female guard. The main subject of

[39] Bruno Bettelheim, "Returning to Dachau," in his *Freud's Vienna and Other Essays* (New York: Knopf, 1990), p. 231.

my essay, however, is the more subtle ways in which Chang Hsien-liang's novels reveal traces of the concentration-camp experience. Certain anomalous words and actions by Chang Yung-lin and Shih Tsai that may cause some readers to think them (and perhaps Chang Hsien-liang himself) a dunce, a fool, or a male chauvinist, fit behavior patterns described by Bruno Bettelheim in a very different place and time.

HALF OF MAN IS WOMAN

The novels discussed in this essay unfold in the labor camps, prisons, and militarized state farms in remote parts of poverty-stricken Ning-hsia where the author himself lived until his freedom was restored. The hero in *Mimosa* and *Half of Man Is Woman* is Chang Yung-lin, a young man of twenty when he enters a Reform-Through-Labor camp as a Rightist in 1958, just like Chang Hsien-liang. *Mimosa* describes his release two years later, amid the famine of the Great Leap Forward. At the age of twenty-eight in 1966, Chang Yung-lin, again like the author, enters another labor camp. This marks the outset of *Half of Man Is Woman*, whose part 1 unfolds wholly within that Reform-Through-Labor camp. The harsh environment of the camp is described, and Chang Yung-lin (a virgin) imagines making love to the ghost of a young woman who once hanged herself in his house. She comes to him in a dream, in chapter 2. Then one day, splashing through a reed marsh, he chances to see something unimaginably rare in his world: the naked body of a lovely young bather. She is Huang Hsiang-chiu 黃香久, a prisoner in a separate women's brigade. Their eyes meet and for a few moments they imagine the sexual possibilities inherent in their chance encounter, away from the all-seeing eyes of the camp. But Chang, the virgin, flees the scene. The next day he sees her once more, marching past in ranks with a scythe. Evidently angry at his previous inhibitions, she waves her blade at him and growls under her breath, "If I could, I would butcher you!"[40]

Eight years later (during Deng Xiaoping's first rehabilitation), Chang Yung-lin, though still "hatted" as a Rightist and counterrevolutionary, has been released and is seen tending sheep on a state farm, where the rest of the novel will unfold. Part 2 begins. By chance, Huang Hsiang-chiu has been transferred from another state farm to help Chang rebuild a sheep cote. Older and wiser now, but still retaining their youthful attractiveness, Chang and Huang form a new friendship. Huang had done her time for sexual

[40] Chang, *Nan-jen*, p. 428 (English edn., p. 51).

promiscuity, and is now twice divorced; she was never a hatted political prisoner, but remains on the low rungs of society. Chang Yung-lin begins his reflections on the stupidity and cruelty of Chinese society in these times, and we meet two of the morally compromised, walking dead it has produced, an informer and a disgraced proletarian hero who has become virtually dumb. Chang abruptly proposes marriage to Huang.

In the next part, Chang's critique of Cultural Revolution China comes home. He discovers on his wedding night and in the months succeeding that emotional scars have left him sexually impotent. His bride Huang Hsiang-chiu ridicules him, and Chang has a vision in which the castrated horse he tends addresses him as a fellow mental cripple: a male deprived of all masculinity, independence of will, and even creativity (as a would-be writer). Chang further chances to see his now sexually frustrated wife being unfaithful to him, with the Party secretary. Lacking the guts to rush in on them and terminate the liaison, he, the ultimate intellectual and sublimator, comforts himself by talking out his frustrations before visions of Sung Chiang (then being castigated by the Cultural Revolution group), Chuang-tzu, and Marx.

In part 4, Chang Yung-lin lets his wife know that he has observed her infidelity; she softens toward him, though Chang cannot bear his humiliation, preferring to think that she is using him as a screen for other liaisons. Then, one night, Chang becomes a hero, by courageously plugging a breach in a dike during a rainstorm and flood. His self-esteem is so restored that he is able (and willing) to have full sexual relations with his wife.

In the fifth and final part, Chang Yung-lin decides to divorce Huang Hsiang-chiu and go off to accomplish great things: to help organize a political movement to end all movements, one not of the oppressors, but of the people, dedicated to sanity, democracy, and the ideals of Liu Shao-ch'i, Chou En-lai, and Deng Xiaoping rather than the inhuman class struggle of the Cultural Revolution. Chou En-lai has just died, Deng Xiaoping has been purged a second time, and another movement of the old kind (promising more tribulations for hatted people like Chang Yung-lin) is almost upon them. This adds urgency to Chang's feeling that he will never be at peace, and that families will never be able to live as true families as long as the current leadership rules (a line of reasoning so far rather close to Bettelheim's moral crusade).

