‘JIAN BEI PIAN’: LAO SHE’S FORGOTTEN WARTIME EPIC POEM

by

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Abstract

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This thesis is the first English-language critical study of Chinese author Lao She’s (1899-1966) wartime epic ballad Jian bei pian and includes the ballad’s first translation into English. The thesis addresses a gap in knowledge about his work, a gap previously covered by simplistic labelling of it as patriotic propaganda. Lao She’s reputation in the West largely rests on his modern fiction, although his literary output covered many genres, generating at different times in his life the full range of reactions in China between popular acclaim and violent censure. Much of his writing, done during periods of intense cultural and political upheaval in China, reflected the events through which he lived. Jian bei pian, his poetic record of a journey through northern China during the Second Sino-Japanese War, is unique, both of its time and outside of its time, yet it has received relatively little attention from critics in China or in the West. Recent Chinese studies on Jian bei pian have highlighted the poem’s patriotic elements, retrospectively interpreting it as an endorsement of China’s Communist Party and deeming it part of his wartime nation-building literature. In the West Jian bei pian has been almost completely ignored, apart from observations which similarly focus on its imputed status as patriotic propaganda and condemn or dismiss it for that reason.

This thesis evaluates the evidence for and against Jian bei pian’s significance and effectiveness as wartime propaganda by examining the poem through frameworks of nation-building theory. Textual analysis of Jian bei pian’s images of China, its narrative treatment of China’s history, and of culturally significant periods and sites, finds that the patriotic rhetoric is inconsistent. This finding echoes recent work of some Western scholars who have observed contradictions and insecurities in Lao
She’s pre-war and wartime fiction that undermined his ability to convey a patriotic message. In rejecting *Jian bei pian* as nation-building, the thesis argues that Lao She’s writing of the poem was primarily driven by personal factors. Against the background of his recorded views, expressed motives and comments on the circumstances in which the poem was written, further textual analysis focuses on *Jian bei pian*’s diverse features reflecting the influence of traditional and classical elements of Chinese culture. This analysis of the poem’s composition, in both form and subject matter, highlights the importance of China’s classical poetry for Lao She, and suggests that *Jian bei pian*, in its travelogue depictions of a China where geography is overlaid with a sense of its history, literature and art, may belong in China’s classical *jiyoushi* (poems about travel) tradition – aspects of *Jian bei pian* recently noted by a few Chinese scholars but previously overlooked in the West.
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Acknowledgements

Many people have been part of my journey of discovering Lao She’s China. They include first of all my supervisors Dr Limin Bai and Dr Megan Evans with their insightful guidance and patient reassurance; former and current colleagues at the School of Languages and Cultures Dr Alessandro Macilenti, Dr Edwina Palmer, Dr Marco Sonzogni, Dr Mukta Dausoa, Dr Richard Millington, and Professor Yiyan Wang with their collegial encouragement, advice and example; Tony Quinn of Victoria University Library with his ever-ready help and suggestions. I owe a special debt to Duncan Campbell who first introduced me to the Chinese classics and has continued to be a source of inspiration and support with his comments on drafts of my thesis. I am grateful to my husband Phil for letting me drag him to China on our first trip then insisting we return for a second, and to my late father Rodney Owen Sinclair, who gave me his calendar of Ming and Qing dynasty scroll paintings and asked “Where are you going with all this Chinese study?” I hope his question is answered.
Map 1: Lao She’s journey as recorded in *Jian bei pian*

Map adapted from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Location_map_China_Northern_Plain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Location_map_China_Northern_Plain), under Creative Commons Licence Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 New Zealand.
Map 2: Lao She’s ascent of Huashan as recorded in canto 27

North Peak (1614 m.)

Blue Dragon Ridge

Quanshanguan

Hundred-foot Gorge

Thousand-foot Precipice

Yuxian Monastery

Mingkeping

Maonu Cave

Jintian Palace

South Heaven Gate

Chaoyuan Cave

West Peak (2083 m.)

South Peak (2155 m.)

Finsuoguan

Middle Peak (2037 m.)

Bajing Palace

East Peak (2096 m.)

Jade Spring Monastery

Xyi Gorge

Shaluo Plain

Not to scale
# Table of Chinese dynastic periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynasty name</th>
<th>Also known as</th>
<th>Coterminous with</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xia</td>
<td>Ancient or Legendary Period</td>
<td>22nd – 18th century BCE</td>
<td>22nd – 18th century BCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shang</td>
<td></td>
<td>17th – 11th century BCE</td>
<td>17th – 11th century BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou</td>
<td>Western Zhou</td>
<td>11th century – 770 BCE</td>
<td>11th century – 770 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Zhou</td>
<td>770 – 5th century BCE</td>
<td>770 – 5th century BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring &amp; Autumn Period</td>
<td></td>
<td>5th century BCE – 221 BCE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Warring States Period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Qin</td>
<td></td>
<td>221 – 206 BCE</td>
<td>221 – 206 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>Western Han</td>
<td>206 BCE – 220 CE</td>
<td>206 BCE – 220 CE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xin Dynasty</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Han</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Three Kingdoms</td>
<td>Cao Wei - Shu Han – Sun Wu</td>
<td>Six Dynasties</td>
<td>220 – 280</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jin</td>
<td>Western Jin</td>
<td>265 – 420</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern and Northern Dynasties</td>
<td>Northern Wei period c.496</td>
<td>420 – 589</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western Wei period 535 - 556</td>
<td></td>
<td>420 – 589</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sui</td>
<td></td>
<td>581 – 618</td>
<td>581 – 618</td>
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<td>Tang</td>
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<td>618 – 907</td>
<td>618 – 907</td>
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<td>Five Dynasties &amp; Ten Kingdoms</td>
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<td>907 – 960</td>
<td>907 – 960</td>
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<tr>
<td>Song</td>
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<td>Western Xia (Tangut) 1038 to 1227 Great Jin (Jurchen) 1115–1234</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Southern Song</td>
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<td>960 – 1279</td>
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<td>Yuan</td>
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<td>1271 – 1368</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qing</td>
<td></td>
<td>1644 – 1911</td>
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# Table of Chinese measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese character</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Measurement equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>亩</td>
<td>mu</td>
<td>0.07 hectare/0.16 acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>顷</td>
<td>qing</td>
<td>100 mu 亩 6.67 hectares.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>寸</td>
<td>cun</td>
<td>3.6 cm/one-tenth of the Chinese foot (the Chinese ‘inch’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>尺</td>
<td>chi</td>
<td>36 cm or one-third of a metre (the Chinese ‘foot’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>丈</td>
<td>zhang</td>
<td>3.3 metres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>里</td>
<td>li</td>
<td>half a kilometre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weight</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>担</td>
<td>dan</td>
<td>50 kg (1 picul or 100 catties; traditional Asian measures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>更</td>
<td>geng</td>
<td>one of 5 two-hour watch periods between 7 pm and 5 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>点</td>
<td>dian</td>
<td>24 minutes/one-fifth of a geng</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Adapted from: Mathews’ Chinese-English dictionary* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1943)
Chapter One - Introduction

In May 1942 a 1000-copy print-run of a volume of poetry rolled off a press in Chongqing. Its cryptic title Jian bei pian 《剑北篇》 referred to a journey through and beyond the mountain pass of Jianmen, a narrow gorge in northern Sichuan enclosed by rapier-like peaks whose striking topography (sometimes translated as ‘Sword Gate Pass’) has featured notably in China’s classical literature.1 But this journey was taken in the midst of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)2 by a group from Chongqing sent to support China’s troops fighting on the northern front. With echoes in parts of the Long March taken by the Red Army just five years earlier, the group visited Yan’an, the base for China’s Communist Party (CCP), and reached as far as Inner Mongolia, Gansu, and Qinghai. Their expedition was recorded by one of its members,3 Lao She老舍 (1899-1966), a well-known author of modern fiction, as an epic but unfinished ballad in 27 cantos – Jian bei pian.

Lao She, born Shu Qingchun舒庆春4 in Beijing in February 1899, was the last of eight children. Left fatherless by the Boxer Uprising at the age of eighteen months, he

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1 For instance, Tang dynasty poets Li Bai李白 (701-762) in Shu dao nan 蜀道难 [Hard Roads of Shu] and Bai Juyi白居易 (772-846) in Chang hen ge 长恨歌 [Song of Everlasting Regret]; Southern Song dynasty poet Lu You陆游 (1125-1210) in Jianmendao zhongwu weiyu 剑门道中遇微雨 [Caught in drizzle at Sword Gate Pass]; the Tang Emperor Xuanzong唐玄宗 (reigned 712-756) in Xing Shu xizi Jianmen 幸蜀西至剑门 [Reaching Sword Gate Pass after travelling through Shu].

2 Also known as the War of Resistance against Japan (Kang Ri zhan zheng 抗日战争) or War of Resistance (Kangzhan抗战). In a general sense Kangzhan means any war of resistance against aggression, but acquired this specific meaning during the 2nd Sino-Japanese War.

3 Laughlin describes this group as “an Army service corps” organised by the Nationalist Army and accompanied by a delegation of writers and artists led by Lao She: Charles A. Laughlin, “The All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists,” in Literary societies of Republican China, ed. Kirk A. Denton and Michel Hockx (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), pp.386, 403. However the group may have mostly comprised Kuomintang 国民党 (KMT) political cadres and journalists associated with KMT media, with Lao She the only writer of note: Sugimoto Tatsuo杉本达夫, "Yousheng de nahan yu wusheng de nahan - guanyu Lao She dui bei lu weiwen tuan de taidu有声的呐喊与无声的呐喊 - 关于老舍对北路慰问团的态度 [Voiced and unvoiced rallying cries - Lao She’s attitude towards the ACRAWA northern expedition],” Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan, no. 2 (1993), pp.198-199.

4 Of Manchu ancestry, his Manchu family name was Sumuru舒穆禄. Some of his very early work appeared under the name Shu Qingchun (including assisting with Clement Egerton’s translation of the 17th century erotic novel Jin Ping Mei金瓶梅 [The Golden Lotus] for which he was credited as ‘C.C. Shu). However by the late 1920s he had adopted his pen-name of Lao She: William A Lyell, “Lao
was brought up by his widowed mother in a working-class neighbourhood. Despite
the family’s impoverishment, his mother ensured that he received educational
opportunities allowing him to escape the hardship and constraints of his origins.\(^5\)
After graduating from Beijing’s teacher training college, he worked for the next six
years as a teacher or in educational administration. During this time he began
attending English language classes at Yanjing University, a Christian university in
Beijing. In 1924, through the recommendations of one of his English teachers, he
went to England on a five-year contract to teach Chinese language at the London
University School of Oriental Studies.

Lao She’s years in London launched his writing career. His teaching duties apparently
left him time to read and familiarise himself with a range of Western literature,
particularly British authors.\(^6\) Reportedly inspired\(^7\) by the work of Charles Dickens, he
began writing his first novel\(^8\) which, like his second and third, was serialised in
Chinese journals before publication in book form. By the time he returned to China in
1930, he was recognised for his pioneering use of humour, realistic characterisation,
and dialogue reflecting the street-speech of working-class Beijing. Over the next
seven years he wrote most of his acclaimed short stories and more novels, including
his best-known *Luotuo Xiangzi* 骆驼祥子 [Camel Xiangzi],\(^9\) while living in
Shandong\(^10\) and continuing in a teaching career to support his growing family.\(^11\)

The outbreak of war in 1937 triggered a dramatic change in Lao She’s life and also
in his writing. Resolving to devote his literary energies to the resistance against Japan,

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\(^6\) Lao She 老舍, "Du yu xie 读与写 [Reading and writing]," in *Lao She shenghuo yu chuangzuo zishu* ed. Hu Jieqing and Shu Ji (Hong Kong: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1980).
\(^8\) *Lao Zhang de Zhexue* 老张的哲学 [Old Zhang’s Philosophy].
\(^9\) Three short story collections appeared in 1934, 1935 and 1936 respectively; two novels were published in 1933 and another two in 1934; *Luotuo Xiangzi* was serialised over 1936-37 before publication in 1938.
\(^10\) From August 1930 to July 1934 he taught at Jinan’s Qilu University, then at Qingdao’s Shandong University until 1936 when he re-joined Qilu University, finally leaving Jinan in November 1937: Lyell, “Lao She (2006),” pp.85-89.
\(^11\) Lao She married Hu Jieqing 胡洁青 (1905-2001) in 1931. Three of their four children were born during this seven-year period.
he left his family behind and moved to Hankou (now part of Wuhan). By the beginning of 1938 he had taken on political and administrative responsibilities for a writers’ organisation formed to promote the anti-Japan resistance, despite his previous neutrality on political issues. He also diversified into writing for traditional forms of popular performing arts, as well as play-scripts for the new Chinese ‘spoken drama’ (huaju 话剧), all apparently to promote the War of Resistance. *Jian bei pian*, written mostly between February and October 1940, was perhaps the most remarkable of his attempts at writing in a traditional form. It was also the longest of his poems, and has been described as the only one of his long poems to be published during his lifetime, or alternatively as the only “collection” of his poetry published while he lived.

Yet *Jian bei pian* has received relatively little attention. No reviews at the time of its 1942 publication have been discovered in China’s mass-circulation newspapers or literary journals. His colleague, poet and essayist Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (1898-1948) apparently saw the poem, or some part of it, and commended it in a 1941 essay about developments in poetry since the start of the war.

Despite writing poetry throughout his life, Lao She never gained a reputation as a poet of significance. His collected verse began reappearing in the 1980s, with three anthologies published in Hong Kong and in mainland China with an anthology of modern verse that included nine cantos of *Jian bei pian*. In the foreword to that anthology, a contemporary of Lao She recalled receiving an author-signed copy of...

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13 Li Qingguo 李庆国, “Kangzhan shiqi Lao She chuangzuo de yi ge cemian - du Lao She shi ji ‘Jian bei pian’ 抗战时期老舍创作的一个侧面 - 读老舍诗集 《剑北篇》 [An aspect of Lao She’s War of Resistance creative work - his poem 'Jian bei pian']", Suihua Xueyuan Xuebao, no. 2 (1986), p.41.
14 Hu Jieqing 胡洁青, “Qianyan 前言 [Foreword],” in *Lao She shi xuan (jiu ben shi)* 老舍诗选(旧本诗) (Hong Kong: Jiulong shizi hui, 1980). This claim apparently discounts the first publication of his humorous verse anthology *Lao She youmo shiwen ji* 老舍幽默诗文集 in 1934, and two collections of lyrics for folk musical theatre published in 1938 and 1951 respectively.
16 Hu Jieqing, “Qianyan.”
17 Lao She 老舍, *Lao She shi xuan (jiu ben shi)* 老舍诗选 (旧本诗) [Selected poetry of Lao She (old-style verse)] (Hong Kong: Jiulong shizi hui, 1980); new editions of Lao She 老舍, *Lao She youmo shiwen ji* 老舍幽默诗文集 [Lao She's humorous verse] (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1982); Lao She 老舍, *Lao She youmo shiwen ji* 老舍幽默诗文集 [Lao She's humorous verse] (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian Xianggang fendian, 1987).
18 Zeng Guangcan 曾广灿 and Wu Huaibin 吴怀斌, eds., *Lao She xin shi xuan* 老舍新诗选 [Selected new poetry of Lao She] (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 1983).
Jian bei pian’s 1942 publication and his admiration for that poetic endeavour, asserting that: “[Jian bei pian], after its publication, was influential.”19 (This vague and difficult-to-substantiate claim should perhaps be viewed in its context of something written at the request of the author’s widow.) In 1994 a collection of Lao She’s old-style verse appeared,20 re-released in a revised and enlarged edition six years later.21

The resurgence of interest in Lao She came once he had been restored to the position of a respected writer in mainland China, almost two decades after his death (reportedly by suicide) during the Cultural Revolution. This interest has generally focused on his fiction and drama; for instance, the biographical note introducing a 1998 compilation of Lao She’s work22 makes no mention of Jian bei pian or any of the verse collections appearing after his death. The first posthumous Chinese-language biography of Lao She appeared in 1977 in Hong Kong,23 followed in 1979 by a volume of criticism and interpretation which included a bibliography of his literary output and an overview of research.24 In mainland China the first major collection of studies on Lao She and the first critical biography both appeared in 1985.25 Thereafter many Chinese critical studies or overviews of research material on Lao She have appeared,26 as well as more biographies.27 In 1982 a volume of his

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20 Zhang Guixing 张桂兴, ed. Lao She jiutishi jizhu 老舍旧体诗辑注 [Annotated compilation of Lao She's old-style poetry] (Xuzhou: Zhongguo Kuangye daxue chubanshe, 1994).
21 Zhang Guixing 张桂兴, ed. Lao She jiutishi jizhu 老舍旧体诗辑注 [Annotated compilation of Lao She's old-style poetry] (Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 2000).
23 Hu Jinquan 胡金銓, Lao She he ta de zuopin 老舍和他的作品 [Lao She and his works] (Hong Kong: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1977).
24 Huang Dongtao 黄東濤, Lao She xiao shi 老舍小識 [Notes on Lao She] (Hong Kong: Shijie chubanshe, 1979).
25 Zeng Guangcan 曾广灿 and Wu Huaibin 吴怀斌, eds., Lao She yanjiu ziliao 老舍研究资料 [Research material on Lao She] (Beijing: Shiyou wenyi chubanshe, 1985); Wang Huiyun 王惠云 and Su Qingchang 苏庆昌, eds., Lao She ping zhuan 老舍评传 [Critical biography of Lao She] (Hebei: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 1985).
26 Including: Zeng Guangcan 曾广灿, ed. Lao She yanjiu zonglan, 1929-1986 老舍研究纵览, 1929-1986 [Lao She research overview, 1929-1986] (Tianjin: Tianjin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987); Song Yongyi 宋永毅, Lao She yu zhongguo wenhua guannian 老舍与中国文化观念 [Lao She and Chinese cultural values] (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1988); Meng Guanglai 孟广来 and Meng Dan 孟丹, Meng Guanglai lun zhu ji: Lao She yan jiu 老舍论著集: Lao She research [Meng Guanglai: collected views and research on Lao She] (Tianjin: Tianjin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991); Zhang Guixing 张桂兴, Lao She ziliao kao shi 老舍資料考釋 [Research material on Lao She], 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhongguo guoji jiangbo
essays on literature and art appeared, further collections of his work in the 1980s and 1990s, and his complete works in 1999 (reissued in 2013). Since then several conferences in China have been dedicated to Lao She, with selections of papers published from at least two of their proceedings.