But why must he cut his relations with Huang Hsiang-chiu? Because, he rationalizes, his mission is too dangerous, and her infidelity will always cast a

shadow over their relationship.[41] She struggles for a different outcome, trying hard to please him, risking life and limb in a small act of heroism of her own,[42] even buying him a short-wave radio in furtherance of his dangerous political curiosity. And Chang Yung-lin admits that it was she who brought him to life,[43] allowed him to become more than just "half a man" by being his wife once he regained his manhood. Chang, however, uses virtually dialectical reasoning to resist her: the relations of husband and wife have made him a whole man, but now he must *transcend* that, ignoring sex to solve the larger political crisis, lest sexuality be lost once more in new political paroxysms to be brought on by the Gang of Four. So Chang goes on his way, leaving the now three-time divorcee to fend for herself. A surface reading might have us overlook Chang's inhumanity because of his idealism on behalf of an unexceptionable "greater good." Moreover, Chang Hsien-liang has evidently made Huang Hsiang-chiu stand not just for herself and for womanhood, but for China. But has Chang Yung-lin's misogyny really been displaced into a more abstract ambivalence toward all China, in the passage below?

> My land, my salty land, my sandy Paradise, my vast plateau, I will soon be leaving you. Like her, you've been trampled on and ravaged by men. But you've also willingly lain beneath them, to give yourself. You've been unfaithful to me, cheated me and punished me — you are a dried-up marsh: how much of my sweat has gone into nourishing you and been soaked up without a trace. You are ugly, and you are evil, but you also have a beauty that approaches the mystical. I curse you and I love you, demonic land and demonic woman. You have absorbed my sweat and my tears [and my wet seed?], you have also changed my soul: from now I have no more love to give you.[44]

I think not. Huang Hsiang-chiu, not China, is the reed marsh of sexuality he has known since the chance encounter in the labor camp, and encountered yet again in a recent dream as a fetid, bloody marsh that entraps him.[45] So now she is an inhibiting, "dried-out" marsh, or contrarily, still a deep lake of moonlight (which continues a long series of *yin* symbolism in the novel), from the bottom of whose waters come "hot arms" that "wrap tightly around me, and pull me down, pull me down."[46]

How could Chang Hsien-liang the humanist (or Marxist humanist) have

[41] Ibid., p. 534 (206). [42] Ibid., p. 538 (212). [43] Ibid., p. 540 (214).
[44] Ibid., p. 538 (272–73). [45] Ibid., p. 574 (260). [46] Ibid., p. 592 (285).

cast his triumph of good over evil as a triumph of politics over women? My answer is that Chang Yung-lin is acting as one might expect a concentration-camp survivor to act: that Chang Hsien-liang is consciously or unconsciously writing realistically, not just crafting a symbolic novel of moral and political didacticism. Even as an ordinary person, Chang Yung-lin's shifting psychology is all too human. A middle-class intellectual, he seems in his heart of hearts to have viewed Huang Hsiang-chiu, the adulteress and two-time divorcee, as beneath him. It was his lack of self-esteem that had leveled the ground between them and let him contemplate marriage to her. When he became a hero, regained his potency, and acquired a revitalized vision of himself building a new world in which intellectuals are not evil, the power balance between himself and Huang reversed itself. Her infidelity gave him the excuse he needed. Having come again to see himself as too good for her, he was easily able to rationalize the break, on behalf of "higher ideals."

CHANG YUNG-LIN AS A CONCENTRATION-CAMP SURVIVOR

First, let us examine the intended core problem of *Half of Man Is Woman*: sex. There can be little doubt about the plausibility of a concentration-camp prisoner, or a survivor for some years after that, being impotent. The troubling thing, from the standpoint of authenticity, is that many camp survivors were traumatized even more than that. After a review of the voluminous survivor literature, Terrence Des Pres concludes that "One of the striking things about the concentration-camp experience — and there is enormous evidence on this point — is that under conditions of privation and horror the need for sex disappears. It simply is not there, neither in feeling nor in fantasy, neither the desire nor the drive." Quoting the survivor Alexander Donat, he notes that "Women lost their periods; men lost their urge." And, said an Auschwitz survivor, "even in his dreams the prisoner did not seem to concern himself with sex."[47]

This might cast a shadow over *Half of Man Is Woman*, with its many sexual fantasies and dreams, notably the visit in Chang Yung-lin's dream of the alluring ghost of a young woman who hanged herself. We might of course reason that Chang Hsien-liang allowed his character still to have unconscious sexual fantasies out of poetic license, since the physical impotence that is his primary symbol of human degradation inside and outside the camps

[47] Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (New York: Oxford U. P., 1976), p. 189.

succeeds only if there is sexual desire as a foil. Or it might be that Chang Hsien-liang did not really experience an "extreme situation" after all. Or it might well be that Des Pres discusses more extreme situations than those in Chang's and Bettelheim's camps, ones more common in the death camps (like Auschwitz) than those whose purpose, earlier in the Nazi regime, was to terrorize the inmates and the outer society into obedience.

Bettelheim's observations not only support Chang Hsien-liang's decision to use prisoner sexual fantasies as the primary symbol of his novel, they also suggest the reason for his having chosen this specific symbolism. "[The] prisoners' dread of losing their competence and integration found openest expression in fears for their potency," Bettelheim notes. "Virtually every prisoner was afraid of becoming impotent, and was tempted by the anxiety to verify his potency. That meant either homosexual practices or masturbation."[48] Such behavior is not mentioned in *Half of Man Is Woman*, but there is another implicit thematic link between the Chinese and German camps as the two men understood them. Says Bettelheim, "The dread of becoming impotent was closely related to infantile castration anxiety, a fear revived by S.S. threats of castration."[49] In *Half of Man Is Woman*, the castration threat is presented symbolically not only in the gelding, who takes himself to be Chang Yung-lin's alter ego (a comparison the hero is at pains to deny), but in the form of Huang Hsiang-chiu, who after Chang's refusal to ravish her in the reed marsh brandishes a scythe at him the next day and whispers of wanting to "butcher" him. Chang Hsien-liang's organization of his novel around impotence and its meaning — sexual, psychological, and political (as in the power relations between a man and a woman), is effective.

Pao Jo-wang, incidentally, seems to come down on both sides of the question. Pointing out that exhaustion, malnutrition, and the puritanism of Communist ideology led to certain impotence, he also claims that prisoners were "not at all" "tormented by unfulfillable erotic fancies." Yet he prefaces this observation with memories of a campmate who awoke one morning after a wet dream and let out "an exultant cry" for everyone to hear. He says that homosexuality was rare, since it led to instant execution. Yet he witnessed such an execution.[50]

Dreams and daydreams make up some the most imaginative and original passages in *Half of Man Is Woman*. Often Chang Hsien-liang does not draw a clear line between dream and reality; did Chang Yung-lin's horse really speak to him, was Chang dreaming (and if so, in what state of

[48] Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, pp. 198–99. [49] Ibid., p. 199.
[50] Bao and Chelminski, *Prisoner of Mao*, pp. 189, 242–43.

consciousness?), or was he going mad? Such fantasy renders the novel vulnerable to traditionalist criticism of its "modernism," but less politicized readers, too, may find the fantasy passages excessive and contrived, particularly when Chang Yung-lin joins in dialogue with Sung Chiang and Marx. In the same vein, the author's Western religious, sports, and music metaphors, and references to all manner of Westerners, from Spengler to Picasso, seem forced, if not showing off.

Even if the dream passages are "literary effects," they may in their own way reflect a concentration-camp mentality. In the Nazi camps, daydreams were important inmate defenses. Bettelheim recalls that "prisoners daydreamed almost continuously in their efforts to escape a depressing reality. The trouble was that soon they were no longer sure what was daydream and what was real."[51] Daydreams and night dreams, like some of Chang Yung-lin's, were often simple wish fulfillment. The prisoner in his fantasies would regain a psychic advantage for minor slights suffered earlier in the day at the hands of the guards, but always he suppressed thoughts about larger traumas. Furthermore, prisoners enjoyed letting their minds run wild with *collective* rumors of liberation and so forth, just as the inmates of *Half of Man Is Woman* spend much of their time exchanging ideas on how to write their utterly pointless legal appeals.

Particularly characteristic of the "old prisoners'" dreams and fantasies in German camps were megalomaniacal visions. They "would vaguely daydream of some coming cataclysm. Out of this earth shaking event they felt sure of emerging as the new leaders of Germany, if not the world. This was the least to which their sufferings entitled them. . . . In their daydreams they were certain to emerge as prominent leaders of the future, *but they were less certain they would continue to live with their wives and children, or be able to resume their roles as husbands and fathers*." Partly, Bettelheim explained, the prisoners felt that "only high public office would help them to regain standing within their families."[52]

This, of course, is an uncanny restatement of the denouement of *Half of Man Is Woman*. It is not just anachronistic but, even supposing it were the mid-1980s, totally unrealistic of Chang Yung-lin to think that a vast popular movement is waiting to be born among the masses to overthrow the totalitarian society that robbed him of his manhood. It is simply megalomaniacal of him to think that he, of all people (a still-capped Rightist) can search out the node of this new maelstrom, be accepted by it as a comrade,

[51] Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 200. [52] Ibid., pp. 167–68, emphasis mine.

and perhaps even become its leader. He leaves his wife not as much out of hatred or spite as from a desire to do something "more important." He does indeed have to prove himself; hence the exultation that he has the strength to extricate himself from her succulent marshiness. Once he has proved himself, he may return, or perhaps not. Like the prisoners in Germany, he is simply vague about that.

Chang Yung-lin's messianic purpose on earth is foreshadowed as early as part 2, when he first begins to dream of having a home: "Master of that tiny plot, I could concentrate my thoughts there and plan, plan for the future of the rest of that vast land [China]."[53] "Betrayed" by his wife, Chang identifies with Christ: "I stood up suddenly, and felt the earth spin for a moment beneath me. The pressure inside me burst out as I shouted, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"[54]

The trotting out of Western knowledge by Chang the narrator also appears to be an act of self-assertion. Bettelheim explains that the prisoners forgot meaningful events from their past lives, even the names of close relatives, and so felt upset, frustrated, and incompetent, "as if their emotional ties to the past were breaking, as if the ordinary order of importance, of the connections of experiences, was no longer valid."[55] One defense therefore was to memorize, "to prove to themselves that they were not losing their intelligence. For example, they tried to remember what they had learned in school . . . they were best able to recall . . . facts with no bearing on their present life situation . . . the names of German emperors, their dates of ascension, the names of the popes, and like facts."[56] The Chinese dissident Liu Ch'ing 劉青, famous for his 1981 account of prison life that was smuggled out by friends, also says "I tried to remember formulae in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. I made deductions and drew diagrams on the wall."[57] Chang Yung-lin, the classic Chinese intellectual, appears to be reciting his lessons, so that this part of his identity will not be lost. His evocations of world cultural authorities suggest a man struggling to maintain his individuality.