Since the 1980s Chinese scholars have paid more attention, albeit to a lesser degree than to his fiction or drama, to Lao She’s poetry, both old-style and modern. While Jian bei pian has not always been included in this, it features to a varying degree in work examining Lao She’s War of Resistance writing. One early essay restricts itself to outlining where and when the poem was written in order to document Lao She’s movements during 1940-1941. Another examines Jian bei pian as an example of

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27 Including: Lang Yun and Su Lei, Lao She zhuo: xie jia chunqiu 老舍传: 写家春秋 [Biography of Lao She] (Taiyuan: Beiyue wenyi chubanshe, 1988); Hao Changhai 郝长海 and Wu Huaibin 吴怀滨, eds., Lao She nianpu 老舍年谱 [Chronicle of Lao She’s life] (Anhui: Huangshan shushe, 1988); Gan Hailan 甘海岚, ed. Lao She nianpu 老舍年谱 [Chronicle of Lao She’s life] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenxue chubanshe, 1997); Guan Jixin 关纪新, Lao She ping zhuoan 老舍评传 [Critical biography of Lao She] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1998); Li Hui 李辉, Lao She 老舍 (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 2003); Pan Yiwei 潘怡为, Lao She ping zhuoan 老舍评传 [Critical biography of Lao She] (Qingdao: Qingdao chu ban she, 2009).

28 Lao She 老舍, Lao She wenyi pinglun ji 老舍文艺评论集 [Collected literary essays of Lao She] (Hefei: Anhui renmin chubanshe, 1982).


30 Lao She 老舍, Lao She quanji 老舍全集 [Complete Works of Lao She], 19 vols. (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999).


32 Li Shan 立山, “Guanyu ‘Lao she zhi ge’ ji qita - kanzhuan shiqi Lao She huodong bu zheng 关于《老舍之歌》及其他——抗战时期老舍活动补正” [Lao She's Songs' and other material - additions and updates to his War of Resistance activities], “Chongqing shifanxueyuan xuebao (Zhexue
Lao She’s modern poetry, relating its genesis to Lao She’s evolving views on poetry, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, and asserting that it stands out among the work produced by his War of Resistance literary peers. Li Qingguo’s essay focuses on four cantos of Jian bei pian dealing with Lao She’s experiences and observations in Shaanxi, particularly his impressions of Yan’an and meetings with Mao Zedong 毛泽东, but offers little in the way of critical evaluation, and overall seems mostly concerned with confirming Lao She’s credentials as patriot and supporter of the Communist revolution. Song Yongyi’s book takes a chronological approach to Jian bei pian in the context of Lao She’s work, citing only Zhu Ziqing’s 1941 essay as independent critical commentary on Jian bei pian in the context of poetry developments during the anti-Japanese war. Gan Hailan describes Jian bei pian as representing a new and significant milestone in Lao She’s poetic work, considering it to hold a rightful place in China’s tradition of long poems, and observing that the entire poem is infused with reverence for China’s ancient culture and admiration for the people’s patriotism. Guan Jixin’s critical biography devotes two chapters to Jian bei pian, citing fresh sources to augment already known details of Lao She’s journey, and claims that despite its obvious patriotism and emphasis on anti-Japan resistance the poem contains many profound observations on Chinese culture and society, finally concluding that in its vernacular narrative style Lao She “achieved… clarity and fluency”. The new millennium has seen several essays exploring the links between Lao She’s love of classical poetry and his writing of Jian bei pian. One finds similarities in the narrative poetry of Wu Meicun 吴梅村 (1609-1672) and Lao She in the way both comment on the political chaos of their times. Another notes the

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[33] Zeng Guangcan 曾广灿, "Zang ge, zhan ge, songge: du Lao She xin shi zhaji 葬歌·战歌·颂歌 - 读老舍新诗札记 [Funeral songs, battle songs, hymns of praise: notes on reading Lao She's new poetry]," Qilu xue kan, no. 6 (1982), pp.85, 88-89.
[34] Li Qingguo, "Kangzhan shiqi Lao She chuangzuo de yi ge cemian."
[35] Song Yongyi, Lao She yu zhongguo wenhua guannian, pp.263-264.
[36] Gan Hailan 甘海岚, "Lun Lao She de kangzhan wenxue chuangzuo 论老舍的抗战文学创作 [Lao She's literary creation during the War of Resistance]," Beijing shehuikexue [Beijing Social Sciences], no. 3 (1997), pp.48, 50
[38] Poet of the late Ming/early Qing dynasty, more commonly known as Wu Weiyi 吴伟业, whose epic poems reflected people and events of the Ming dynasty’s fall.
powerful formative influence that classical poetry had on Lao She, identifying Lu You’s⁴⁰ verse as a model both for Lao She’s patriotism and for his creative ideas.⁴¹ Shi Xingze pursues these observations with particular reference to Jian bei pian, describing the poem as multi-faceted, and pointing out three aspects in which it clearly reflects the influence of classical poetry.⁴² Zhang Guixing’s most recent work updating previous research on Lao She’s poetry output notes the predominance of his old-style verse, but argues that on the basis of both quantity and quality Lao She deserves an important position in the history of modern Chinese poetry.⁴³

Jian bei pian’s reception in China can perhaps be summarised as beginning with initial polite peer acknowledgement of the mammoth and in some ways ground-breaking effort it represented, which soon lapsed into apparently studious neglect lasting four decades. While Lao She’s unenthusiastic comments⁴⁴ after the poem’s publication possibly contributed to its being disregarded, he may have had other political reasons to leave it forgotten.⁴⁵ Much of the last three decades’ commentary on Jian bei pian has focused on its patriotism, dwelling in particular on the significance of his visits to Yan’an and their treatment in the poem, with some retrospective readings of it as unqualified support for the CCP and Mao Zedong. What appears to drive many current Chinese views of Jian bei pian is an earnest attempt to justify the poem’s creation by situating it in the canon of patriotic nation-building literature.

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⁴⁰ Much of Lu You’s work articulated his uncompromisingly patriotic desire to expel the Jin invaders from Northern China.


⁴² Shi Xingze, Lao She yu er shi shiji Zhongguo wenxue he wenhua, pp.40-41.

⁴³ Zhang Guixing 张桂兴, Lao She lunji 老舍论集 [Collected essays on Lao She] (Beijing: Ren min chu ban she, 2011), p.141.

⁴⁴ In 1946 he described it as “an uncompleted and not very presentable long poem.” Lao She 老舍, “Bafang fengyu 八方风雨 [Troubles from all directions],” in Lao She shenghuo yu chuango zuo zishu 老舍生活与创作自述, ed. Hu Jieqing and Shu Ji (Hong Kong: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1980) p.12.

⁴⁵ Sugimoto Tatsuo suggests that Lao She’s subsequent reticence on Jian bei pian is due less to aesthetic reasons and more to his discomfort about the political make-up of the group he travelled with and the ideological nature of their mission i.e. essentially KMT intelligence-gathering: Sugimoto Tatsuo, “Yousheng de nahan yu wusheng de nahan,” pp.200-201.
The 1980s revival of Chinese interest in Lao She was echoed by a new wave of translations into a number of foreign languages, particularly in Japan, where a 10-volume translation of his complete novels appeared. This was followed by a bibliography of Japanese publications relating to Lao She, and a Lao She 'encyclopaedia'. Japanese studies of his war period writing, notwithstanding any imputed status they might have had as patriotic propaganda, also began appearing during this decade, including one on Jian bei pian. In 1992 another study of Jian bei pian appeared, followed in 1995 by translations of Lao She’s entire war period writing, and of his humorous poems in 1999. According to one source, a Russian-language study of Lao She’s writing during the 1937–1949 period was published in 1983 in the USSR, but whether this included Jian bei pian is undocumented. Most recently, Russian interest in Lao She saw a conference in 2014 dedicated to him.

In the West the interest in Lao She, aroused by the first English-language translation of Luotuo Xiangzi in 1946, has been fed by English translations of other novels, individual short stories and two short story collections, three further translations of Luotuo Xiangzi, and two plays.

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49 Much of this research has been done by Sugimoto Tatsuo whose ‘Lao She’s long poem Jian bei pian’ (title translated) appeared in 1983: Sugino Motoko 杉野元子, “20 shiji niandai hou Riben de Lao She yanjiu 20 世纪 90 年代后日本的老舍研究 [1990s Japanese research on Lao She],” Anhui shifandaxue xuebao (Renwen shehuikuxue ban) 31, no. 3 (2003), p.257.
50 Also by Sugimoto Tatsuo (translated title ‘Lao She’s journey in the northwest – another discussion of Jian bei pian’): ibid., p.257.
51 Shibagaki Yoshitaro’s 柴垣芳太郎 ‘Lao She and the Sino-Japanese war’ (translated title), includes detailed commentary on Lao She’s entire work published between 1937 and 1949: ibid., p.256.
53 6th International Conference, “Issues of Far Eastern Literatures”, organized by the St Petersburg Society of Lao She Studies and dedicated to the 115th anniversary of Lao She.
54 An unauthorised and significantly altered version published in the USA as Rickshaw Boy.
56 Crescent moon and other stories (Beijing; Chinese Literature, 1985); Blades of Grass: the stories of Lao She (Honolulu: University of Hawai Press, 1999) translated by William A. Lyell and Sarah Weiming Chen.
translated, and no studies or translations of Jian bei pian into English or any other European language have been discovered, either in full or as extracts.

Jian bei pian rarely features in English-language summaries of Lao She’s work apart from more or less unflattering references. Hsia observes:

In compliance with fashion he wrote much poetry designed to be read aloud: the forty-thousand-word poem North of Chienmenkwan (Chien Pei P’ien), for example, was composed in the style of ta-ku, a popular ballad form in North China.59

Similarly, in The Biographical dictionary of Republican China, the poem is described as:

Participating in a then-current fad, [Lao She] also wrote a long poem for recitation in the ta-ku [popular ballad] style, Chien-pei-p’ien [North of Chienmenkuan].60

William Lyell characterises Jian bei pian as:

A series of new-style poems celebrating the places he had seen and the people he had met; this poetic travel diary sings the praises of cultural and historical sites while deploring the brutality of the Japanese invaders.61

Perhaps it is unsurprising that the lack of an English translation of Jian bei pian has been no barrier to its being labelled as the squandering of Lao She’s literary talent on fashionable popular entertainment, or more seriously, its dismissal as the work of a writer churning out war propaganda. Lao She’s wartime writing has generally been viewed as overly propagandistic by Western commentators, and much of his post-war writing similarly criticised as that of an apologist for Communism and the PRC.62 Yet until his election in 1938 as president of the All-China Resistance Association of

Writers and Artists (ACRAWA),\textsuperscript{63} Lao She had avoided political commitment of any kind,\textsuperscript{64} not even belonging to the League of Left-Wing Writers.\textsuperscript{65} Furthermore, the fact that Jian bei pian has received relatively little attention from commentators in China casts some doubt, in my view, on its role and value as a work of propagandist nation-building, even during the War of Resistance period.

This review of the literature points to a gap in knowledge, a gap all the more curious since Jian bei pian is in many ways unique. Alongside Lao She’s other work, whether written before, during or after the War of Resistance, it stands out in several ways – its length as a poem, its ambitious yet ambiguous scope, its subject matter and tone. The lack of attention in China and abroad, for reasons that appear not entirely compatible, is what has impelled the present study.

My thesis attempts to rectify that situation by producing, in its first part, the first English-language critical study of Jian bei pian, and in its second part, the first English-language translation of the poem. This introductory chapter goes on to outline the historical background to China’s War of Resistance and Lao She’s involvement in that war, before discussing theoretical frameworks for evaluating Jian bei pian as a possible example of wartime nation-building propaganda. Chapter Two examines the evidence for and against Jian bei pian’s reputation as wartime propaganda by analysing how well the poem fits with those theoretical approaches to nation-building: firstly, whether the poem’s images of China serve to invent and promote it as a modern nation; secondly, whether its narrative approach to China’s history articulates a sense of national identity; thirdly, whether its treatment of culturally significant periods and places is part of a reconfiguring process through which modern national identity forms. Chapter Three proposes an alternative interpretation, building on recent scholarship that identifies a sense of uncertainty in the patriotism of Lao She’s

\textsuperscript{63} Zhonghua quanguo wenyijie kangdi xiehui 中华全国文艺界抗敌协会: an umbrella organisation drawing together writers from across a wide political spectrum with expertise in several genres. For more background on ACRAWA and Lao She’s role in it see Laughlin, “The All-China Resistance Association.”

\textsuperscript{64} Hsia Chih-Tsing, A history of modern Chinese fiction: pp.366. See also Ranbir Vohra, Lao She and the Chinese Revolution Harvard East Asian monographs (Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1974). pp.3, 127.

pre-war and wartime writing, and analysing other factors at work in Jian bei pian’s genesis through an exploration of the poem’s textual diversity that reflects many influences from traditional and classical elements of Chinese culture, in both its form and subject matter. Chapter Four draws together the arguments previously discussed in preparation for the full translation of the poem which follows in the second part.

Note on textual material

Jian bei pian’s once-only 1942 printing, the small number of copies made, and other (possibly political) reasons for its scarcity mean that over 70 years later, only four original copies of the poem are recorded by OCLC FirstSearch: WorldCat in library holdings. However other originals may well be held in minor libraries or in private collections. For the purposes of my research a copy was obtained on a short-term loan from Harvard University’s Yenching Library. However parts of this were in very poor condition, with torn pages and illegible characters, which necessitated consulting other non-original sources. One such source was a copy of the 1983 publication of Lao She xin shi xuan which included cantos 1, 5, 7, 10, 13, 16, 24, 26, and 27 in good enough condition to enable satisfactory corrections. Other source(s) consulted were thanks to a feature of the Internet Age whereby Jian bei pian exists, in its entirety or as extracts, on Chinese language web pages for online articles and private blogs, uploaded by Lao She’s countrymen. A reprinted version of the full poem is now available in a revised edition of Lao She wenji Volume 13.

Notes on translation

All translations from Chinese into English are my own unless otherwise attributed. This includes Chinese language secondary sources, as well as the whole poem and its

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67 Zang Kejia hints at this in his comment “An author-signed copy was sent to me, which I saved right up until the eve of the Cultural Revolution”: Zang Kejia, "Xu,” pp.5-6.
68 According to this catalogue, two copies in the U.S.A, and two in China, plus a microfilm copy held in Fudan University, China.
69 For example, Li Qingguo accessed a copy in Jilin’s Provincial Library: Li Qingguo, "Kangzhan shiqi Lao She chuangzuo de yi ge cemian”, p.44.
70 The original text was written in traditional Chinese characters (fantizi 繁体字). In this thesis, quoted extracts of the poem give the characters in simplified form, not the original classical script or layout.
71 The instability of this medium has meant that over my research period, at any one time between 25 and 75 such websites could be found, of which many have proved short-lived.
extracts used in the critical analysis chapters. My approach to Jian bei pian’s translation is driven by the aims of my research. Firstly, in order to examine how Jian bei pian might have served as nation-building literature, the geographical, cultural, political and historical aspects of the poem’s contextual setting are preserved and projected in the English translation. This approach has been well-documented and characterised by Lawrence Venuti as a ‘foreignising’ mode, as opposed to the ‘domesticating’ mode of translation which renders the exotic into familiar and easily grasped English in order to avoid any challenges of strangeness. The foreignising approach (also known as “thick translation”) is likewise appropriate for my other aim of exploring the diverse features of Jian bei pian’s text to illustrate their specific cultural and temporal significance. Within this general approach I follow certain specific guidelines as outlined below.

Meaning and language: My intention has been to convey the sense using plain, almost conversational speech, in an equivalent way to the vernacular (baihua 白话) generally used in Jian bei pian. Baihua is a less scholarly, less condensed form of language than the wenyan 文言 used in classical Chinese poetry. Where Lao She resorts to using classical language in Jian bei pian, no explicit distinction is made between baihua and wenyan in the translation, although explanatory footnotes may indicate the antique or classical origins of a phrase.

Context and language: In the poem’s numerous references to the War of Resistance, my intention is to retain the original emotive and rhetorical flavour of the words, without bowdlerising for the sake of political correctness. With idiomatic expressions, I likewise aim to translate the original wording without domestication, but providing explanatory footnotes for less obvious expressions with (where appropriate) an English equivalent. Also, given the poem’s intertextual references to less recent

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75 These and other aspects of Jian bei pian’s hybridised structure are discussed in Chapter Three.

76 For the same reason I reproduce Lao She’s idiosyncratic (over)use of exclamation marks!
history, to mythology, to cultural traditions, and to Lao She’s literary predecessors, these are given in full with added explanatory footnotes where necessary.

**Rhyme scheme:** No attempt is made to recreate the specific rhyme scheme used in *Jian bei pian.* It is a rhyme scheme common to many traditional chanted music forms of northern China which, according to classical principles, employ a strict system of *yun* 韵 [tone-rhymes] for the last sound (syllable) of each line. In each of *Jian bei pian*’s 27 cantos Lao She (almost) faithfully kept to a specified tone-rhyme, meaning that each line in the canto ended with the same or a similar sound. With an average of 135 lines to each canto (the shortest canto had 104 lines, and the longest 194 lines), translating into English rhyme that even remotely reflected the sound of the Chinese would have been severely restricting. Lao She himself criticised the rhyme-scheme’s weaknesses, weaknesses that I believe would have been magnified in English translation, quite apart from straining syntax and distorting the meaning. I have therefore chosen to translate as free verse without any forced rhyme.

**Form and metre:** I follow Lao She’s canto divisions and retain the ballad form in its number of lines and original line breaks, which allow for some quantitative analysis comparing the number of lines devoted to a particular theme. While the rhyme scheme of *Jian bei pian* is narrowly defined, its line length is much freer. Here I translate without regular metre, which allows for the variable line lengths in terms of number of syllables per line, while at the same time attempting to keep the narrative’s recitation effects and rhetorical appearance.