In the realm of language, one point of interest in *Half of Man Is Woman* is the constant use of foul expressions. Profanity is common in China, particularly in modern novels. But was it used by concentration-camp prisoners? Yes, even in Nazi Germany. Bettelheim found that among his comrades, there "was rarely a 'No, thank you' either in tone or in words; responses

[53] Chang, *Nan-jen*, p. 463 (English edn., p. 105). [54] Ibid., p. 503 (159).
[55] Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 167. [56] Ibid., pp. 196–97.
[57] Liu Ch'ing, "Notes from Prison," in Barmé and Minford, *Seeds*, p. 300.

were always in their harshest forms. One heard nothing but 'Idiot!' 'Go to hell!' 'Shit!' or worse; and no provoking was needed to get this in answer to a neutral question."[58] "Whore" seems to be the favored epithet in *Half of Man Is Woman*. Such talk was, Bettelheim believes, a modest means of self-assertion. "But in the process one came a step closer to the S.S. way of meeting life and its problems."[59]

It comes as no surprise that concentration-camp prisoners, and survivors, have difficulty with human relationships. Bettelheim notes that many survivors "remain debilitated by the *conviction* that they cannot achieve a viable integration" of their personalities.[60] Even newly arrived prisoners in the camps felt ambivalence toward their families outside the camps, because of their "desire to return to the world as exactly the person they had been," while friends and family continued to change. They might even be blamed by the prisoners for changes in themselves.[61] Chang Yung-lin's social ineptness with Huang Hsiang-chiu (after he regains potency and she does everything humanly possible to please him) seem in part a credible reflection of the "survivor syndrome,"[62] in which the ex-prisoner thrusts the burden of his reintegration on family members. He evinces an elemental difficulty with loving and hating, seeing his marriage almost from the outset as a "jail"—a comparison that cannot but distract from his political insight that all Chinese society is really a jail. Particularly interesting is *Passionate Words from a Village Gulag*, whose prisoner-hero Shih Tsai momentarily wills his mother (outside the camp) to die, evidently because he cannot imagine the pain of her witnessing the low state to which he has fallen.[63] The outburst is not just rhetorical, for Shih Tsai marvels at having cursed his own mother and begins to ponder the implications. Naturally the realization depresses him still further.

Bettelheim goes so far as to say that concentration-camp prisoners develop "types of behavior which are characteristic of infancy or early youth," of which the ambivalence toward family, despondency, daydreaming, and messianism (the outlook of a child wanting to control his environment) are partial manifestations.[64] Pao Jo-wang is 110 percent in agreement: "Our relationship with the state was that of child-parent"; "We were very well behaved. Model children." He notes that one prisoner, who was always whimpering and finally refused to work, "lived in such terror of dying that he reverted more and more to childhood."[65]

[58] Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 232. [59] Ibid., p. 233. [60] Ibid., p. 29.
[61] Ibid., pp. 71–72. [62] Ibid., p. 29. [63] Chang, *T'u-lao ch'ing-hua*, p. 9.
[64] Bettelheim, *Surviving*, pp. 75–76; Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, pp. 131, 168.
[65] Bao and Chelminski, *Prisoner of Mao*, pp. 53, 71, 184.

Chang Yung-lin is too much the hero, seen through his own narration, to betray overt juvenile characteristics, except in the individual phenomena just now so interpreted. But "regression" constantly worries him. He sees himself returning not to infancy but to animalism. This fits the elevation, in his own distorted scheme of values, of political and intellectual striving to save China, at the expense of the bestiality and ephemerality of sex. The most striking revelation of Chang's regression to childhood is no doubt that fear of the power of women which he so often states, as in the coda to *Half of Man Is Woman* previously quoted: "Women will never possess the men they have created." Chang Yung-lin is escaping Huang Hsiang-chiu as if she were his mother.

Bettelheim's most famous observation about concentration-camp prisoners is that in time they come to see camp life as their *real* life (rather than their past and potential future life outside the camps), and to identify with the S.S. and their values.[66] Even the thought of liberation by a foreign army worried prisoners of the Germans, because they had come to identify with "the new Germany." They became "afraid of returning to the outer world."[67] As Chang Yung-lin admits in *Mimosa*, getting used to freedom after one's release is hard. "I still needed someone to boss me about."[68] Bettelheim's conclusion stirred much controversy, but discourse about Chinese survivors of extreme situations already revolves around brainwashing; prisoners' adaptation to the new world created by their oppressors is taken for granted. This may help to explain some of the greatest anomalies within *Half of Man Is Woman*.