**Omission of Preface (Xu 序) and Appendix (Fulu 附录):** Although these are in *Jian bei pian*’s original copy, they are not an essential part of the poem. Being more in the style of Lao She’s numerous essays about his writing of various works, they constitute valuable reference material which was probably the basis for his later essay on the writing of *Jian bei pian.*

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77 Lao She’s use of the *Shisan zhe* 十三辙 [Thirteen rhymes] also known as *Shisan dao da zhe* 十三道大辙 [Thirteen wheel-tracks] is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

78 Out of thirteen available tone-rhymes, eleven were used in *Jian bei pian*.
Romanisation and translation of familiar names: The pinyin system of Romanisation is used throughout the thesis, except when the name is better known in its non-pinyin or non-Chinese form e.g. ‘Chiang Kai-shek’ and ‘Kuomintang’ not ‘Jiang Jieshi’ and Guomindang’, ‘Confucius’ and ‘Mencius’ not ‘Kongzi’ and ‘Mengzi’, and except for cited authors published under a non-pinyin form of their Chinese name. Place-names are generally not translated, except when referring to commonly recognised locations e.g. ‘Yellow River’ and ‘Yangtze River’ not ‘Huang He’ and ‘Chang Jiang’.

Historical background – war, nationalism, and national identity

In the latter half of the 19th century, after two decades of China being humiliated by foreign imperial powers in two Opium Wars and riven internally by the Taiping Rebellion, certain Chinese intellectuals began a quest for a new version of China able to “combine the strengths of [its] past with the modernity of the present”, 79 a quest that resonated through the self-strengthening movement of the 1860s. 80 By the end of the century, following more humiliation in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the self-strengthening movement, with its narrow focus of reliance on adoption of Western technology mainly to improve military capabilities, had been largely discredited. It was overtaken by broader nationalist sensibilities, reflecting an emerging view that to solve its problems of exploitation by foreign powers China needed to become a modern republican nation-state. Intellectuals and other elites in various provincial bases increasingly voiced demands for radical reforms to all aspects of Chinese society – educational, cultural and political – as the debate about the nature of a new Chinese identity deepened. 81

Only in the first decade of the 20th century were reforms of any substance seen. But the debates continued, while humiliation at the hands of foreign powers intensified. The decade began with the failed Boxer Uprising (in which Lao She’s father was

killed), resulting in Beijing’s occupation by forces of the Eight-Nation Alliance\textsuperscript{83} and the imposition of punitive financial reparations that came close to bankrupting China. Modernisation started in earnest with the abolition of China’s traditional system of civil service examination in 1905, and a series of constitutional reforms announced over the following two years. Yet this period of reform was accompanied by more and more strident expressions of nationalism\textsuperscript{84} which grew increasingly anti-Manchu in focus and culminated in the revolution of 1911-1912, the abdication of the last Qing Emperor, and replacement of the Qing dynasty with a Republican government.

This promising beginning soon descended into the constitutional turmoil surrounding the Republic’s first president Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 and, after his death in 1916, the chaotic Warlord Era (\textit{Junfa shidai} 军阀时代) of 1916 – 1928 which effectively prevented the implementation of major reforms on a wide scale; as Schoppa observed, “warlordism was the very antithesis of nationalism.”\textsuperscript{85} Yet the voices of nationalism continued to be heard, most eloquently through the May Fourth Movement. Named after the mass demonstrations in Beijing on May 4\textsuperscript{th} 1919, this movement arose in reaction to what was widely perceived as China’s betrayal at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference by the Great Power victors of World War I,\textsuperscript{86} as well as growing concern about the threat to China from Japanese territorial ambitions. May Fourth activists called not only for political reform but also significant cultural reforms, foremost among which was the replacement of formal classical language (\textit{wenyan}), used by Confucian scholars and the traditional elite, with the vernacular (\textit{baihua}). The vernacular (largely based on northern Chinese dialects) was adopted for both writing and teaching purposes with surprising swiftness: by 1921 it was officially accepted by

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{82} His father was a Manchu Bannerman working as a guard in the Imperial City. Many years later Lao She described his admiration for the “patriotic, anti-imperialistic zeal and courage” of the Boxers in the afterword to his 1960 play \textit{Shenquan} 神拳 [Magical Boxers]: Lao She 老舍, “Suppressed Furor Against Foreign Troops: An Unwritten Novel and a Play about the Boxer Uprising,” in \textit{Modern Chinese Writers: Self-portrayals}, ed. Helmut Martin and Jeffrey Kinkley (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), p.271.
\item \textsuperscript{83} Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the US; their troops entered Beijing in August 1900 to lift the siege of Beijing’s Legation Quarter.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Schoppa, \textit{Revolution and its past}, pp.136-138.
\item \textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p.155.
\item \textsuperscript{86} Japan’s territorial claim on Shandong, secretly agreed to in 1917 by Britain, Russia, France, Italy, and the United States, was ratified despite protests from China, which had fought on the side of the Allied powers.
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government and educational authorities.\textsuperscript{87} The significance of this particular reform lay, as Anderson observes, in the power of the printed vernacular as a vehicle for expressing modern nationalistic sentiments.\textsuperscript{88} Dissemination and popularisation of the vernacular was something with which Lao She was later to become closely identified, despite having no first-hand involvement in the May Fourth Movement’s early years.\textsuperscript{89}

When the warlord factions were finally overcome by the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) commander Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石, through his Northern Expedition of 1926-1928, a period of modernisation consistent with classical models of nation-building\textsuperscript{90} followed under Nationalist (KMT) Government rule. This included reforms to China’s fiscal system, currency and banking; first attempts at agricultural reform through crop improvement research and rural reconstruction; industrial development; and road, railway and telegraph line construction.\textsuperscript{91} These modernisations, aimed at upgrading and consolidating China’s infrastructure, might more accurately be termed ‘state-strengthening’.\textsuperscript{92} But state-strengthening effectively ceased as construction gave way to destruction with the start of war in 1937.

The official beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War is generally identified as 7 July 1937, often referred to as \textit{Qi\-qi shibian} 七七事变 [The 7/7 Incident], when a skirmish between Japanese forces and Chinese forces at a strategic railway bridge near Beijing led to a build-up of reinforcements on both sides, ceasefire violations, escalating demands and full-scale war a month later.\textsuperscript{93} Now Chinese nationalism, driven for decades by antagonism towards foreign powers’ exploitation of China, had a very specific target. If, as Leibold argues, “the struggle against foreign imperialism

\textsuperscript{89} Vohra, \textit{Lao She and the Chinese Revolution}, pp.15-16, 18, 59.
\textsuperscript{90} See discussion on page 26 below.
\textsuperscript{92} State-strengthening (also known as state-building or state-making) I define here as measures or programs designed to develop or improve the infrastructure of a functioning state, with the aim of consolidating its control of territory, finance and trade, communications and transportation etc.
helped define both China and its identity”; then the most desperate and critical period of this struggle was the Second Sino-Japanese War. That war could thus be seen as the furnace in which the identity of modern China was forged.

The furnace of war and Lao She

This forging process involved both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Firstly, the speed and scale of the Japanese advance meant that more and more Chinese people, both city-dwellers and those in the countryside, were directly affected by Japanese invasion, occupation or aerial bombardment. Mitter argues that this boosted the number of people with a nationalistic mind-set, making the war period pivotal in the development of Chinese nationalism.95

Secondly, there was a change in the nature of Chinese nationalism itself. Even before 1937, nationalist sentiment among urban intellectuals had steadily strengthened following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the bombing of Shanghai in 1932, with increasing demands for the Nationalist Government to end its policies of appeasement and non-resistance towards Japan.96 The official start of war was welcomed by many such intellectuals,97 whose nationalist sentiment became infused with a belief that resistance would be ineffective unless it was unified and involved the mass participation of the rural population.98 This belief was soon put into practice, as refugees from battles and bombings around the eastern coastal cities moved into China’s interior.

Lao She, who had been living in Shandong, was one such person whose life was destabilised by Japanese military activity.99 After war’s official outbreak, he shared

95 Mitter, "Nationalism in East Asia," pp.301, 305.
98 Harrison, China, pp.215-216.
99 Even as early as 1932, when the Japanese bombed Shanghai, and the manuscript of his novel Daming hù 大明湖 [Daming Lake] was lost in the destruction of a Shanghai printing-house where it was being held ready for printing: Boorman, Howard, and Cheng, "Shu Ch'ing-ch'ün," p.133.
the general mood of intensely patriotic “grief and indignation” until in November 1937, determined to devote himself to the resistance effort, he left his family behind in Jinan and travelled to Hankou. In this journey by train and boat up the Yangtze River, he was part of the mass exodus of government officials, business people, small traders and ordinary people, in forced or voluntary exile from their city bases, who fled the Japanese advance, following the Nationalist Government as its administrative centre and military headquarters were moved from Shanghai and Nanjing to Hankou and ultimately to Chongqing. Whether the experience of being a voluntary refugee intensified Lao She’s nationalist sentiments, it undoubtedly provided him with material to express those sentiments. It also set him up to participate in what Harrison describes as the merging of “traditional rural and modern urban forms of national identity”.

Given the gulf between these two versions of national identity, reconciling them was a major achievement. Modern national identity as understood and articulated by urban intellectuals owed much to Western culture and its ideas imported late in the 19th century, a sometimes uneasy mix of scientific rationalism and individualistic romanticism, an anti-imperialism which at the same time clamoured for the adoption of Western political institutions and technology, all underlined by the May Fourth Movement’s anti-Confucianism and rejection of traditional Chinese values. On the other hand what Duara terms the “political self-awareness” of China’s rural people had existed for a long time as a form or mode of identity closely tied to its (many and different) agrarian settings, yet linked by ancient Confucian values and a notion of relationship to the Chinese emperor. From an age when only elites could read and write, it relied less on print media to convey a shared sense of community and more on oral transmission through myth, performance and recital of popular folk tales, and through participation in religious and cultural ritual or festival.

100 Lao She 老舍, “Zhe yi nian de bi 这一年的笔 [This year's writing],” in Wen nian: Lao She shenghuo zishu, ed. Hu Jieqing and Shu Ji (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1986), p.117.
101 His wife and three children stayed in Jinan until autumn of 1938, then moved to the relative safety of Japanese-occupied Beiping where they remained until re-joining him in Chongqing in 1943: Lyell, "Lao She,” (2006), pp.89-90.
102 Harrison, China, p.219.
As an urban intellectual, in certain respects Lao She’s nationalist sentiments resembled those of his literary colleagues, yet in others he was something of an outsider. He was not the product of the classical elite educational system which, despite the May Fourth Movement’s reforming ideals, had never entirely extinguished the traditional negative view that intellectuals held about popular or folk culture. An ethnic Manchu who had grown up in a working-class Beijing neighbourhood, he had a longstanding fondness for traditional culture as expressed in the popular legends and folk tales that he had heard or seen performed in teahouses and theatres.104 Because of this he may have shared, or at least appreciated, the traditional rural sense of his nation’s culture. Nor had he unreservedly endorsed the May Fourth Movement’s rejection of Confucian tradition, or its belief that in order to modernise, China should adopt everything Western.105 If he occupied what seems to have been an ambivalent position between the two versions of national identity, did he contribute to their convergence in a new hybrid form during the War of Resistance in the same way as his literary colleagues? This question is discussed in the next section.

**War of Resistance literature and Lao She**

The hybrid which emerged, through a process Harrison characterises as “modern nationalism [fitting] into a matrix of traditional values,”106 was a particular feature of the anti-Japan resistance’s cultural arm, involving a significant contribution by intellectuals and writers. Modern nationalist consciousness could well have percolated through, in a natural if more gradual process, as rural people came in contact with the influx of urban refugees from such varied backgrounds. But it was through deliberate organisation and strategies adopted by intellectuals and writers that modern urban nationalistic attitudes and ideas about national identity were brought to the rural masses.

104 Hung, War and Popular Culture, p.196.
106 Harrison, China, p.222.
Organised literary resistance activity was concentrated in areas outside Japanese control: initially in Shanghai, then once Shanghai fell in November 1937, in Hankou, at that time the Nationalist Government base. The events of 7 July, as well as affecting Lao She, apparently galvanised many of China’s writers out of the disillusioned factions into which the May Fourth Movement had fragmented. Armed with renewed patriotism and a radicalised awareness of China’s position in the world, writers began organising themselves to promote the anti-Japan resistance. Early in 1938 ACRAWA was formed in Hankou with Lao She elected as its president, a position he held for the rest of the war. As someone who had previously been wary of officialdom and who had avoided political commitment, his election probably reflected his fellow writers’ recognition of that non-partisan status. In his role as ACRAWA president he reportedly displayed some political adroitness in dealing with both the Nationalist Government and the various factions that made up ACRAWA.

In September 1938, when the government evacuated to Chongqing in the face of Japanese advance, Lao She and other writers followed. Chongqing became thereafter one of the major centres for War of Resistance literature. Anti-Japan resistance was promoted in a variety of media such as newspapers and magazines whose previously city-located printing presses had been destroyed or similarly evacuated to Chongqing, as well as new journals especially set up for the purpose. Along with news articles and essays, these media also featured short fiction, play-scripts, song lyrics, comic dialogues and the new cartoon form, all disseminating the resistance message. Lao She had been instrumental in setting up one such journal, Kang daodi 抗到底 [Resist to the end], before his election as ACRAWA president, and his presidential responsibilities included editing ACRAWA’s journal Kangzhan wenyi 抗战文艺 [Resistance Literature].

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109 See earlier footnote 63.


112 Ibid., p.127.
Perhaps of greater significance was the guiding role Lao She played in ACRAWA debates over the use of simple language and popular art forms to convey the resistance message. His enduring affection for the popular performing arts equipped him to argue their merits with ACRAWA’s established writers who may not have shared that affection. He believed that besides having intrinsic cultural value, popular forms – folk tales, clapper ballads (kuaiban 快板), drum songs (guci 鼓词), comic dialogues or ‘crosstalk’ (xiangsheng 相声), traditional opera (xiqu 戏曲), and folk musical theatre (quyi 曲艺) – were an ideal way to promote the War of Resistance. In both ACRAWA debates and essays for resistance journals he addressed the issues of which aspects of popular literature were appropriate to use in the cause of anti-Japan resistance, and how to adapt traditional forms for this purpose.\(^\text{113}\)

One strategy employed by many intellectuals and writers during the War of Resistance harnessed the power of theatre, both by adapting traditional drama and by writing new Western-inspired huaju. In 1937 Shanghai-organised travelling drama troupes were dispatched for this purpose out to rural towns and villages, an approach widely adopted over the war years ultimately involving many kinds of amateur drama groups as well as more professional groups of actors, some with playwrights attached, some with funding from the Nationalist Government, being sent into the countryside.\(^\text{114}\) In Yan’an, the other major centre for War of Resistance literature, the Communist authorities took a more directive approach to the use of drama. Yan’an had been the CCP base since 1936, after Red Army forces had reached nearby Bao’an, northern Shaanxi, at the end of their Long March. With the founding of the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts in Yan’an in 1938, a number of left-wing writers gravitated there, and more writers arrived over the next few years. Many of them worked for or contributed to new journals publishing resistance material in Yan’an.\(^\text{115}\) Led by teachers at the Lu Xun Academy and exemplified by what has been called the “Village Drama Movement”,\(^\text{116}\) they linked the patriotic anti-Japan resistance to a wider struggle of urban and rural working people against foreign imperialism and domestic ‘feudalism’.

\(^{113}\) Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, pp.188, 196-199.
\(^{114}\) Ibid., pp.49-50.
\(^{115}\) For a list of resistance journals and newspapers, both those based in Chongqing and in Yan’an, see ibid., pp. 367-369.
\(^{116}\) Ibid., p.222.
Lao She’s own efforts to convey the resistance message in his creative writing included nine plays in huaju style written between 1939 and 1943. Despite soon discovering that his expertise in the fiction-writing craft was not readily transferable to huaju, his playwriting skills were valued to the extent that three of those plays were commissioned, effectively for propaganda purposes. One, *Guojia zhishang* 国家至上 [Nation Above All], set in a rural north China town threatened by advancing Japanese forces, stands out for its message promoting co-operation between the local Muslim and Han peoples to defeat their common enemy. This play, with its vision of a unified China in which historically deep ethnic differences are subjugated to the cause of resistance, was popular and performed in several Chinese cities not under Japanese occupation.\(^{119}\)

However Lao She’s wartime plays are not considered of high quality;\(^{120}\) only some were ever performed.\(^{121}\) Moreover, not all sustained *Guojia zhishang*’s vision of a united China. Tellingly, in the preface to *Dadi longshe* he wrote: “The war against Japan gave… literature a kind of ‘X-ray vision’ with which to examine society.”\(^{122}\) This penetrating examination was particularly evident in two satirical plays *Canwu* 残雾 [Lingering fog] and *Mianzi wenti* 面子问题 [The problem of face] where, as in his pre-war fiction, Lao She cast a critical eye over Chinese society. His main targets continued to be corrupt civil servants and wealthy elites, the exploitation of the poor, especially women, the trivial preoccupations of privileged youth, and the hypocrisy of would-be revolutionaries,\(^{123}\) while the Japanese enemy served mainly as backdrop and

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117 Lao She 老舍, ”Xian hua wo de qi ge huaju 闲话我的七个话剧 [Random thoughts on my seven plays],” in *Lao She ju zuo quanji* (Beijing: Zhongguo xi zhu chubanshe, 1982-1985), p.553.
118 Co-written with Song Zhidi 宋之的 (1914-1956). The other commissioned plays were *Zhang Zizhong* 张自忠 (about the eponymous War of Resistance hero); and *Dadi longshe* 大地龙蛇 [Land snakes]: Vohra, *Lao She and the Chinese Revolution*, p.133.
119 Ibid., pp.130, 133.
120 Hung describes them as “devoid of artistry, and visual appeal… lacking originality and insight into character.” Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, p.195.
122 Lao She 老舍, ”Dadi longshe (Xu) 大地龙蛇 (序) [Preface to 'Land snakes'],” in *Lao She ju zuo quanji* (Beijing: Zhongguo xi zhu chubanshe, 1982-1985), p.301.
props to his plot-lines. Only four\textsuperscript{124} of these nine plays were set unambiguously in the countryside, with characters and scenarios that rural people might more easily identify with. Some included popular entertainment forms: \textit{Dadi longshe} incorporated song and dance, ending with a choral procession;\textsuperscript{125} the final act of \textit{Guiqu lai xi} [Returning] featured boatmen’s songs.\textsuperscript{126} Lao She’s mastery of the vernacular in pre-war fiction meant he could apply his beliefs about using simple language in his wartime plays. But the simple language in which he wrote most proficiently was the Beijing dialect and colloquial idiom, which may not have been especially useful in reaching rural audiences in distant provinces.