At the heart of the novel is the equation of Chinese society under socialism (or at least during the Cultural Revolution) with jail. But the novel is even more extreme than that. In the dialectic of inner (inside the towering walls) and outer (ordinary society) which Chang Yung-lin weaves, the camp is actually *more* restful than ordinary living: it is even "a haven of peace" (*shih-wai t'ao-yüan* 世外桃源). Again, "the life of a prisoner offers certain insights, and also certain rewards. . . . With the Outside as it is, a gang labor camp is the more rational place."[69] We who have never experienced the Chinese Gulag can easily take Chang's explanation as a figure of speech exposing how horrible (and like a "concentration camp") all China had become. It is also conceivable that the passage of time and a successful adjustment to outside society could ease a survivor into claiming that camp

[66] Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, pp. 169–73. [67] Bettelheim, *Surviving*, p. 68.
[68] Chang, *Lü-hua-shu*, p. 227 (English edn., p. 12).
[69] Chang, *Nan-jen*, pp. 395, 391 (English edn., pp. 12, 6).

life was preferable to life outside. As we noted before, Bettelheim himself, in a charitable moment, spoke of all the Germans as having lived in "that wider concentration camp which was the Third Reich." But I hope it is by now apparent that such statements are incredible if taken literally.

One could of course object that Chang Hsien-liang was departing from his usual realistic mode of writing, or that he was writing flippantly (a reporter notes that Chinese citizens out on the street, even former inmates, like to say that "life in China is so oppressive that the camps are a relief"),[70] or that he was entering into a literary tradition of "happy prison fiction" that goes back to the nineteenth-century West, in which prisons are redemptive places where the soul may take comfort from oppression, find inner freedom amid confinement, develop powers of concentration and imagination, even come to a different understanding of confinement, as coming in the first instance from the body itself, so that social confinement vanishes into triviality.[71] But I find no evidence of any of these conditions. Ts'ung Wei-hsi had indeed by the mid-1980s created a kind of "happy prison fiction" with female prison warders falling in love with and rescuing inmates and so forth; one can also find in his fiction melodramatic heroic values continuous with those in Maoist fiction about the horrors of K.M.T. prisons (like *Red Crag*); works like Ts'ung's *Ta-ch'iang hsia te hung yü-lan* 大墻下的紅玉蘭 (*The Red Magnolia under the Towering Wall*, 1978) infuriated Liu Pin-yen 劉賓雁 for their "new false realism," which still sang paeans to the forces of order and castigated the sincere voices of spontaneity, if not democracy.[72] Chang Hsien-liang's earlier work *Passionate Words from a Village Gulag* may be partly indebted to this trend. But *Half of Man Is Woman* distinguishes itself by having climbed out of that trap. It subverts the whole socialist vision of a necessarily happy future. I find it more convincing to read *Half of Man as Woman* as a realistic psychological investigation of Chang Yung-lin, as a man

[70] Nicholas D. Kristof, "Twenty Months of Prison Torment (for the Warden)," *New York Times*, April 5, 1991, quotes former inmate Chang Wei-kuo, a lawyer: "Whether you're inside or outside, it's just about the same for the Chinese." During twenty months of "constant browbeating" in which he lost fifteen pounds, he was never allowed a visit from his family, and was allowed outside for exercise only once.

[71] See Victor Brombert, *The Romantic Prison: The French Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1978), a book kindly brought to my attention by Philip Williams.

[72] Liu Binyan, "Stark Truth vs. 'False Realism': The Book that Stunned Beijing," trans. Howard Goldblatt, *New York Times Book Review*, November 6, 1988, pp. 3, 36. Here the perpetrator of "false realism" is not named, but at the occasion of Liu's April 2, 1991, Princeton University "China Initiative" talk, I learned from Liu that it had been Ts'ung. Although written after Chang's *Passionate Words*, one exquisitely nonsensical novel with a warden's-female-relative-loves-and-rescues-prisoner theme (also seen in Alexandre Dumas's *La Tulipe noire*) is Ts'ung Wei-hsi, *Feng lei yen* 風淚眼, in *Ts'ung Wei-hsi chi* 從維熙集 (Foochow: Hai-hsia wen-i, 1986), pp. 1–86.

who has adjusted to the camps so well as to see them as relatively benign (or life outside the camps as impossibly terrifying), and who perhaps has unknowingly adopted other elements of the ideology of his oppressors as well. Among them are hatred of his own "bourgeois" background, and acceptance of Marxist-Leninist dialectics as his system of thinking.

No one would dream of saying that Nazi Germany was so totalitarian that one might have found refuge in its concentration camps—except, perhaps, for a kapo (prisoner foreman). And Chang Yung-lin is, indeed, a kapo. That fact is emphasized in the second and third sentences of the novel. Chang Yung-lin is evidently proud of being a kapo, intent on telling us from the outset just how many men he supervises (a detail of twelve men, and at another time, sixty-four), and anxious to indicate that this means the leaders have special trust in him. By this he evidently reasserts his self-esteem, as if he were indeed still a bourgeois. Having earned the leaders' trust, Chang's whole detail is allowed to live apart from the main brigade, in a little fallen-down house of their own. Only Chang is there to account for them.