Notwithstanding Vohra’s claim that Lao She’s wartime plays “helped to harness the theater to the war effort”,\textsuperscript{127} Lao She was perhaps not part of the War of Resistance drama mainstream. Playwrights in that mainstream evolved or improvised several dramatic forms better suited to getting the resistance message across to rural audiences – adaptations that included writing around issues of local relevance and relying on audience participation, taking well-known themes and characters from historical legend or updating the familiar plot of a traditional drama to carry the resistance message.\textsuperscript{128} In this way War of Resistance dramatists mined the sources of traditional notions of national identity. Non-drama forms of popular and folk culture were also adapted to promote the anti-Japan resistance, but drama in its various new permutations appears to have been the most effective at conveying the resistance message to a widely dispersed rural population, and at the same time defining a new kind of nationalism with which rural people could identify. In my view any contribution that Lao She’s wartime plays made to the development of that new hybrid nationalism would have been limited by the fact that fewer than half had rural settings, while those with urban settings tended to dilute or side-line the patriotic message in favour of social criticism.

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Guojia zhi shang; Wang Laohu} 王老虎 [Tiger Wang], co-written with Xiao Yiwu 萧亦五 (1914-1977); \textit{Zhang Zizhong; Tao li chun feng} 桃李春风 [Peaches and Plums in Spring Wind], co-written with Zhao Qingge 赵清阁 (1914-1999).
\textsuperscript{125} Lao She 老舍, "Dadi longshe," pp.327-331, 351-352, 373-378.
\textsuperscript{126} Lao She 老舍, "Guiqu lai xi," pp.455, 462, 466.
\textsuperscript{127} Vohra, \textit{Lao She and the Chinese Revolution}, p.132.
\textsuperscript{128} Hung, \textit{War and Popular Culture}, pp.51-57, 85-92.
Recent studies point to a similar undermining of the patriotic message in Lao She’s fiction, pre-war as well as wartime. Previously, commentators both within and outside China saw the start of the War of Resistance as signalling Lao She’s wholehearted embracing of the patriotic cause. Such a view apparently assumed that Lao She abruptly abandoned the cynicism, the black humour of exasperation and despair which coloured his pre-war depictions of China’s national identity and social conditions, exemplified most strikingly in his eponymous second novel Zhao Ziyue 赵子曰 (published in 1928) and in Mao cheng ji (1933). But Wang’s study of Lao She’s fiction published between 1939 and 1945 identifies “anxiety and scepticism towards the [putative patriotic] cause”, a sense of hopelessness about the futility of even patriotic effort, and a reckless, almost nihilistic embracing of chaotic violence as plot device. Chow’s close reading of one “politically incorrect” short story from the wartime period discovers elements that challenge Lao She’s reputation as a committed patriotic writer, concluding that Lao She used fiction to deal with his “ambivalence” towards the anti-Japan resistance. Such ambivalence, what Wang refers to as the “existential anxiety… that has always haunted Lao She’s patriotic discourse”, seems to have characterised not only Lao She’s fiction – pre-war, wartime and post-war – but also his plays written during and after the War of Resistance.

One way Lao She dealt with this anxiety in his pre-war fiction was, according to Prado-Fonts, through “multiple literary experimentations”. He took this exploratory and eclectic approach to his War of Resistance writing as well. On the one hand he had vowed:

I would write whatever was needed for the war effort. I had to do my best, and give no consideration to what my own writing should be… As for ‘art’, and my reputation, those were secondary considerations. The anti-Japanese war was the

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130 Vohra, Lao She and the Chinese Revolution, pp.29-38, 62-69.
133 Ibid., p.8.
134 Wang, Fictional Realism in Twentieth Century China, p.167.
top priority. All my power was in my writing, and this writing had to do what was required for the war effort.136

But in the same period he also reported:

I am experimenting with several different forms of writing and hope to dedicate my poems and plays – unpoetic and undramatic as they may be – to the War of Resistance.137

If both his wartime fiction and drama contained mixed messages about patriotism, did he articulate his patriotism more convincingly, less ambiguously, when using his preferred tools, the traditional and popular performed arts? Even before the end of 1937 he had enthusiastically started writing for such traditional forms as drum song lyrics, a new version of Sanzijing 三字经 [Three Character Classic],138 new children’s word-games,139 and comic dialogues, many published in another resistance journal that he had helped set up.140 The drum song lyric was a form on which Lao She expended considerable literary energy in this period, putting into practice his belief that the simple language, rhymes, repetition, and popularity of drum songs made them an ideal way to get the resistance message across. By 1939 he had published three drum songs and went on to write many more over the war years.141 Describing Lao She’s drum songs as conveying “confidence and fervent nationalism”, Hung singles out Wang Xiao ganlǐ 王小赶驴 [Wang Xiao Drives a Donkey] for its skill and eloquence in telling a story of patriotic sacrifice.142 But Lao She’s most ambitious work in the style of a drum song lyric was the long and ultimately unfinished Jian bei pian. Whether he was able to convey the patriotic resistance message with the same conviction in Jian bei pian, and how the poem performed to invent and promote his vision of China, is examined in Chapter Two, using frameworks of nation-building theory discussed in the next section.

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136 Lao She, "Zhe yi nian de bi," p.118.
138 A traditional reading primer for children, dating from the Song dynasty, which sets out Confucian precepts in lines of 3 characters.
139 Yangpianci 洋片词: played with illustrated cards.
140 Kangzhan huakan 抗战画刊 [Resistance Pictorial]: Song Yongyi, Lao She yu zhongguo wenhua guannian, p.383.
141 Hung suggests the total number is around 20: Hung, War and Popular Culture, p.199.
142 Ibid., pp.199-200.
Theoretical frameworks

The making of modern nations

The view that nations were or could be constructed derives from the classical modernist approach articulated by Western historians and social scientists aiming to refute the assumptions of nineteenth century liberalism about nations being ancient, essentially unchanging, and derived in some natural sense from historic (generally racial) groupings of people.\footnote{143} Classical modernists argue instead that true nations only emerged in the nineteenth century, as a necessary consequence of the Industrial Revolution and other developments associated with modernisation. This argument tends to reflect the Eurocentric assumptions of its proponents, with the modernist discourse initially focusing on European nations during the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries, but later broadening to include new nations emerging in Africa, Asia and Latin America following the dissolution of European colonial empires. If the formation of the League of Nations in the aftermath of the First World War can be seen as signifying recognition that some new nations were generated and others resurrected out of the disintegrated Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Tsarist empires, the period following the 1945 establishment of the United Nations suggests that a concept of nation-building was becoming increasingly pervasive. Sociological theories of nationalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s assumed that there was a prototype or model for nation-building, and during this period the project of nation-building was seen as something both desirable and capable of being realised as long as the model was followed.\footnote{144} Versions of the model might vary, but generally it specified the kind of features exhibited during the modernisation experienced by (indeed, as modelled by) Western Europe and North America: for example, increased urbanisation, reduced reliance on an agricultural economy, improved levels of literacy, and greater access to educational opportunities for the wider population.

\footnote{144} Ibid., pp.19-21.
However by the 1980s the classical modernist model of nation-building, with its emphasis on an almost mechanistic development process, was itself being challenged. Gellner, who views nationalism as a new ideology for imposing organisation on societies in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, claims that nations were fabricated (in the sense of being invented fictions rather than simply constructed from raw materials supplied by territory, history, and ethnicity). Contending that nationalist ideologies were mostly founded on myth, he suggests that nation-building was essentially a grand-scale exercise in self-deception.\footnote{Ernest Gellner, \textit{Nations and nationalism} (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), pp.124-125.} Anderson takes this illusory or fictional aspect of nation-building further and argues that the modern nation is an “imagined community”, something which came about when capitalism\footnote{To the extent that Anderson sees the rise of capitalism as a critical condition for nation-building, he represents a post-Marxist approach to questions of nationalism. Most such approaches acknowledge the inadequacies of Marxist analysis in explaining the rise of nationalist movements: Anderson, \textit{Imagined communities}, p.3.} and print technology, using vernacular language and elements of culture, worked together to promote a shared image of the nation, a kind of national consciousness.\footnote{Ibid., pp.6, 46, 74-76.} Extending his analysis to national movements that arose in the European colonies of Asia and Africa, Anderson observes that traditional Western educational institutions, established by the colonial powers to produce an indigenous elite for their own administrative purposes, also had the quite unintended result of introducing modern Western culture, with its ideas of nation and nationalistic movements, to the new breed of indigenous intelligentsia. And it was members of such intelligentsia who went on to play pivotal roles in the independence movements emerging under the old colonial administrations.\footnote{Ibid., p.116.}

In the case of modern China, comparatively few attempts have been made to rigorously apply theoretical insights from the discourse on nation-building. Instead China has been cited as a possible exception to the classical modernist model, as well as to the model of invented nations.\footnote{Harrison, \textit{China}: pp.1-2. See also Leibold, \textit{Reconfiguring Chinese nationalism}: pp.17-18.} The arguments for China being exceptional are mostly based on its purported existence as a large state, in the form of a dynastic empire, for over 2000 years. Despite contraction and expansion of its borders over that time, despite significant fragmentation that occurred in some periods of dynastic
change, and some dynastic changes having been brought about through invasion by northern nomadic peoples,\textsuperscript{150} such arguments hold that China had remained unified. China’s ancient written language and centralised system of bureaucratic government have also been cited as evidence of its exceptionalism, since these institutional features were identified as characteristics of modern nations.\textsuperscript{151} Furthermore, despite its recent history of exploitation by foreign powers, China is not viewed as having arisen out of Western colonisation, since it lacked the well-established institutions and ideologies associated with colonialism.\textsuperscript{152}

Nevertheless, Harrison contends that modern China was indeed invented in the twentieth century, initially through “nationalistic” responses to “Western imperialism”, then through the convergence of traditional rural and modern urban notions of national identity during the War of Resistance.\textsuperscript{153} It was perhaps an exceptional invention, following a different path and a different timetable, to that of the European experience. Firstly, as Leibold observes, it was accomplished by conversion from an ancient dynastic empire without the fragmentation that resulted when the old empires of Western and Eastern Europe broke up.\textsuperscript{154} Secondly, the modernisation of China was embarked upon almost concurrently with strategies for nation-building and state-strengthening.\textsuperscript{155} The timing of these interrelated developments was much more compressed than the European pattern, in which state-making during the 18th century was followed by the 19th century modernisations that were in turn followed by the nation-building which should, according to classical modernism, occur only after modernisation.\textsuperscript{156} Moreover, Duara claims, Chinese resistance to occupation during the Second Sino-Japanese War had many features of nation-building under quasi-colonial occupation.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{150} For example: the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period; the Yuan dynasty, founded after conquest by the Mongolian Emperor Kublai Khan; the Qing dynasty established by Jurchen clans invading from Manchuria.


\textsuperscript{152} Duara, \textit{The global and regional in China’s nation-formation}: pp.25, 182.

\textsuperscript{153} Harrison, \textit{China}: pp.3-6, 219-224.

\textsuperscript{154} Leibold, \textit{Reconfiguring Chinese nationalism}: p.45.

\textsuperscript{155} See discussion on page 16 and definition of state-strengthening in footnote 92.


\textsuperscript{157} Duara, \textit{The global and regional in China’s nation-formation}: p.25.
One such feature was the organised literary resistance movement. Yet the issue of nation-building was rarely addressed in literary discourse of the War of Resistance period: the focus was on national defence and national salvation, suggesting a view of China as a nation already built albeit one in need of deliverance. Recent scholars variously identify China’s nation-building as occurring during the 1920s and 1930s, a period when literature was expected, at least by May Fourth Movement intellectuals, to contribute to that nation-building process; alternatively in the twentieth century’s first 20 years or first 30 years. According to this chronology, 1937-1945 is characterised instead as a period of “Literature and National Salvation,” with repeated demands for “national defense literature”, and “the cause of national salvation” identified as a fundamental issue for War of Resistance writers.

Lao She claimed on several occasions that his wartime writing was dedicated to the cause of anti-Japan resistance. If he saw his task as one of nation-building, rather than national defence or national salvation, this would appear to place him outside the mainstream of literary discourse at that time. Yet he has been described as “[a] key resistance intellectual” during the War of Resistance period, and could thus be considered an influential member of the intelligentsia whose writing for the resistance effort, according to Anderson’s view of nation-building as an exercise in constructing imagined communities, would have contributed to China’s nation-building. Whether Jian bei pi an can be seen as national defence or national salvation

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158 See discussion on pages 20-21. On other modes of literary resistance during the war period, particularly in Beijing and Shanghai, see Gunn, Unwelcome Muse: pp.2-9, 21-24.


164 See pages 18, 24-25.

165 Hung, War and Popular Culture, p.12.

166 ‘Intelligentsia’ I define here as the group of intellectuals acknowledged as influential by virtue of their higher education, scholarship, and political activism and/or engagement in culturally valued literature and art. Despite Lao She’s pre-war avoidance of political activism, on all other counts he clearly qualifies to be included in such a definition.
literature is discussed in Chapter Two, in the course of my examining the proposition that Jian bei piàn would have contributed to China’s nation-building. This examination will use my definition of nation-building: the ‘imaginative invention’ applied by members of the intelligentsia, in narratives which draw on and refine enduring cultural elements recognised by a community, with the aim of communicating and promoting a unified vision of the nation.

Narrating the nation – intellectuals and narratives of national identity

The part played by the intelligentsia in a nationalist movement is often seen as closely linked to the articulation of a sense of national identity. According to Smith, a major proponent of the ethno-symbolist approach discussed in the following section, frequently it is the intelligentsia who “propose the category of the nation in the first place and endow it with symbolic significance”.167

In the classical modernist view national identity, while clearly a critical element in the process, is one of several features to be developed during nation-building. Smith sees the term “national identity” as replacing “national character” and “national consciousness”, expressions favoured by proponents of the old liberal view for what they held to be the unique and fundamental nature of the nation as primordial entity. The newer expression implies a sense of shared awareness acknowledged or displayed by individuals in their behaviour, in other words, the involvement of psychological and socio-cultural influences. But this kind of psychological/socio-cultural dynamic does not fit easily with the idea of national identity being put in place like a building-block, or a milestone reached at a certain stage of nation-building.

More recent discussions of national identity take into account psychological/socio-cultural dynamics, emphasising both the fluid nature of national identity over time as well as its reliance on enduring perceptions of a cultural heritage that is, nonetheless,

167 Smith, Nationalism and modernism, p.91.
subject to constant redefinition: “National identity is always a project.” For Anderson, language, with its power to create a sense of community both contemporary and historical, is an important part of that on-going project, producing as it does the narratives needed for national identity. Focusing on the fluidity of national identity in the modern postcolonial world, Bhabha argues that those narratives must always be contradictory, giving voice to an uneasy blend of many cultural identities (as opposed to a single cultural heritage). Regardless of whether narratives of national identity express uncertainty, volatility and tension as Bhabha claims, or a broad consensus among a large enough group of individuals about the unique nature of their heritage, what such narratives reveal are the forces which generate and sustain the on-going project of national identity, as well as those which, hinting at the ever-present potential for a nation’s fragmentation, challenge and undermine it. Nor are the intelligentsia likely to be the only narrators. Sometimes their version of national identity will reflect only a minority view; sometimes intellectuals are solitary voices promoting an idea of nation.

Lao She employed a variety of genres for his wartime writing, and of his works during that period Jian bei pian stands out for its focus on China’s history, both classical and contemporary, with its references to seminal events and periods, as well as to places and individuals of significance in that history. To the extent that the lyrics of Jian bei pian evoke a sense of community in the way Anderson argues that poetry and song are able to do, the poem could be considered a narrative promoting and affirming national identity. This proposition is examined in Chapter Two, using my definition of national identity: the shared awareness of belonging to a nation, with an enduring concept of that nation in both its physical and emotional dimensions, a concept which is at the same time subject to an iterative process of affirmation and re-affirmation.

169 Ibid., p.20.
171 Anderson, Imagined communities, pp.133, 144-145, 204-205.
Cultural symbols commemorated, reconfigured, modified, commodified

Over a range of narrative media – verse, legend retold in opera or blockbuster movie, fiction in the form of historical or modern novel, scholarly history or textbook, popular magazine, newspaper, or official state news agency – the narrative text often features elements strongly associated with the national culture, or of a dominant group within that culture. Such cultural motifs, when employed within narrative, serve not only to define a quantifiable sense of the nation – its origins, temporal and physical boundaries – but also to create persuasive accounts of its spiritual existence, and to highlight meaningful qualities with which individuals are able to identify. It is such cultural and historical underpinnings of nationalism, and how in the modern setting they are used for the project of national identity, to which ethno-symbolists pay attention.

The ethno-symbolist approach examines the part played by traditional myths, symbols, values, and communal memories in what is viewed as a continual remaking of national identity. For ethno-symbolists such as Smith, this remaking process involves unravelling the way those traditional components are configured, re-evaluating them for utility and relevance, reconstituting them in a meaningful form, and supplementing them with components of fresh significance. Components identified as important in the emergence of a shared sense of identity include myths about ancestry or origin, sometimes linked to an enduring association with a particular geographical location in its cultural sense of homeland, iconic sites and landscapes, symbolic celebrations such as festivals and anniversary holidays, and memories of crucial episodes and periods in history.

The physical territory represented by concepts of homeland, motherland, native soil etc., is noted by Smith, who illustrates how geographical territory can become so critical to national identity: places that were the venue for definitive events ultimately acquire historical significance through the narratives of poetry, national anthem, (and

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174 ‘Culture’ I define here as the mix of traditional myths, symbols, values, and memories recognised by a community, as well as the material, intellectual, and social modes of giving expression to such cultural components.
175 Smith, Nationalism: theory, ideology, history p.22.
176 Smith, Nationalism and modernism, p.191.
nowadays perhaps, tourism brochure or website); a landscape whose natural endowments provide a livelihood comes to be personified by its inhabitants as a benign and guiding influence, an identity-relationship in which their own interests and that of the landscape are inseparable; claims of attachment to terrain become vested in the tombs of ancestors, monuments to heroic warriors, and shrines to ancient sages and prophets.¹⁷⁷

Frequently these geographical features are linked to the notion of a golden age, the communal remembrance of some bygone era when the nation was at the height of its power and prestige. Many decisive battles, and the heroes to whom monuments were raised, come to be seen either as ushering in this glorious epoch, or as representing its high point. The glorious epoch can be used in several ways to affirm and re-affirm national identity. Its values, perhaps expressed in parable or religious precept, might be held up as those to which the modern nation should aspire. Its achievements, along with its heroes and celebrated intellectuals, get cited in textbook and official history as inspiration for the nation’s revival. The defining and enduring qualities of its ordinary people (the ancestors), disseminated in legend and folk song, are seen as confirming that those qualities were not lost but simply in need of reawakening. And as Smith observes, “the more faithfully recorded, better documented and more comprehensive a golden age, the more impact it can exert over later generations.”¹⁷⁸

According to the ethno-symbolist approach, to the extent that Lao She’s Jian bei pian features places in China’s geographical territory and periods in its history holding a special position in communal memory, it could have played a role in reinvigorating, re-inventing and reconstructing (rather than constructing) national identity. This proposition is examined in Chapter Two.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.263-264.
Summary

This theoretical review has identified three approaches for evaluating the nation-building qualities claimed for Jian bei pian:

1) Whether Jian bei pian can be seen as contributing to modern China’s nation-building through Lao She’s imaginative invention and promotion of a vision of unified China;

2) Whether Jian bei pian can be seen as a narrative that contributed to the construction of China’s national identity;

3) Whether Jian bei pian can be seen as a reinterpretation and reconstruction of national identity through its ethno-symbolist celebration of China’s culture.
Chapter Two – Patriotic rhetoric and nation-building in Jian bei pian

This chapter examines the justification for Jian bei pian’s reputation as nation-building propaganda during the Second Sino-Japanese War, as an example of Lao She’s writing for the patriotic cause of anti-Japan resistance. The poem is analysed to determine how well it fits with the theoretical approaches to nation-building outlined in the previous chapter.

The discussion begins by examining the proposition that in promoting Lao She’s vision of China, Jian bei pian could have contributed to modern China’s nation-building during the anti-Japan resistance. Next, it evaluates the extent to which Jian bei pian can be seen as a narrative fostering an imagined national identity. Finally, focusing on the ethno-symbolism of China’s landscape as territory and of historical periods celebrated as golden ages, the discussion evaluates how well Jian bei pian uses these to reinterpret and reconstruct China’s national identity.

Imagining modern China

In Jian bei pian Lao She’s imagined China is illustrated by three broad types of reference: China as a political concept (nation, nationality, state or country); China as a geographical territory with defined boundaries; China as represented by its people generically, in specific population groups, and in living individuals (as opposed to historical or mythological characters).

From the beginning “Travelling the great road of China’s revival” the journey is located in an imagined place, that of China the nation in renewal.

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1 In the following analysis, totals are calculated by counting the number of lines in the entire poem in which a specific kind of reference occurs, as defined by the terms listed in footnotes 2-3, 16, 25-28 below. A line may contain more than one type of reference.
2 Guojia 国家 or guo 国, minzu 民族, zhongguo 中国 or zhonghua 中华.
3 E.g. dazhong 大众, minzhong 民众, baixing 百姓, renmin 人民, generally translated as the ‘common people’ or ‘masses’.
4 Canto 1 line 2.
China’s rejuvenation is alluded to again in cantos 8, 11, 15, 18, 21-23, with Lao She’s vision of the future, his pattern for China’s invention, outlined in canto 15:

Our new nation,
will then be lovely as fresh flowers,
with dances, songs, paintings,
it will have power and culture, strength and refinement.

我们的新国家，
那将是多么美丽的鲜花，
它会舞，它会歌，它会画，
它有武有文，刚强而文雅。5

This renewal is anchored to China’s past as a great nation (cantos 1, 6-8, 16, 18, 24-25). One inspiration for his image of new China is ancient Xi’an, here associated with the mythical giant bird Dapeng:6

Like mighty Peng standing on the plateau,
wings outspread, head lifted to the sky,
this new China symbolized in Xi’an!

象大鹏雄立高原，
双翅齐展，昂首向天，
这新中华的世界的西安！7

But the remaking of China is also linked to its contemporary defiance in resisting Japan: “the lion roars in fury at East Asia’s setting sun”怒狮吼落东亚的残阳。8 In this metaphor for China’s defiance the Rising Sun symbol referred to earlier (“that white flag with its rising sun”那白旗上的太阳)，9 is inverted to suggest Japan’s declining power. The message of defiance is stated clearly in canto 7: “mighty China faces the attack, fights back”伟大的中华去应战，应战10 and reiterated in cantos 4, 8, 10, 19-21.

Despite these mostly optimistic images of China in its process of renewal through resistance (exceptions describe the nation as humiliated and troubled11), references to

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5 Lines 70-73.
6 From the Daoist classic Zhuangzi.7 Canto 8 lines 91-93.
7 Canto 8 lines 91-93.
8 Canto 1 line 59.
9 Canto 1 line 30.
10 Line 49.
11 Canto 2 line 39, canto 21 line 105, canto 26 line 101.
the nation are only a small part of the poem, in 37 lines spread over 21 cantos. Given
the length of Jian bei pian (3,652 lines altogether\(^{12}\)) it is difficult to argue that these
few references alone convey a powerful vision of united China.

The geographical boundaries of Lao She’s imagined China are also delineated in Jian
bei pian’s opening canto. “[F]rom South China Sea to northern border”\(^{13}\) 从南海到塞
上 and “Purple Border to Pearl River”\(^{14}\) 从紫塞到珠江 are images with the power
to reinforce and promote a geographical sense of the nation as a whole. But other than
these two lines, the remaining references to China’s geography – 31 lines in 13 cantos
– consist of common idiomatic expressions based on topography,\(^{16}\) generally
interpreted as the land, territory or terrain of a country without indicating its area or
defining its physical borders. While Jian bei pian contains many more references to
specific sites, scenery, landmarks and natural resources, these do not contribute to a
concept of China united in a territorial sense so are not included here. Such references
are discussed later in this chapter.

Slightly more references (45 lines in 14 cantos) are to China as embodied in its people
en masse. Many positive qualities are ascribed to “our people” who:

Knowing the nation’s shame, are brave, sincere and loyal,
and, given the word, would readily fight with all their might.

知耻有勇, 厚道忠诚,
一句话便敢去拼命.\(^{17}\)

Innate patriotism drives their willingness to sacrifice themselves:

[They] look on laying down their lives without alarm,\(^{18}\)
and give their flesh and blood to support the shattered country.

会把牺牲看作坦途,
用血用肉把破碎的山河撑住.\(^{19}\)

\(^{12}\) Counting its 27 canto headings.
\(^{13}\) 塞 (sài): a general term for China’s northern and eastern frontiers.
\(^{14}\) Referring to the northern frontier area around the Great Wall; the Pearl River flows through
Guangdong and empties into the South China Sea.
\(^{15}\) Canto 1 lines 55, 94.
\(^{16}\) E.g. shanhe 山河, shanchuan 山川, heshan 河山, jiangshan 江山, ditu 地土, guotu 国土, dadi 大地.
\(^{17}\) Canto 26 lines 101-102.
\(^{18}\) Literally, they regard sacrificing their lives as an easy (smooth) path to take.
\(^{19}\) Canto 6 lines 7-8.
In their determination not to yield but to overcome the enemy the people are presented as tenacious (canto 9), untiring (canto 10), and organised (canto 18). Although ordinarily peace-loving and patient, they are moved to outrage by the mass slaughter and destruction wrought by the invaders (canto 5). Their historic ability to overcome hardship (“the courage and persistence that built the Great Wall” 以建造长城万里的勇敢辛苦)\(^\text{20}\) can be harnessed for the resistance, as can their mythological heritage: “descendants of the Yellow Emperor,\(^\text{21}\) for the sake of peace take arms” 黄帝子孙为了和平换上武装.\(^\text{22}\)

But in several less than complimentary references the people are described as being susceptible to panic (cantos 19, 26) and needing guidance on the war against Japan (canto 20). In a passage discussing which aspects of the war should be publicised to gain the people’s long-term commitment, Lao She seems unconvinced that the people’s initial enthusiasm will suffice:

Thinking that a few punches and kicks will bring success at once;
they had not anticipated, and of course don’t understand,
what modern warfare is.

以为是一拳一脚就可以成功；
他们没有想到, 自然也就不懂，
什么是现代的战争.\(^\text{23}\)

This is a significant defect in Lao She’s image of China as represented by its people. Rather than acknowledging that the rural masses have their own cultural values, wisdom, and practical experience that should be enlisted for the resistance effort – a view which developed during the War of Resistance especially in the Communist-held areas\(^\text{24}\) – he seems to echo an old elitist view held by urban intellectuals that the rural population need educating as well as mobilising.

The most numerous references to China’s people involve particular groups or individuals, with the Chinese army and its soldiers fighting in the War of Resistance

\(^{\text{20}}\) Canto 6 line 42.
\(^{\text{21}}\) Legendary emperor of early China.
\(^{\text{22}}\) Canto 1 line 61.
\(^{\text{23}}\) Canto 26 lines 105-107.
\(^{\text{24}}\) Hung, War and Popular Culture, p.279.
by far the most prominent group (120 lines in 18 cantos). Such references are mostly in broad, effectively neutral terms i.e. warriors or fighters, officers and soldiers, or specifically mention China’s National Revolutionary Army and ‘People’s Army’ militia, but also include references to heroes and comrades, labels carrying positive emotional values. These, along with the approving adjectival or verbal descriptions which qualify almost all references to the Chinese army and its soldiers, communicate strongly favourable images of China’s forces fighting the War of Resistance.

Canto 1 contains the greatest number of references to the soldiers as heroes, and closes by dedicating Jian bei pian to soldiers fighting in the War of Resistance. The purpose of Lao She’s journey is given as “to visit and cheer our heroes in this War of Resistance” 去慰问抗战英雄们的健康. The determination of new recruits (“China’s men of iron heading for the front” 中华的铁汉开往前方) has already made them heroic warriors, and:

No matter ten-zhang snowdrifts on the Wusha32 ranges,
or timeless harshness of the Gobi Desert,
neither can stop the heroic warrior’s advance, or curb his song.

任凭乌纱岭33上的积雪十丈,
还是瀚海里的亘古饥荒,
都拦不住健儿的前进.34

Their “boundless exhilaration… [defeats] thirst and hunger, wind and frost” 无边的兴奋…先战胜了饥渴风霜; despite being poorly-equipped these “heroes with giant
bamboo rain-hats all askew” 伞大的竹笠歪在头上 become “five million heroic warriors singing with one voice” 五百万健儿齐唱.35

This powerful image of a united China is reinforced by other qualities of its soldiers depicted throughout the poem:

Enduring thirst and hunger…
These strong soldiers, having gone through the fires of discipline, have steel’s hardness, cotton’s gentleness.

忍着饥渴…
这铁的军人，经过纪律之火，
有钢的坚硬，棉的柔和.36

The special sacrifice of soldiers killed or maimed in the War of Resistance is highlighted in cantos 3, 5, 11, and 19, while the selflessness of all soldiers is commended:

The hardships of soldiers who fight, you who toil all year long, in deserts without food and water, or barren mountains’ cold rocks and deep snow, danger is your everyday experience, but you ignored danger, you overcame the hardships! These great difficulties weigh your shoulders down, soldiers, you did not hesitate for a second;37 through gunfire and a hail of bullets, forward you go, through treacherous rapids and barren mountains, forward you go… laying down your lives to redeem our territory!

苦斗的战士，你们辛苦终年，
在没有食水的沙漠，或石寒雪厚的荒山，
危险，危险是你们的日常经验，
可是忘掉了危险，你们战胜了艰难！
这伟大的艰苦压在你们的双肩，
战士啊，你们并没有迟疑的眨一眨眼；
枪风弹雨，你们向前，
恶水荒山，你们向前…
用血肉的牺牲赎取国土河山！38

35 Canto 1 lines 21-23, 56.
37 Literally, for the time it takes to blink.
38 Canto 24 lines 47-54, 57.
Besides having the requisite toughness and unwavering courage (cantos 5, 8-11, 15, 17, 20, 23, 26), the soldiers are good-natured, unassuming and sincere (cantos 9, 11, 14). Army morale is high because of the battles it has won (cantos 11, 14, 15, 18), and soldiers’ enthusiasm (cantos 15, 23) is balanced by clear-minded confidence:

Taking matters calmly while tightly stretched,
neither servile nor overbearing they persist in their conviction;
this belief, born of experience and courage…
blows the scent of victory to the battlefield…
self-confident, trusting people, they give belief to others.

不慌不忙的他们紧张，
不卑不亢的坚持着信仰；
这信仰，来自经验与胆量…
把胜利的花香吹送到战场上…
自信，信人，给别人以信仰。39

This superhuman mixture of attributes is not tempered by any undesirable qualities. The image of China presented by its army and soldiers thus seems a clear example of positive nation-building. In this respect Lao She displays an almost utopian view of the army, apparently making no distinction between the two (barely-reconciled) factions of the United Front,40 despite his journey taking him through areas quite separately administered by either one or the other faction. Such impartiality may partly reflect his position as president of the non-aligned ACRAWA, and the fact that ACRAWA had effectively sponsored his journey. It is underlined by his allusion to Xi’an as “joining the whole nation’s stampede into bloody battle” 也由全民族的冲杀血战,41 possibly an oblique reference to the Xi’an incident of December 1936 when Chiang Kai-shek was detained by two of his KMT generals until agreeing to join forces with the Communists to fight the Japanese as the United Front.42 Lao She surely knew of the Xi’an incident but may have glossed over it since it represented a humiliation for Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT. Again, in canto 17, the claim “this is no civil war” is followed by the observation that “reports of fresh victories…” [have

39 Canto 11 lines 22-24, 26, 47.
41 Canto 8 line 78.
42 See footnotes 27 and 40 above.
people] convinced the National Army can defend the country" 这不是内战…捷报仍新…相信了国军能保卫江山。43 Moreover, while Lao She may not have known about the United Front’s dissolution-in-progress when he left Chongqing in mid-1939, he was surely made aware by the time he reached the northern border area where the Communist forces were based, given that he visited Yan’an at least twice (see cantos 24 and 26) and reportedly met Mao Zedong on one of these occasions.44 Curiously, nowhere in the poem are Mao Zedong or the Communists mentioned by name. These omissions, together with the generally positive tone of the passages in cantos 8 and 17, suggest that Lao She’s view of, and commitment to nation-building, were at that time anyway, tied to efforts of the United Front. One explanation offered is that Lao She’s instinctive dislike of politics made him unwilling to accept the reality of the United Front’s rupture and its factional disputes, so that he never mentioned it in his wartime writing.45 While this may have been a form of self-censorship, he could also have been anticipating KMT-directed censorship in Chongqing. On the other hand, at this stage he perhaps had difficulty accepting the CCP version of Chinese nationalism and national identity, described by Harrison as “a mass nationalism based on the rural poor” which ultimately positioned the CCP as the true power behind anti-Japan resistance and the only viable voice of national unity.46

Of other population groups and individuals referred to (62 lines in 15 cantos), young people feature prominently. Despite the challenging and often hazardous wartime environment backgrounding much of the narrative, the younger generation is often shown as a symbol of hope for the future. Young boys perform a drama to promote the resistance:

These twelve-year old children,  
along with China’s daring War of Resistance,  
and our new-born art, will grow up at the same time!

这十二岁的娃娃,  
将随着敢抗战的中华,  
与刚降生的中华艺术，一齐长大!47

43 Canto 17 lines 82, 85, 87.  
44 Lao She probably made three visits to Yan’an: Song Yongyi, Lao She yu zhongguo wenhua guannian, p.384.  
46 Harrison, China, p.224. See also Hung, War and Popular Culture, pp.284-285.  
47 Canto 15 lines 67-69.
Schoolchildren sing war songs (cantos 19, 26); children working in the fields:

Happily wear woven rain hats,
helping to hoe and weed, spread manure, herd cattle, and feed chickens.

连孩子们也快乐的戴上草笠，
帮着锄草，施肥，放牛，喂鸡。\(^{48}\)

Such images, drawing from the deep vein of traditionalism that placed a high value on progeny, exploit the positive emotion associated with those traditional values. The other side of that emotion – the anguish of losing a child – is shown in a passage about a child injured in a Japanese air-raid:

A boy of ten, maimed by shrapnel fragments, his short white pants already drenched in blood. A white-haired old man… Bearing the boy on his back, the old man silent, the drooping child whimpering, quietly, slowly, amidst everyone’s anger, heads for the green shade of a short thatch fence, ah, towards eternal memory of blood!

十龄的小儿被破片殃及，
短短的白裤已如血洗。
白发的老人…将他背起，
老人无言，孩子低泣，
默默的，缓缓的，在大家的愤怒里，
走向绿阴中的短短的草篱，
啊，走向永远的血的记忆！\(^{49}\)

Other population groups, identified mostly by occupation, are sketched in short and mostly positive images: agricultural and industrial workers who drive China’s defence (canto 4); itinerant merchants surviving through their ingrained habits of hard work (canto 6); long-haired barefoot scholars spreading the resistance message through writing and performance (canto 24). Jiangsu-Gansu railroad\(^{50}\) workers are singled out for attention and praised for their courage, steadfast attention to duty, and unwillingness to surrender in the face of enemy attack (canto 11).

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\(^{48}\) Canto 10 lines 26-27.

\(^{49}\) Canto 10 lines 102-108.

\(^{50}\) The Long-Hai Railway, running from the Jiangsu port of Lianyungang to Lanzhou in Gansu. For the significance of this railroad, its defence and eventual capture by Japanese forces in 1938 in relation to the fall of Zhengzhou, Xuzhou and Wuhan, see Mitter, Forgotten ally, pp.147-148, 157.
One individual who features prominently is an elderly farmer, fired with patriotic zeal, but unhappy about progress in the War of Resistance and the way it is being fought. To some extent he presents an ideal image of China as symbolised by its rural population ("hard-working plainspoken... down-to-earth” 勤苦爽快...朴诚). But the old man’s doubts are used to launch a lecture (on ensuring that the commitment of ordinary people to the War of Resistance is sustained) whose tone, as noted previously, is somewhat disparaging of rural people.