> I was the supervisor of this effort, so naturally I carried more. In a labor camp there is no other mark of recognition. . . . "Reform through labor" was our assigned occupation, and that is what we did. If you did it better, you got special treatment. You got the distinction of being allowed to manage others, being allowed to shit on others rather than be shat on. You got "trust," and the title of "free prisoner." And when the day was done and you marched back in the ranks to the "big ladle," you didn't get one, you got two.[73]

So Chang Yung-lin honestly indicates that those who were admired by the camp guards got promoted, in these near starvation conditions, to the all-important luxury of double rations. How far his special status must have separated Chang Yung-lin from the world of values of the ordinary prisoners is obliquely revealed in one of the tasks with which he is charged: to prevent sabotage. He identifies with the cadres deeply enough to speak of this work in a moralizing tone. After comparing brigade leader Wang to "a shepherd surveying the flocks he had just fed," Chang notes that "We field supervisors had other work to do. If we weren't careful the men would quietly sabotage the work, digging open the irrigation channels, trampling down the dikes. They put little value on their work, and they valued that of others even less."[74] More directly: "The criminals of the Main Brigade

[73] Chang, *Nan-jen*, p. 393 (English edn., p. 9).

[74] Ibid., p. 418 (40).

blamed the weeds on the supervisors. Not able to fulfill their quotas, they focused their frustration on us. Paddies we had painstakingly filled would suddenly be drained. Water that was flowing smoothly would suddenly flood, breaking down restraining walls."[75] Still, Chang feels superior because of his camp-conferred status:

> When I next straightened up to throw another bundle of weeds on the bank, I exploded with a feeling of tallness, as though I were the hero in a tragedy. All the prisoners bending over around me were like the robbers with Christ at Golgotha. I felt myself the "Son of God," and first a feeling of superiority and then a sense of compassion welled up within me.[76]

What self-betrayals Chang Yung-lin must inevitably have made to be promoted above the others are not part of his mental world—perhaps he blocks them out of his narrative, because of shame. (The inmates of *Half of Man Is Woman* like to speak of women who have offered themselves sexually to camp guards, but there is little indication of what the men may have offered.) He rationalizes that "A prisoner, confined and humiliated, must survive by making himself feel bigger."[77] The other novels, however, do address the compromises that the average prisoner (not the kapo) makes in order to stay alive, and the attendant guilt. In *Passionate Words from a Village Gulag*, the hero wrestles with guilt after using false pretenses to get the woman camp guard who admires and trusts him to smuggle his letters out of camp: "At the time I was angry with myself for being able to lie to her, and also angry that I could feel angry for having lied."[78] Later, under pressure, he even compromises the secret of their special relationship, endangering her. In *Mimosa*, Chang Yung-lin is notable for his many indications of having internalized "proletarian" values and having truly come to hate himself as a "bourgeois." Even more interesting is this classic statement of "survivor syndrome" guilt: "In the daytime [while in the camp] my instinct for self-preservation drove me to ingratiate myself and resort to all kinds of tricks. At night I was horrified by my contemptible behavior, revolted by my conduct during the day. I shuddered and cursed myself. I was fully aware of just how low I'd sunk."[79] Note, in any case, that Chang Hsien-liang's prisoner-heroes, however compromised, keep themselves together psychically by holding on to moral values and rationalizating that they are moral persons. They do not consider amoral survivorship a noble

[75] Ibid. [76] Ibid., pp. 392–93 (8–9). [77] Ibid., p. 393 (9).
[78] Chang, *T'u-lao ch'ing-hua*, p. 55. [79] Chang, *Lü-hua-shu*, p. 240 (English edn., p. 21).

end in itself, the viewpoint Bettelheim charged *Seven Beauties* with propagating, and which he categorically repudiated as uncharacteristic of camp life and a dangerously false lesson for the Outside.

One other notable self-aggrandizing fantasy enters the mental world of Chang Hsien-liang's imprisoned intellectual heroes, a mirror opposite to the anti-bourgeois sentiments expressed in *Mimosa*. It is the conceit that ideological offenders like themselves (Rightists), instead of being lower in the pecking order than ordinary criminals (as they surely were, by official Maoist values and the consensus on the Outside), are really recognized, *in the camps*, as superior to the petty thieves and morals offenders: "Within a labor gang it is the political prisoner who is trusted, although admittedly the trust comes in limited ways. 'Criminals'—or moral degenerates—receive very different treatment."[80] This fantasy of social superiority within the camp, seemingly best explained by Chang Yung-lin's kapo status, is supported by especially understanding prison guards who surround Chang Hsien-liang's heroes. One is the sympathetic cadre Wang who has helped Chang Yung-lin to transfer out of the big brigade into a freer status. Another, in a fantasy to end all fantasies, is the lovely peasant guard girl of *Passionate Words from a Village Gulag*. She secretly gives the prisoner Shih Tsai extra rations, even *confides in him* that she knew all along (even before he heroically saved a woman's life) that intellectual Rightists like him are really more moral than most Chinese. Finally she falls in love with him.[81]