There are also several group and individual references which cast their subjects in a decidedly negative light. Daoist devotees are characterised as vulgar (canto 4) and superstitious (canto 12); Daoist priests on Huashan as avaricious and less than otherworldly in their readiness to demand money from travelling pilgrims for meals provided (canto 27). A pretentious guide and sellers of cheap souvenirs at the Longmen Buddhist caves are mocked by Lao She (canto 12). In Jian bei pian these are rare examples of censure directed at the kinds of people Lao She frequently targeted in his pre-war fiction, suggesting that he had not entirely abandoned a cynical view of his fellow-citizens.

Based on this analysis of textual images I would argue that on three counts Jian bei pian fails to project a compelling vision of China that qualifies as nation-building. Firstly, the overall incidence of references to China, whether as nation, physical territory, or people, is low, confined to 297 lines or less than one-tenth of the entire poem. This quantitative estimate alone suggests that the China imagined in Jian bei pian was unlikely to have promoted nation-building. Furthermore, the small number of copies in circulation from Jian bei pian’s single print-run in 1942 mean that its readership would almost certainly have been confined to a small group (probably fellow-writers). Even of the poem’s cantos that received extra exposure by appearing as extracts in newspapers and literary magazines between March 1940 and April

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51 Canto 26 lines 79, 100.
52 Canto 26 lines 95-127.
53 Cantos 1 (in the popular Beijing newspaper Dagong bao 大公报 March 1940); 5 (in Wenyi yuekan 文艺月刊 [Literature monthly magazine] April 1940); 7 (in Zhongsu wenhua 中苏文化 [Sino-Soviet Culture] June 1940); 10 (in Zhongsu wenhua July 1940); 13 (in Zhongsu wenhua September 1940); 16 (in Xin shubao 新蜀报 [New Sichuan news] June 1940); 24 (in Wenyi yuekan April 1941); and 27 (in Wenshi zazhi 文史杂志 [Literature and history magazine] January 1941): Zeng Guangcan and Wu Huaibin, Lao She xin shi xuan. Canto 10 also appeared in Kangzhan wenyi in 1940, as did canto 9.
1941, not one could be described as having its text dominated by images of China. Despite the poem being composed in a popular lyric form designed for performance, its length suggests it was probably not performed in its entirety, and indeed there is no record of even one canto having been performed or recited to an audience, other than a private reading of an extract by the author for a colleague.\textsuperscript{54}

Secondly, the images of China in Jian bei pian are mixed, neither overwhelmingly positive nor clearly conveyed. The new China imagined draws from the past through its theme of renewal. Its territory is sketched only briefly in terms of northern and southern limits. The notes of exasperation sounded about its people (with the exception of soldiers fighting the War of Resistance) tend to undermine any sense of a unified China. Even Lao She’s vision of China as represented by troops of the United Front army, however intended, was ultimately a distortion.

Thirdly, the emphasis on renewal through resistance and sacrifice suggests that Lao She shared his contemporaries’ view of their literary mission not as nation-building but as national defence and national salvation.

Yet if a vision of united China fails to materialise in Jian bei pian, Lao She’s narrative of a travelogue featuring China’s history may still reflect an attempt to affirm a sense of nationhood. This hypothesis is examined in the following section.

**Narrating China’s national identity**

This section evaluates the poem as a text which, through its narration of history, could have contributed to the construction of modern China’s national identity by articulating an enduring sense of the nation and promoting the shared awareness of belonging to that nation.

\textsuperscript{54} Zhu Ziqing, “Kangzhan yu shi”. 

Lao She’s sense of history is a constant travelling companion on the journey described in *Jian bei pian*. From the beginning, China’s ancient history and the current war are juxtaposed:

Both sides of the tombs of Zhou and Qin⁵⁵ where ancient battlegrounds prepare for combat once again.

到周秦陵墓两旁的
古战场，而今哪，又成了战场。⁵⁶

Past and present are constantly compared, with both positive and negative qualities of ancient history highlighted. Much of history is worth venerating and celebrating (cantos 4, 8-10, 12-15, 17, 21-22, 26): “the spirit of our past, the passions⁵⁷ of our ancient state” should be emulated in the modern war.

However old stories have limited value when they detract from modern achievements (canto 19), and some legends have lost their power with the passage of time (canto 21). The gaiety and romance of historic times (cantos 4, 17), their magnificence, elegance and serenity (cantos 2, 8, 15, 17) are offset by history’s inevitable association with catastrophe (canto 8) and devastation (canto 13). History’s volatility is troubling and perplexing:

How alarming, the rise and fall of dynasties…
What violent storm replaced the playing of jade flutes?
What battles with blade and flame displaced the treasures of a cultured life?
Several thousand years of rain and dew, liquor and rich living,
bright mansions with thousands of lovely palace women fluttering in fine dresses,
then in a short time, all flies away to dust!

多么惊心…历史的兴废…
是什么风暴代替了玉笛横吹？
是什么刀火代替了宝马金龟？

⁵⁵ Apparently alluding to the fact that Lao She’s journey through China’s ancient ‘cradle’ of the Wei River Valley brought him at its easternmost point to Luoyang, site of Zhou dynasty tombs and at its westernmost point to the Qin dynasty mausoleums near Xi’an.
⁵⁶ Canto 1 lines 7-8.
⁵⁷ Literally, happiness, fury, grief, laughter.
Elsewhere China’s history is viewed as an extended lesson, in which the knowledge passed on through generations (canto 4) bequeaths inspiring memories (canto 17), and gives people their powers of endurance (canto 6). But while history provides answers (canto 10), enlightenment alternates with oblivion (canto 13), and Lao She can only imagine the former liveliness and glory of now-deserted scenic spots (canto 21).

The passage of time is seen as somehow hindering the predetermined momentum of China’s history: “time’s great changes slow history’s advance and hasten its reverses” 沧海桑田，使历史迟进而急退. 60 Almost denying the possibility of progress, Lao She declares that China’s people have struggled to overcome hardship for over 5,000 years (canto 10):

Ancient challenges,  
blood and sweat of today’s people,  
history’s stubbornness persists through time!

古代的艰难,  
今人的血汗,  
历史的倔强今古不变61

But now the continuum is broken. The War of Resistance ends that 5,000 year period – “China’s history, new and brilliant, shines” 闪耀者中华历史的新光62 – and will decide the future (canto 22). This rebirth of history needs new powers to fight not only the invading enemy but also the depravity and cruelty of former ways (canto 21). The new history, with every battle victory recorded, illuminates reports from soldiers fighting on the front (canto 11). Jian bei pian’s treatment of the War of Resistance is discussed in the next section.

59 Canto 13 lines 2, 22-26.  
60 Canto 13 line 36.  
61 Canto 4 lines 91-93.  
62 Canto 1 line 97.
The War of Resistance – end of history, beginning of history

The War of Resistance, its battles, significant dates and events leading up to the conflict, make up the great majority of specific historical references in Jian bei pian. With the war providing both the impetus for and much of the backdrop to the journey, a few references function only as mechanical indicators, characterising a place (canto 2) or setting the temporal context (canto 5). Rhetorical allusions give the war itself certain qualities: it is both holy and daring (canto 15) and also a torch carried “through day and night regardless… past the Purple Border, to the Yellow River’s banks” 昼夜不分，传递到紫塞以外，黄河之滨. Then again, the war is a sea of blood (canto 5), a wind tossing people about like weeds (canto 16), and “earthquake, landslide, tsunami” 是地震, 是山崩, 是海啸.

Many motivations are given for China’s resistance. It will erase the humiliation of Japanese occupation (canto 3) and restore national honour (canto 16). It is driven by principles of self-determination and equality (canto 8) and also by economic considerations (canto 4), including the desire to defend land and crops (canto 6), particularly the loess plateau:

This gold-like loess, benevolent and holy,  
for its sake we go to war, we kill, we sacrifice ourselves,  
to preserve our loess, preserve our culture,  
not until the loess is safe will we be freed from suffering!

这金子作的黄土, 慈祥而神圣,  
为它去战, 去杀, 去牺牲,  
保全住黄土, 保全住文明,  
保全住黄土才解除了苦痛!  

Battles and campaigns of the War of Resistance are mentioned frequently, of which the latest, the Sui-Zao battle 亦作 Battle of Suixian-Zaoyang, from April-May 1939, in which Chinese forces repulsed Japanese attacks on Suizhou and Zaoyang in Hubei.
battles mentioned are two in 1937 in the Zhongtiao Mountains\textsuperscript{67} (cantos 10, 11, and 27), the Battle of the Great Wall\textsuperscript{68} (canto 15), and the 1938 battles for Xuzhou\textsuperscript{69} and Wuhan\textsuperscript{70} (cantos 7, 11, 15, and 16).

There is also a set of references to military strategy which merits closer examination. Describing what are usually termed guerrilla tactics, Lao She tells how soldiers in north-western Henan harass enemy forces:

\begin{quote}
When the enemy attack, calmly we evade them,  
the time to fight, the place to fight,  
shall make them crazy like houseflies that dart into a room;  
we wait, as hunters wait for tiger and wolf,  
hiding at every step, stalking them step by step,  
waiting for our time, our battle ground.
\end{quote}

These lines may have been inspired by the writings of Sun Zi 孙子 (544-496 BCE), the military strategist who over 2,000 years earlier stressed the need for flexibility and deceit in warfare.\textsuperscript{72} Such strategies were also endorsed by Mao Zedong (one of many military leaders influenced by Sunzi) in his 1938 Yan’an lecture \textit{Kang Ri youji zhanzheng de zhanlue wenti} 抗日游击战争的战略问题 [Problems of strategy in

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{67} The Zhongtiao Mountains and Taihang ranges were the setting for a minor but morale-boosting victory against Japanese forces by the newly-formed Eighth Route Army, with the involvement of high-profile CCP military leaders Zhu De 朱德 (1886-1976) and Lin Biao 林彪 (1907-1971).  
\textsuperscript{68} The first stage of this battle took place at Nankou near the Great Wall’s strategic Juyongguan Frontier Fortress. Although not resulting in victory for the Chinese (Nationalist KMT forces), Japanese forces were strongly resisted, and, following on the Japanese failure to prevail in the 1936 Suiyuan Campaign, these engagements are viewed as a motivating force for Chinese resistance against Japan.  
\textsuperscript{69} This includes the Battle of Tai’erzhuang in March 1938, in which KMT forces won a significant victory against the Japanese. However it was followed by the Battle of Xuzhou in May 1938, when the Japanese successfully took Xuzhou. For more detail on these battles, and their significance in the War of Resistance, see Mitter, \textit{Forgotten ally}, pp.145-156.  
\textsuperscript{70} The battle for Wuhan which raged over 4 months in the latter half of 1938 was ultimately unsuccessful for the Chinese, but significantly weakened Japanese advance and Japan’s ability to control mainland China. It began when Japanese troops captured Xinyang in October 1938 and used it to launch their attack on Wuhan. A year later Chinese forces attacked Japanese frontline positions in southern Henan, including Xinyang, their main objective being to tie down and harass Japanese forces.  
\textsuperscript{71} Canto 11 lines 29-34.  
guerrilla war against Japan], particularly in the passage beginning “In order to mislead, decoy and confuse the enemy…” 73 In another comment that “our casualties diminish daily, thanks to divide and conquer tactics” 我们伤亡日减，因为化整为零 74 Lao She uses an expression 75 of more recent provenance, often attributed to Mao Zedong since it was employed in the same lecture outlining tactics of dispersing fighting forces to carry out widespread harassment of the enemy. 76 The guerrilla tactics referred to in these passages, though widely practised by CCP forces, did not reflect the NRA approach to the War of Resistance in theory or in practice. 77 As noted previously, the Communist forces and their leaders are never directly mentioned, but these two passages clearly extolling CCP military strategy raise doubts about Lao She’s neutral stance with regard to the United Front.

_Jian bei pian’s_ account of the War of Resistance is obviously incomplete since only its first two and a half years could be related. 78 Nevertheless references to the war’s events and protagonists, its effects and its general functioning as background make it the dominant historical period covered by the narrative. 79 Thus, to the extent that the war was portrayed as a crucial point in China’s history, _Jian bei pian_ may have been designed to intensify awareness of the nation in its time of crisis. In comparison, historical references to the pre-modern era are relatively few, 80 but discussed in the next section.

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74 Canto 23 line 134.
75 Huazhengweiling [breaking up the whole into parts].
76 Mao Zedong, _Selected military writings_, p.162.
78 Some battle references were presumably written with the advantages of hindsight. For example, Kaifeng was part of the Japanese front line in Northern China, retaken by Chinese forces in December 1939. Similarly, the battle for Xinyang (see footnote 70 above) was probably not underway when Lao She travelled through Henan in the summer of 1939, but he may have had both campaigns in mind when he wrote canto 11 line 18.
79 Altogether 338 lines over all 27 cantos.
80 99 lines over 22 cantos.
Milestones of history

At one point Lao She observes: “Historic sites line the roadside like stars spread across the sky”. Such milestones of history are recorded in references often identifying particular dynasties or epochs. Of these the Han dynasty, featuring in cantos 4, 8, and 15, and the Tang dynasty, in cantos 8, 12, 13, 24 and 26, are most frequently mentioned, and in canto 8 are linked in historic sequence: “Zhou, Qin, Han or Tang, we cannot escape [Xi’an’s] history”!

The Tang is also coupled with the Song dynasty (cantos 13 and 26), as is the Qin dynasty with the Han (canto 8). But overall the narrative approach to China’s history is not comprehensive. No era before the Zhou dynasty is mentioned by name, the post-Song period features only twice, in references to the Yuan (canto 25) and the Ming dynasties (canto 26), and the Qing, as the last imperial dynasty before the Republican period, is omitted.

The main reason for the lack of chronological cohesion is that almost all epochs and dynasties mentioned relate to historical sites or events associated with particular places on the journey. Arrival at Hanzhong (canto 4) brings an extended musing on Han dynasty history, while the first visit to Xi’an (canto 8) prompts many references to the Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang dynasties. At Luoyang religious and cultural associations from the Six Dynasties period through the Western Jin, Tang, and Song dynasties are noted (cantos 12 and 13); as likewise are Nanyang’s Han dynasty relics and events of the Three Kingdoms period (canto 15). Even small northern Shaanxi towns have their dynastic legacies from Han, Tang, Song, and Ming periods highlighted (cantos 24 and 26).

81 Canto 17 line 116.
82 Canto 8 line 21.
History and national identity in Jian bei pian

Jian bei pian can thus be described as only a part-narrative of China’s history, driven very much by the journey’s itinerary and, as noted earlier, dominated by the War of Resistance period. With the war so frequently indicated as a critical cut-off point in the trajectory of Chinese history, an ultimately progressive, if non-linear, view of history emerges. Despite concerns expressed about the flux of dynastic cycles, and the occasional voicing of a fatalism that would deny the prospect of development, such concerns seem over-ridden by repeated allusions to “new China” and the revolutionary new chapter of its history beginning with the war’s outbreak. For example, the first major battle of the war – the 13 August 1937 Battle of Shanghai – is referred to as a day of “national revolution” 民族革命.83 This is not a view of history advocating “liberation by returning to the antiquity”.84 While the narrative singles out the achievements of certain dynasties for praise, it raises doubts about the utility of history in the current conflict, and even looks to the future with calls for industrialisation to support the resistance effort (cantos 4 and 6).

Intrinsic to Jian bei pian’s view of history is the notion of China as one continuous and homogeneous nation, despite the ebb and flow of ethnic diversity caused not only by invading non-Han peoples but also by border expansion and shrinkage throughout the dynastic cycles. A great variety of expressions are used – mostly interchangeably and mostly, as noted earlier, collective terms without specific ethnic or racial meaning – to refer to the Chinese nation and its people, but ethnic diversity barely features. The one term used – han 汉 – which could, among its many meanings,85 indicate Han ethnic identity, seems not to have been applied in that specific sense.86

83 Canto 17 line 125. The term “revolution” (geming 革命) also occurs in cantos 19 and 23. For a discussion of the origins and different meanings of geming in the context of modern China’s nation-building, see Prasenjit Duara, Rescuing history from the nation: questioning narratives of modern China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.126.
85 Viz. the Han ethnic group, race or nationality; the Han dynasty or people living during that time; Chinese people; Chinese language; man.
86 For example, in cantos 1, 5, 15, 25, and 26 it is used in its general sense of ‘man/fellow’.
Jian bei pian's projection of a homogeneous China may to some extent reflect early twentieth-century government attempts at nation-building through their educational policies, policies which during the War of Resistance aimed to create a “single and unifying national identity”\textsuperscript{87} by strictly controlling and manipulating the representation of China’s history to downplay ethnic diversity in that history. Lao She’s background, first as a student in the last years of the Qing dynasty and early Republican period, then as a teacher during the early 1920s and early 1930s, would have ensured his exposure to new interpretations of China’s history emerging over that time. If he intentionally promoted a unified view of China’s national identity in Jian bei pian, it may have been for several reasons, including the more personal one of disowning his Manchu background.\textsuperscript{88}

The analysis suggests that the sense of national identity projected by Jian bei pian is limited by inadequacies in its narrative treatment of China’s history. Despite frequent assertions that the nation is united through awareness of its (continuous and homogenous) historic culture, how such an awareness of belonging might be shared by different sub-groups in the nation is passed over. More critically, the poem’s historical references, dictated by the journey’s route, produce a somewhat random, piecemeal, and simplistic historical narrative, in which the history featured seems invoked mainly to evaluate its relevance to the present struggle – the War of Resistance, portrayed as a crucial point in China’s history which dominates the narrative.

Yet leaving the War of Resistance aside, certain dynastic periods are highlighted in references to places having significant associations with those dynasties. Such references, in their treatment of location and historical period as cultural icons, are the focus of the next section.