Chang Yung-lin's and Shih Tsai's identification with their guards is evidently fairly advanced. Their rationalization is that the guards do not really hold the values of the Outside, but rather the intellectual prisoners' own Rightist values. Bettelheim explains that "once prisoners adopted a childlike attitude toward the S.S., they had a desire for at least some of those whom they accepted as all-powerful father-images to be just and kind."[82] Furthermore, they divided their positive and negative feelings toward their oppressors in such a way that the positive feelings fell particularly on the more distant administrators high up in the camp hierarchy. Chang Yung-lin and Shih Tsai break this pattern in that they both have high regard for some of their immediate superiors. But Chang Yung-lin, like the German

[80] Chang, *Nan-jen*, p. 390 (English edn., p. 6).
[81] Chang, "Kuan-yü T'u-lao ch'ing-hua" 關於土牢情話, in his *Hsieh hsiao-shuo te pien-cheng-fa* 寫小說的辯証法 (Shanghai: Shang-hai wen-i ch'u-pan-she, 1987), pp. 73–74, says that once he really was guarded by a gentle armed female warder. She was his model for the heroine of *Passionate Words from a Village Gulag*. With her nearby, he began having romantic fantasies; it was by recreating these that he spun out his novella.
[82] Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 172.

inmates, also has infantile hopes for salvation by those at the top, notably Chou En-lai and (strangely, for a Rightist) Deng Xiaoping.

To end with just a small jolt of reality: how much was Chang Yung-lin really trusted? Not enough, evidently, even years after his release, to be able to get a marriage license with the approval of his local cadre. Part of the problem was that he, the thought criminal, was sullying the record of Huang Hsiang-chiu — a fellow Reform-Through-Labor inmate, but, after all, just a morals offender — one of those "criminals" that Chang Yung-lin had felt superior to in camp.

CONCLUSION

A reading of *Half of Man Is Woman* as social argument shows Chang Hsien-liang to be interested in the same problem as Bruno Bettelheim: "Autonomy in a Mass Age" (as Bettelheim subtitled his major book on the concentration-camp experience, *The Informed Heart*), or maintaining at least a part of one's "original" ego in the face of extreme pressure from the state. Both men take prison camps to be symptomatic *and* symbolic of a monstrous totalitarian pathology.

But *Half of Man Is Woman* is also realistic, in an eerie way. As Chang Yung-lin narrates his sad tale, he, in both his perceptiveness and his lack of self-understanding, reveals himself to be the victim of a unique psychological trauma. Unique, but not absolutely unique. His consciousness is that of a concentration-camp survivor.

One cannot help asking, since the novel is autobiographical, if Chang Hsien-liang deliberately drew so unsentimentally upon his own experiences in order to paint a realistic portrait of a man mentally crippled by the camps. Or might the psychological realism of the novel be partly unconscious? Might Chang Hsien-liang unknowingly have put his own emotions and perceptions into Chang Yung-lin (who does not appear to have been used ironically, as an unreliable narrator), unwittingly baring his own darker motivations? Without more information — we do not even know if Chang Hsien-liang was himself a kapo, and China has no psychiatrists, a fact bewailed by Liu Pin-yen and Hsiao Ch'ien 蕭乾[60] — the inner springs of Chang's creativity must remain a mystery, and there are no doubt some who think that this is as it should be. But those of us whose curiosity extends beyond texts to the writers themselves must ask if Chang Hsien-liang's

[60] Liu spoke on this at a 1990 Columbia University symposium on human rights; see also Hsiao Ch'ien, *Traveller*, p. 106.

grand nine-volume project is not itself an aspect of the "survivor syndrome," which Bettelheim and others characterized by its guilt feelings. Assuming that Chang Hsien-liang is so burdened, one might then ask whether Chang has denied his special status as a survivor (and attempted to return to his old role as a writer as if nothing had happened to him internally), or if he is, perhaps through his novels, working through his mental injuries, as Bettelheim always counseled.

I see signs of the latter. Chang Hsien-liang's fiction as discussed above is already deeper and franker than Ts'ung Wei-hsi's. Ts'ung, too, appears to be an emotionally scarred survivor of a traumatic camp experience; one might speculate that he, like many another survivor, has projected his guilt feelings onto the rest of society. His camp years are a Red Magnolia of Courage, a badge of hurt proudly worn. There is every reason to believe that Chang Hsien-liang is looking for weakness in his own psyche. In *Getting Used to Dying*, he grapples directly with the psychological scars of being a survivor, taking a completely new tack, both artistically and existentially.

Chang Hsien-liang's latest novel does not lend itself to neat analysis or quick summary. Skillfully tidied up in the English-language edition (which I consider in some ways superior to the Chinese original) into fifty-two distinct chapters, each with a title and typically two subtitles identifying two disparate times and places in which the chapter's action is to unfold, *Getting Used to Dying* is the tale of a Chinese prison-camp survivor who, liberated by China's "new era," has become a celebrated author able to flit between Peking, San Francisco, New York, and Paris, and between imagined copulations with quite as many Old/New World females, all deracinated by their respective kitschy cultures.