\textsuperscript{88} This may also explain Jian bei pian’s omission of the Qing dynasty or any of its significant sites. In the early stages of his writing career, well before the War of Resistance, Lao She apparently downplayed his Manchu background, perhaps to gain acceptance as a ‘Chinese’ writer, but more importantly, according to Vohra, to survive as a Chinese of Manchu ancestry: Vohra, Lao She and the Chinese Revolution p.9. Chow suggests Lao She must have known that being the voice for a minority culture or national group could be viewed as undermining the patriotic war effort: Chow, “Fatal Attachments,” p.8.
Reconfiguring China’s national identity – ethno-symbols of geography and history

This section evaluates Jian bei pian as a text which, by highlighting particular sites and periods of Chinese history that held a special position in communal memory, uses the ethno-symbolism of such places and epochs to reinterpret and reconstruct national identity.

Milestones of culture – glorious epochs and hallowed places

China’s ancient civilisation and its cultural treasures are showcased in the narrative’s recording of places as milestones on the journey. Shrines, temples and tombs, often in remote settings, feature this way. The significance of serene pastures around Dingjun mountain, venue for a famous Three Kingdoms period battle, is noted in canto 4. Zhongnanshan,89 the mountain renowned as a birthplace of Daoism, is the setting for much of canto 21, and Huashan,90 westernmost of the Five Sacred Daoist Mountains, for all of canto 27. The Sichuan mountain pass of Jianmen clearly functions as a milestone by figuring in the poem’s title as well as in canto 3.

Particular cities and their environs also serve as milestones. Two cities resonate powerfully with layers of golden ages excavated by Lao She in the manner of a dedicated archaeologist. Luoyang, the setting for three cantos of the poem, is one of these. While its history as the site of ancient capitals dates back to pre-Han times, for Lao She its significance lies in associations with periods between the Eastern Han and Song dynasties. A Song dynasty scenic site, “the ancient bridge where Kangjie heard the cuckoo” 康节听鹧的古桥,91 is noted in passing. Canto 13 records an excursion to see a recently excavated Western Jin dynasty monument92 and its associated ancient Imperial College.93 The period of greatest significance is the Tang dynasty, and the highlight of the Luoyang cantos is the visit to the Longmen caves, famous for their Buddhist carvings of which the majority were completed during the Tang dynasty

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89 South of Xi’an, part of the Qinling Mountain range.
90 In eastern Shaanxi.
91 Canto 12 line 35: referring to a story told about Shao Kangjie 邵康节, better known as scholar, philosopher and poet Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077). The bridge was Luoyang’s Tianjin Bridge.
92 The Biyong 辟雍 monument on the outskirts of Luoyang, unearthed in 1931.
93 The Western Jin Imperial College or Taixue (太学).
when Chinese Buddhism was at its most influential. The scale of the Buddhist iconography is admired, as is its message of enlightenment:

Buddha’s teachings shine from afar,
instructing humankind to tread the path of virtue!

佛光远照,
便血肉的人间同登善道194

The imprint of the Tang dynasty also appears in canto 13 references to White Horse Temple outside ancient Luoyang’s city walls, which became a centre for Buddhist translation scholarship during that period,95 and to the nearby tomb of a Tang dynasty minister.

The other city indelibly marked by the Tang dynasty is Xi’an, with its Forest of Steles,96 and “roadside taverns where the immortal poet97 got drunk”路旁的酒馆醉过诗仙.98 Xi’an’s suburbs teem with poetic associations:

Baqiao’s breezes still recalling bitterness and grief of ancient partings;
Qujiang Pool, Leyou tombs.

霸桥的微风还记着古代的离怨悲酸；
曲江池，来游原.99

Further out are Huaqing’s famous hot springs,100 and other sites with poetic links such as Lantian (canto 8).101

94 Canto 12 lines 83-84.
95 White Horse Temple is claimed to be the first Buddhist temple in China, built during the reign of the Eastern Han Emperor Ming 汉明帝 (28-75CE) to commemorate the return of two monks (symbolised by the two white horses) carrying Buddhist sutras from India. Translation of those sutras, mostly carried out at White Horse Temple, later became the foundation texts of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. See Paul Demieville, "Philosophy and religion from Han to Sui," ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, vol. 1, *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, PDF e-book, 1986).
96 A historic Xi’an site, also known as the Xi’an Beilin Museum, containing a large collection of Tang dynasty steles.
97 An expression always taken to mean Li Bai.
98 Canto 8 line 23.
99 Canto 8 lines 27-28. During the Tang dynasty Baqiao Bridge was known as the place from which to farewell departing guests; Qujiang Pool and the nearby Leyou Tombs were popular Chang’an scenic spots. All three sites featured in the verse of Tang poets such as Li Bai, Du Fu 杜甫 (712 – 770), and Li Shangyin 李商隐 (ca.813 – 858).
100 Hot springs at Lishan southeast of Xi’an known as the setting for the tragic love story of the Tang Emperor Xuanzong and his imperial consort Yang Guifei 杨贵妃. The emperor built a luxurious palace in Lishan, and Yang Guifei was given permission to bathe in Huaqing Pool, till then reserved for Tang emperors.
Many places in Xi’an mentioned for their Tang dynasty links are also associated with the Han dynasty. Here Lao She’s imagination seems to drive poetic licence with a reference to “locust trees from Han times” 汉的槐. Imagination also completes the picture when reality fails to match expectations:

I found no forest park,
no palaces...
still I could imagine the splendid majesty of Han and Tang!

没有了林园，
没有了宫殿…
还能想出汉唐的富丽庄严!¹⁰³

The city most closely identified with the Han dynasty is Hanzhong, with its “ruined Han palace,”¹⁰⁴ pavilions and parks” 汉王台后，古秀的亭园.¹⁰⁵ Historic views of the scene remind Lao She he is:

Now, at the site of great Han’s ancient state,
on this tiny plain…
this blue-green river between mighty mountains,
since ancient times assured success in battle.

在今天，在大汉，
这小小的平原…
这雄山碧水之间，
自古就操着胜算.¹⁰⁶

Judging by the number of eminent individuals from the Han and Tang dynasties featuring in the narrative, either period could have functioned as a powerful ethno-symbol. So how does Lao She’s treatment of these two periods perform in this respect? Tang’s golden age of poetry is acknowledged with numerous references in canto 2 alone: the well at which Xue Tao 薛涛 (768-831) is believed to have drawn water to

¹⁰¹ Lantian, on the northern slopes of the Qinling Mountains southeast of Xi’an, is an area of both archaeological and culturally historic interest, particularly as the site of Wang Wei’s home.
¹⁰² Canto 8 line 22: no example of this species (Sophora japonica, also known as the “Chinese scholar tree”) in Xi’an or elsewhere is credited with such longevity i.e. over 1700 years old.
¹⁰³ Canto 8 lines 30-31, 35.
¹⁰⁴ The historic site of the imperial court established by Liu Bang 刘邦, warlord who founded the Han dynasty as its first Emperor Han Gaozu 汉高祖 (202-195 BCE). Liu Bang used Hanzhong as his base for mounting his successful challenge to the Western Chu overlord Xiang Yu 项羽 in the period when the Chu and Han states were vying for supremacy after the collapse of the Qin dynasty.
¹⁰⁵ Canto 4 line 31.
¹⁰⁶ Canto 4 lines 36-37, 39-40.
dye her writing paper;\textsuperscript{107} a borrowing from the title of Li Bai’s well-known \textit{Shu dao nan};\textsuperscript{108} Jiange’s “tragic sound of bells” 悲剧里的铃声\textsuperscript{109} alluding to Bai Juyi’s \textit{Chang heng ge}. A renowned doctor and Daoist sage of Sui and Tang dynasties’ time, Sun Simiao 孙思邈 (581 – 682), is mentioned,\textsuperscript{110} as is General Guo Ziyi 郭子仪 (697-781), the Tang military leader credited with ending the An Lushan rebellion.\textsuperscript{111}

Military heroes rather than poets dominate the Han dynasty; the only scholar mentioned is the high-ranking calligrapher and court official of the Western Han dynasty Zhang Anshi 张安世 (?- 62 BCE).\textsuperscript{112} Zhang Liang 张良 (262-189 BCE), a key strategist in the founding of the Han dynasty (also known as Marquis Wencheng of Liu 留文成侯 or Marquis Liu 留侯) features in two cantos reporting on a visit to Liuhou Temple.\textsuperscript{113} Another general involved in establishing the Han dynasty is referred to in a visit to “Marquis Fan’s shrine” 樊侯祠.\textsuperscript{114} But over the whole poem there are more references to military heroes from the Three Kingdoms period following the Han dynasty’s disintegration.\textsuperscript{115} It is difficult to claim that the narrative portrays the Han dynasty as particularly glorious, even in a military sense.

Nor can it be argued that the Tang dynasty is unequivocally promoted as a golden age. A telling comment about this dynasty is its description as drawing on “foreign culture’s truth and beauty to attain perfection” 吸取异域的真美至善, suggesting that the perfection of Tang Xi’an may only have been achievable with the input of “Nestorion Christian Gospels [and] Buddhist scriptures” 景教的福音, 佛国的经

\textsuperscript{107} Line 24.
\textsuperscript{108} 蜀道难行 Line 81.
\textsuperscript{109} Line 121: the ‘bells’ were wind-chimes heard by the Emperor Xuanzong, during an evening rainstorm in the Sichuan mountains near Jiange Pass. The poem records the Emperor’s journey south into exile as he mourns for Yang Guifei, blamed for his government’s extravagances and killed as a scapegoat on his orders.
\textsuperscript{110} Canto 26 line 33.
\textsuperscript{111} Canto 25 line 71: after death Guo Ziyi was deified in popular mythology as a Daoist God of Wealth and Happiness.
\textsuperscript{112} Canto 26 line 29.
\textsuperscript{113} Canto 4 lines 124, 181; canto 5 lines 1-2. The temple is also known as Zhangliang Temple of Zibai Mountain.
\textsuperscript{114} Canto 17 line 56: the memorial hall for Fan Kuai 樊哙 (242-189 BCE).
\textsuperscript{115} See cantos 2, 4, 9, 15, 17, and 18.
Later in the poem the romantic story of the Tang emperor and Yang Guifei is treated with scathing irreverence and decidedly anti-imperial sentiments:

Yang Guifei’s bathing pool, on which so many generations of poets wasted flowery phrases…
this so-called Precious Jade emerging from her bath, this golden house for a concubine,
the Emperor’s rash romance brought grief to ordinary people.

贵妃的浴池，费过多少代艳丽的词藻…
什么玉环出浴，什么金屋藏娇，
天子的风流是万民的烦恼．

Even the Tang dynasty treasury of Buddhist art at Longmen is given a humanist perspective as the handiwork of skilled workers, then wearily dismissed:

Ah, Longmen, art, religion,
this ugly world of humans, has wrecked much more than it created!

啊，龙门，艺术，宗教，
这丑陋的人间哪，破坏多于创造！

As a record of venerated sites, the narrative covers many imperial tombs and monuments, Buddhist temples, and Daoist shrines. Yet reverence is often followed by complaints about a site’s present-day neglect, the damage wrought by looting and war, or the mediocrity and vulgarity of commercialisation. Not all mythology associated with places is related uncritically. A cynical tone haunts descriptions of the Guanlin Temple and speculation about the possible existence of a rival king’s tomb (canto 12). Skepticism is expressed about Nanyang’s legendary founding and competing claims for the venue of the Longzhong Plan (canto 15). Stones popularly thought to be hoof-print evidence of an episode in Sanguozhi 三国志[History of the Three Kingdoms] are labelled counterfeit (canto 17). And the Great Wall, notwithstanding

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116 Canto 8 lines 42-43.
117 Canto 21 lines 17, 42-43: “Precious Jade” plays on Yang Guifei’s proper name of Yang Yuhuan (杨玉环).
118 Canto 12 lines 107-108.
119 Canto 4, 12, 13, 22, 27.
120 The strategy of pacifying southern China then conquering the north to establish a stable state during the Three Kingdoms period, formulated at a meeting between Zhuge Liang 诸葛亮 (181-234), military leader during Three Kingdoms period, and the Eastern Han warlord Liu Bei 刘备 (161-223) who subsequently became founding emperor of the Shu Han state.
121 According to this story, Liu Bei fled across Tanxi River, at the time a raging torrent, to escape danger, with his horse famously accomplishing the escape by a mighty leap onto the far bank.
its iconic status as geographical boundary and military fortification, is ultimately discounted because:

[It] cannot resist relentless sandstorms blowing south, it is not a Great Wall we need, but fertile earth and fine rivers.

万里长城挡不住风沙南犯，
不是长城，我们要的是肥土良川．

Initially, the route of the journey and the specific itineraries for parts of that route chosen by or forced upon the travelling group would have determined the locations to feature in the narrative. Perhaps some locations were highlighted in Jian bei pian because Lao She perceived them as critical to national identity, part of the shared memories embodied in national consciousness. But frequent interpolation of his idiosyncratic reaction, particularly his scepticism coupled with disdain for superstition, undermines Jian bei pian’s capacity to promote such locations as cultural symbols. At Longmen, personal significance seems paramount, as Lao She contrasts his former reverence for its sculptures and calligraphy with his reaction to its reality:

I am not disappointed, nor yet am I overcome with joy; perhaps these few lovely remnants have turned my admiration into mourning for the past.

我没有失望，可也没有忘形的欢叫；
也许是美的缺残，使欣赏变成凭吊．

Mourning and disillusionment are often expressed with self-consciously poetic melancholy: “all that remains is an empty sadness” 只剩下一些悲酸的寂寥．

In such passages Lao She’s pre-occupations seem to override considerations of national identity, an issue discussed in the next section.

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123 Canto 22 lines 73-74.
124 Canto 12 lines 114-115.
125 Canto 21 line 11.
National identity re-interpreted – whose culture?

In a generic sense, Jian bei pian treats China’s national identity as inseparably tied to if not defined by its traditional culture. Being in possession of, secure in and knowledgeable about their culture has enabled China’s people to survive throughout history; “[they] have their culture to give them clear minds at this critical time” 文化的直觉在大事上不会胡涂.\(^\text{126}\) It is a double-edged relationship, for while the culture is a source of strength it is also fragile and needs protecting:

If culture is like breathing, military power is the lungs…
for a culture to survive first there must be self-defence!

文化假若是呼吸呀，武力是肺…
文化的生存，第一是自卫!\(^\text{127}\)

Thus national identity must be secured (through the War of Resistance) by fighting to protect the culture (canto 9) and restore it from the neglect and deprivation into which it has fallen (canto 25).

Specific references to famous characters, both historical and mythical – poets, sages, emperors, gods, celebrated court beauties and renowned warriors of classical literature – would have been recognisable for much of the population (even to those who were illiterate, if they were to hear Jian bei pian recited aloud). To this extent then, the poem could be seen as an affirmation of national identity through its drawing on sources of traditional culture.

Yet in its treatment of the three fundamental ethical-spiritual traditions of Chinese society Jian bei pian displays a less balanced if not partisan approach to traditional culture. References to the Confucian tradition are few, and perhaps perfunctory.\(^\text{128}\) On the other hand Buddhism and the Buddhist influence on China’s culture are clearly held in high regard, with generally overwhelmingly positive references to Buddhism and sacred Buddhist sites.\(^\text{129}\) The picture is more complicated with regard to the

\(^{126}\) Canto 6 line 14.
^{127}\) Canto 13 lines 55, 78.
^{128}\) Cantos 9, 13, 15.
^{129}\) Cantos 12, 13, 14, 17, 21, 25, 26.
treatment of Daoism: sacred Daoist sites are admired for their scenery;\textsuperscript{130} Daoist mythology and its scholar-sages are mostly mentioned with respect;\textsuperscript{131} but its modern-day priests and adherents are almost routinely derided.\textsuperscript{132} The disapproving voice in these passages is that of an intellectual, perhaps influenced by Western notions of logic and science, not someone engaged in a process of creating national identity by highlighting meaningful aspects of culture with which its people would identify in the wartime milieu.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter has applied three theoretical approaches for evaluating \textit{Jian bei pian}’s contribution to modern China’s nation-building during the War of Resistance. In the first approach, textual analysis of the extent to which \textit{Jian bei pian} functions as a work of imaginative invention concludes that the poem’s vision of China, conveyed only in infrequent images, lacks cohesion and conviction, with the only consistently positive images in \textit{Jian bei pian} associated with the China fighting the War of Resistance. In this respect the poem seems to share the kind of ambivalence about patriotism that ran through much of Lao She’s other wartime writing, an ambivalence which means Lao She’s efforts to promote anti-Japan resistance in \textit{Jian bei pian} cannot be equated with nation-building, either intentional or unintentional. Moreover, Lao She’s repeated references to China as a nation of longstanding and illustrious existence requiring only rejuvenation do not suggest that he intended \textit{Jian bei pian} as nation-building.

The second approach evaluates \textit{Jian bei pian} as a narrative that articulates an enduring sense of China, but concludes that the poem’s unsystematic approach to history fails to achieve this. Because the narrative is propelled mainly by its travelogue form, there is little coherence or depth in its treatment of historical themes. Only when it focuses on the War of Resistance as a crucial point in China’s history does \textit{Jian bei pian} come close to articulating a sense of shared belonging to the embattled nation.

\textsuperscript{130} Cantos 2, 15, 25, 27.
\textsuperscript{131} Cantos 4, 26, 27.
\textsuperscript{132} Cantos 4, 12, 27.
The third approach, evaluating *Jian bei pian* as an ethno-symbolist highlighting of cultural elements critical to national identity, finds that despite numerous, mostly appreciative, references to the artistic, literary, and military achievements of particular dynasties, *Jian bei pian* neither upholds particular epochs as glorious nor invokes them as impeccable models for the future. Similarly its treatment of iconic places is sometimes tempered by a cynicism that inevitably detracts from the loftier claims of their mythology. Lao She’s attitude towards certain elements of traditional culture hardly suggests that he intended to use them in *Jian bei pian* as the basis for a meaningful re-configuring of national identity. Such authorial comments are another aspect of the ambivalence noted earlier, ambivalence that would have sabotaged any reading of the poem as effective nation-building according to the applied theoretical frameworks.