There are numerous seemingly random flashbacks to the hero's four stints in prison and many close brushes there with suicide and death. From these it may be determined that the narrator has a past history nearly identical with Chang Hsien-liang's. But not quite; the dates of the narrator's trips abroad are not exactly the same as the author's, and his many females make no particular claim to be other than fictitious. Nor can one positively identify this narrator as Chang Yung-lin, spinning out a sequel to *Half of Man Is Woman* (continuing it to his suicide in 2001, and retelling his camp horror stories in new ways), for he is never named. *Getting Used to Dying* is not named as a book in the formerly projected (now possibly abandoned) nine-volume project, *The Making of a Materialist*, either. But the new narrator shares with Chang Yung-lin in *Mimosa* the unique defining episode of having crawled out of a pile of corpses, after being given up for dead during the

famine of the Great Leap Forward. In my judgment he is, at least spiritually, an extension of Chang Yung-lin, with a more developed, perhaps a more chastened — but also a wearier and more cynical — personality.

Far more important than the novel's new details about camp life, such as the sadistic practice of bringing an inmate before a firing squad just to terrorize him (whence the novel's title), is the newly subjective and fragmented manner of the telling. The narrator is one person in two egos, a dominant "I," and a "he" whom "I" intermittently refers to having killed (he committed suicide) in the year 2001. It is in fact the third-person passages about "him" that create an illusion of omniscient understanding of "his" innermost thoughts, and thus of omniscient self-understanding — a series of assessments that are unsparingly unsentimental, even if excessively portentous, in this effort to scale the philosophical heights of Kundera. Fortunately for the reader, the English edition provides parallel chronologies of the crisscrossing nonconsecutive events in the narrator's life and the actual life history of Chang Hsien-liang, thereby reducing *Getting Used to Dying* to mere *As I Lay Dying* difficulty.

The relentless third-person analysis of the hero presents the flashback memories of horrors and absurdities from the old prison camps in a new light, not just as literary flashbacks, but as mental phenomena in real time — possibly post-traumatic stress disorder flashbacks. The splitting of the narrator's personality, too, may be interpreted as Chang Hsien-liang's decision to depict his survivor persona as schizophrenic. He is also revealed as masochistic (the "I" who destroys the "he") and suicidal ("he"). New depths of self-analysis are reached by means of these ultimately rather unfathomable narrative voices.

The survivor in *Getting Used to Dying*, in talking about his other ego and his desired lover like Kundera's telling the tale of Tomas and Tereza, is quite aware that his past has *detached* him from the normal world of life, love, and other emotions: "His own misfortune was that he had lost the ability to be happy; hers was not understanding a man who had so often been close to death."[84] And in the first person: "I realize I have been so reformed that I am no longer tolerant of pleasure. I have spent a lifetime learning how to withstand hardship — asking me to enjoy myself now is asking too much. Ultimately, it is easier for me to suffer."[85]

One of the main threads of plot in *Getting Used to Dying*, as in the earlier

[84] Zhang, *Getting Used to Dying*, p. 56. All translated passages are from this English edition by Avery.

[85] Ibid., p. 123.

novels, is the narrator's inability to have normal relations with women. The narrator has a new subjective understanding of this in the latest novel. Says the dominant "I," taking the role of superego to criticize the "he," "He had always been trampled on by others but he had, in turn, trampled on women." "The truth was that his heart could no longer accommodate love . . . he had betrayed the heart of any woman before he ever began making love."[86] To feminist critics, then, it should be clear that Chang Hsien-liang, now if not before, is aware that his heroes are male chauvinists; he is not unknowingly parading his own unexamined prejudices before the reader. The character even evinces understanding that becoming a kapo changed him: "I saw that I would have become arrogant, for I had been designated captain of a team of convicts."[87] Self-assumptions that may or may not have been conscious in the earlier novels thus are clearly conscious by the time of this writing.

Judgment of the progress of Chang Hsien-liang's art may be more problematic. *Half of Man Is Woman* was very frank for the mid-1980s, and it contains many beautiful passages setting off the human world against the natural. Read as a realistic novel, however, it is intriguing without being definitively probing. Read with modern Western expectations — that the novel of atrocity will probe ultimate evil through mind-bending and reality-bending in the tradition of Kafka, one cannot claim that China has yet found its Arthur Koestler, its Paul Celan, or its Elie Wiesel. *Getting Used to Dying* may be counted a new departure, but Chang will have to assert his independence from Kundera in his next work. From its aphorisms to its sexual references; from its larger visions of sexual intercourse as personal annihilation to its details, such as the dog named Freedom (Tomas's dog Karenin, after *Anna Karenina*), *Getting Used to Dying* is too much an imitation of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. But Chang Hsien-liang is continuing to explore both his art and the resources of his tortured psyche. Perhaps the chief decision before him now is whether to continue with deep self-analysis or seek a more popular audience with sensational exhibitionism. The choice is his — if China will continue to let him write.

[86] Ibid., pp. 12, 21. [87] Ibid., p. 177.