However the fact that the author’s views of China, its history and its culture, often surface (sometimes disruptively) in the narrative, points to other considerations at work in the writing of *Jian bei pian*. Such personal factors, with the motives and circumstances behind them, are investigated in the next chapter to present an alternative reading of *Jian bei pian*. 
Chapter Three – Experimenting with tradition

This chapter offers the alternative view that Jian bei pian was written as an attempt to satisfy several personal, if contradictory, motivations – some made explicit but others implied, some unashamedly aesthetic and others carefully political. Both form and subject matter of the poem are examined to arrive at an understanding of how those motivations reveal Lao She’s personal search for identity in the wartime context.

The discussion begins by investigating personal factors behind the writing of Jian bei pian, drawing on Lao She’s comments about the poem and other sources. Next it will show how Jian bei pian differs from Lao She’s earlier and other wartime writing, suggesting that these differences were another instance of his wartime experimentation, and focusing on the tension generated by new and old components of that experiment. It will then examine sources of popular traditional and classical Chinese culture which, by serving to frame the terms of his experiment in writing Jian bei pian, may have inspired or influenced it. Finally it will demonstrate how Lao She turned his travelogue observations of geographic China into his literary muse.

Writing Jian bei pian – Lao She explains his approach

Lao She’s stated intentions in writing Jian bei pian, and for choosing its poetic form, are outlined in four main sources: his preface to the original poem;¹ an appendix to the poem in the form of a letter to a friend;² his essay on the writing of Jian bei pian apparently compiled or discovered later (possibly posthumously), which is generally similar in content to the first two sources but has some omissions and some additional material;³ a 1946 essay summarising his life during the War of Resistance’s eight years.⁴ These sources also describe the writing process, as well as providing insights into his views of the poem. Overall this material is sparse: Lao She’s customary self-

¹ Lao She 老舍, "Xu 序 [Preface],” in Jian bei pian (Chongqing: Wenyi jiang zhu jin guanliweiyuanhui chu ban bu, 1942).
² Lao She 老舍, "Fulu 附录 [Appendix],” in Jian bei pian (Chongqing: Wenyi jiang zhu jin guanliweiyuanhui chu ban bu, 1942).
³ Lao She 老舍, "Wo zenyang xie Jian bei pian. 我怎样写《剑北篇》 [How I wrote 'Jian bei pian'],” in Lao She shenghuo yu chuangzuo zishu ed. Hu Jieqing and Shu Ji (Hong Kong: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzi sanlian shudian, 1980)
⁴ Lao She, "Bafang fengyu.” The essay first appeared in Xinmin bao 新民报 [New People’s News].
deprecation and nonchalance when discussing his literary craft yield little elaboration on deeper psychological, philosophical or aesthetic themes. Jian bei pian’s appendix begins with the author claiming a complete lack of talent and labelling much of his earlier work as of little worth. Its preface, very much focused on quantitative measures of progress, gives a month-by-month account of the writing experience in which distractions and impediments receive almost as much coverage as achievements. This rather mechanical approach to the poem is exemplified by the author’s defence of some extremely long sentences and his concerns about exceeding the maximum number of lines he had initially set himself. There are other structural and technical issues: he expresses frustration over his failure to limit the use of archaic words; in retrospect he feels the chosen rhyme-scheme was a hindrance. His apologetic verdict on the poem as a whole is that it “failed to achieve the effects of a free-flowing style”.

Lao She’s dissatisfaction with Jian bei pian seems to have arisen from his realisation of the discrepancy between his aims when embarking on this ambitious endeavour and the outcome of his efforts. He gives several reasons for finally abandoning the poem after working only intermittently on it for a year – his health (he suffered from dizzy spells caused by anaemia), Chongqing’s chaotic wartime environment, social obligations, and other writing commitments – yet all these were the same conditions under which, with his habitual industry and zeal, he produced a great variety of written work during the same period. And despite his complaints about the difficulties of writing in Chongqing, he admits that while writing Jian bei pian he was able to escape the city, thanks to the help of a friend, and live alone in peaceful rural

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5 Lao She, "Fulu.”
6 Lao She, "Xu.”
7 The tone-rhyme scheme used in Jian bei pian is discussed in more detail in Lao She, folk culture and drum songs.
8 Lao She, "Xu.”
9 Ibid.
10 From February 1940 until early in the spring of 1941: ibid.
11 These factors are mentioned in Lao She, "Wo zenyang xie Jian bei pian”, Lao She, ”Xu”, and Lao She, “Fulu.”
12 Lyell, "Translator's Postscript,” p.278; see also Vohra, Lao She and the Chinese Revolution, p.129.
13 He stayed at Baihe outside Chongqing, in a cottage in the grounds of the family mansion of General Feng Yuxiang, the influential Christian warlord: Lao She, "Bafang fengyu,” p.13. For Lao She’s relationship with Feng Yuxiang, and the General’s support of ACRAWA writers and artists during the War of Resistance, see Hung, War and Popular Culture, pp.195-196, 202, 216.
surroundings.\textsuperscript{14} But in November 1941,\textsuperscript{15} over six months after work on the poem had ceased, its 27 completed cantos were submitted for publication financed through a grant from the Arts Commission.\textsuperscript{16} Describing his state of mind at this point as one of embarrassment, Lao She confesses he had “lost the will to persevere… [and] given up hope that the whole poem would be finished.”\textsuperscript{17} One of his contemporaries, who received a signed copy of \textit{Jian bei pian} from Lao She in 1942, recalled that:

Lao She frequently sighed over [his poetry’s] defects… [and regarding] \textit{Jian bei pian}, he pointed out many of its shortcomings to which he had resigned himself.\textsuperscript{18}

However, the account in ‘How I Wrote \textit{Jian bei pian}’ is somewhat at odds with that in the preface and appendix, and possibly a less accurate reflection of his original intentions. He admits that he initially aimed to write 10,000 lines,\textsuperscript{19} a target explained in the preface by his observation he had enough material left over from his journey notes to write another ten cantos, and by his expressed hope that at some future time he would be able to complete the poem.\textsuperscript{20} And in the appendix, despite admitting that on occasions he had been ready to give up writing, he expresses his resolve to keep working on the poem “even if this means it would take a year or so”.\textsuperscript{21} Also in the appendix he states: “what I wanted to write was a travelogue… to have the poem serve as ‘a true record’… [of] what I saw and heard on the long journey”.\textsuperscript{22} The later essay gives an additional reason: “I had been to almost none of those places before, and so I very much wanted to write something as a memento of them.”\textsuperscript{23} The implication of this “memento” aspect, with Lao She placing himself in the tradition of classical literary travel writing, is explored later in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{14} Lao She, “Bafa fengyu,” p.13.  
\textsuperscript{15} According to the preface date: Lao She, “Xu.”  
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Wenyi jiang zhu jin guanli weiyuanhui} 文艺奖助金管理委员会 [Literature and Art Grants Commission]: Li Qingguo, “Kangzhan shiqi Lao She chuangzuo de yi ge cemian,” p.41.  
\textsuperscript{17} Lao She, “Wo zenyang xie \textit{Jian bei pian},” p.80.  
\textsuperscript{18} Zang Kejia, “Xu,” p.9.  
\textsuperscript{19} Lao She, “Xu.” The goal of 10,000 lines is reiterated in Lao She, “Fulu.” and Lao She, “Wo zenyang xie \textit{Jian bei pian}.” The poem as published comes to less than 3,700 lines.  
\textsuperscript{20} Lao She, “Xu.”  
\textsuperscript{21} Lao She, “Fulu.”  
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. This is also expressed in Lao She, “Wo zenyang xie \textit{Jian bei pian}.”  
\textsuperscript{23} Lao She, “Wo zenyang xie \textit{Jian bei pian},” pp.78-79.
Clearly then, Lao She originally envisaged the poem covering the entire journey, which took 164 days\textsuperscript{24} from 28 June until his return to Chongqing on December 9.\textsuperscript{25} Instead, the poem’s narrative, if read chronologically, starts in early summer (canto 2) and ends at Mid-Autumn Festival (canto 27) which in 1939 occurred on 27 September. This suggests that up to ten weeks of his journey remain unrecorded; that is, the period travelling through Gansu, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, and the return to Chongqing. Allusions to these omitted sections of the journey are found in the two later essays\textsuperscript{26} and also in the introductory canto outlining the expedition:

Three nights lodged in Pingliang…\textsuperscript{27}
visiting Riyue mountain grasslands...\textsuperscript{28}
ten-\textit{zhang} snowdrifts on the Wusha\textsuperscript{29} ranges.

三宿平凉…
到日月山前的草原上…
乌纱岭上的积雪十丈.\textsuperscript{30}

Canto 7 features a reference to Inner Mongolia: “snowy ground and icy skies in Suiyuan” \textit{雪地冰天的绥远},\textsuperscript{31} and canto 26 outlines an apparently postponed stage of the journey into Inner Mongolia:

We planned to travel from Yulin through the Ordos region…\textsuperscript{32}
then crossing the Yellow River, galloping over grasslands, to Wuyuan and Shanba.\textsuperscript{33}

我们打算，由榆林穿过伊盟…
然后，渡过大河，在草原上驰骋，
到五原陕坝.\textsuperscript{34}

Another source shedding light on missing parts of the journey has an itinerary of places passed through which, if they follow chronological order, would have

\textsuperscript{24} Song Yongyi, \textit{Lao She yu zhongguo wenhua guannian}, p.384.
\textsuperscript{25} Zhang Guixing, \textit{Lao She lunji}, p.309.
\textsuperscript{26} Lao She, “Bafang fengyu,” pp.1, 12; Lao She, “Wo zenyang xie Jian bei pian.”
\textsuperscript{27} A town in Gansu near the Ningxia border.
\textsuperscript{28} Riyue Shan in Qinghai, part of the Qilian mountain range dividing Qinghai and Gansu.
\textsuperscript{29} Mountains in Gansu (see Chapter Two, footnotes 32 and 33)
\textsuperscript{30} Canto 1 lines 3, 6, 18.
\textsuperscript{31} Line 16: Suiyuan was a historical province of China, covering a large area of modern-day Inner Mongolia, including Hohhot, the capital, as well as the districts of Baotou, Wuhai, Ordos, Bayan Nur and parts of Ulaan Chab.
\textsuperscript{32} Mostly desert, this is the region of Inner Mongolia effectively enclosed by the Great Bend or ‘Ordos Loop’ of the Yellow River.
\textsuperscript{33} Wuyuan and Shanba (now known as Hangjinhouqi) are counties in Inner Mongolia’s Bayan Nur prefecture.
\textsuperscript{34} Lines 2, 6-7.
had Lao She’s group crossing from Yulin in northern Shaanxi into Gansu via Pingliang and Lanzhou, thence to Qinghai, back into Gansu and on through Ningxia into western Inner Mongolia, returning again through Ningxia, thence into north-western Shaanxi and back through the Qinling Mountains into Sichuan.\textsuperscript{35}

If the foregoing material suggests the intended scope of \textit{Jian bei pian}, what were Lao She’s aspirations for the poem? His inability to take meticulous notes while on the rushed journey was no impediment to writing a travelogue: having acquired some impressions that he felt could appropriately be conveyed in poetry, he decided to write it as a long poem rather than a prose essay.\textsuperscript{36} Another reason is offered for that decision: given the tradition of long poems in Chinese literature, it seemed worth attempting and something he had to try.\textsuperscript{37} This suggestion of an experimental approach is made explicit in his description of the poem as “an experiment at using tone-rhyme in the style of classical poetry to produce a harmonious blend of old and new”,\textsuperscript{38} and also in his admission that he was willing to try out all sorts of literary forms.\textsuperscript{39} His attempt to compose \textit{Jian bei pian} as modern poetry using vernacular speech\textsuperscript{40} and tone-rhymes of folk ballads derived from classical verse forms is explored in two later sections of this chapter.

In contrast to ‘How I Wrote \textit{Jian bei pian}’ and the preface, the overall tone of the appendix suggests that Lao She was not completely disheartened by his experiment in writing \textit{Jian bei pian}. The impending publication of the poem’s 27 cantos is anticipated with a mixture of resignation and hope (perhaps based on reaction to previously published cantos). While apologetic about its defects, he manages to identify an advantage for its readers in the fact that each of the poem’s cantos can be read as a stand-alone piece.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{35} Guan Jixin, \textit{Lao She ping zhuan}, p.305.
\textsuperscript{36} Lao She, ”Fulu.”
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Lao She, ”Xu.”
\textsuperscript{39} Lao She, ”Fulu.”
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
Five years on, commenting on his wartime writing\(^\text{42}\) including *Jian bei pian* Lao She admits that:

> [E]ven though among these there is no masterpiece… it is possible to see a small trace of the great effort made… I did learn some new techniques and skills… [and] don’t regret my great efforts to learn.\(^\text{43}\)

Significantly, nowhere in the preface or appendix does Lao She explicitly claim *Jian bei pian* was written to support the War of Resistance effort. He had other writing commitments to this cause (such as the commissioned play script *Zhang Zizhong*) and seems to have viewed the poem more as a personal project that should come second to any War of Resistance writing, implying that writing the poem was something of a luxury.\(^\text{44}\) However, he felt obliged to carry on, apparently driven by a desire to produce something worthy of the journey that testified to his “perseverance and willpower”,\(^\text{45}\) strongly-ingrained personal traits which defined Lao She’s approach to his entire writing career.\(^\text{46}\)

*Jian bei pian* is not the only one of his wartime writing projects to remain unfinished: three novels were published in part only (*Xiao renwu zishu* 小人物自述 [Autobiography of a Minor Character] in 1937,\(^\text{47}\) *Tui* 蜕 [Metamorphosis] in 1938, and *Minzhu shijie* 民主世界 [Democratic World] in 1945\(^\text{48}\)). Documentation of why these were abandoned is scarce, but overall there is little evidence that overwhelming disillusionment with any of his wartime writing was the main reason for its remaining incomplete. Rather, the picture emerges of an over-committed, anxious-to-please, generally tireless toiler who is more embarrassed by the quality of what he managed to produce than the works he left unfinished.

To summarise then, two main forces appear to have driven the writing of *Jian bei pian*. Firstly, Lao She’s desire to create a narrative of the whole journey in a series of impressionistic mementoes and secondly, his feeling that it should be done by

\(^{42}\) According to Lao She this comprised: “lyrics for ten drum songs, eight stage plays, six or seven short stories, three novels, the long poem, [and] many essays.” Lao She, “Bafang fengyu,” p.14.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., pp.14-15.

\(^{44}\) Lao She, “Fulu.”

\(^{45}\) Ibid.

\(^{46}\) Vohra, *Lao She and the Chinese Revolution*, p.129.


\(^{48}\) Wang, “Lao She’s Wartime Fiction,” p.198.
amalgamating old and new poetic forms. Despite applying his characteristic diligence and doggedness to the task, several factors worked to sabotage his intentions to do it justice. One such factor – the challenges posed by his poetic experiment – is discussed in the following section.

**Challenges of blending old and new**

**From innovator to experimenter**

Lao She had been acclaimed a literary pioneer with his first novels, written during his sojourn in London, in which he brought an earthy streetwise humour to the New Literature movement. His continued output of novels and short stories into the mid-1930s seemed to follow a course cementing his reputation as a writer of comic and realistic fiction, a course previously viewed as interrupted only by the outbreak of war in 1937 with a shift to more serious political writing. However two recent studies question whether this path was indeed one of steady progress through which Lao She evolved as a writer of both better quality and heightened political awareness. Prado-Fonts argues that the novels written by Lao She from his leaving London and through the early 1930s were marked by repeated “literary experimentation” in structure and style. When the War of Resistance began this was not confined to his fiction: Lao She admitted to “experimenting with several different forms of writing”, in particular “poems and plays”, as his contribution to the resistance effort. And while his fiction output diminished during the war period, experimentation in that genre continued, shown in what Wang sees as deviations from the prescribed patriotic theme – a theme whose message was ultimately undermined by Lao She’s difficulties in trying to realise a vague notion of “national resistance literature” while continuing to voice the social preoccupations and cynicism that marked his earlier fiction.

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50 Lyell, for example, emphasises the radical change wrought by the Second Sino-Japanese War on Lao She’s writing. ibid., p.14; Lyell, "Translator's Postscript," p.278.
The pressure to produce models of national resistance literature almost certainly influenced Lao She’s writing of Jian bei pian. He attributed the genesis of his poetic experiment to the fact that while he was writing the poem vigorous debates were going on over the issue of national styles or forms of art, probably referring to the debates triggered by Mao Zedong in a 1938 speech to CCP cadres. One proposal for developing a distinctive national style was to adapt traditional popular entertainment forms, known as “pouring new wine into old bottles” (jiupingzhuangxinjiu). This expression acquired fresh significance in the War of Resistance context when the aim was to communicate an anti-Japan resistance message.

As ACRAWA president, Lao She had been an influential voice in discussions over how such adaptation should be achieved, and he became seen as one of its leading practitioners. Yet by 1941, while other intellectuals still debated its merits, he had renounced the approach as unrealistic and unattainable.

The practice of “pouring new wine into old bottles” has been described as “theory” by Hung and Liu. However Lao She’s reported disdain for theory, together with his non-affiliation to any literary faction, suggest he was unlikely to have been following any theory-driven style advocated by a particular group. Rather, it was his readiness to test several styles that led him into the trial-and-error mode of working which often marks an experiment. The difference between theory and practice may have been on

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54 Particularly given his position as president of ACRAWA, and his part in a 1938 literary argument over the purpose of wartime literature: ibid., pp.200-201.
55 Lao She, "Xu."
57 Originating from the New Testament parable about putting new wine into old wineskins, this expression may first have been applied in the context of Chinese literary reform by the influential scholar Liang Qichao (1873-1929): Day, “Heroes Without a Battlefield,” p.46. The slogan was taken up by reformist Chinese intellectuals from the May Fourth movement onwards. See also Long-hsin Liu, "Popular readings and wartime historical writings in modern China," ed. Viren Murthy and Axel Schneider, The challenge of linear time: nationhood and the politics of history in East Asia (Leiden; Boston: Brill, ProQuest ebrary, 2013). pp.187-188.
58 Hung, War and Popular Culture, pp.188, 191.
60 Liu, "Popular readings and wartime historical writings," p.190; Hung, War and Popular Culture, p.199.
62 Hung, War and Popular Culture, p.191.
63 Liu, "Popular readings and wartime historical writings," pp.188, 206, 207, 209, 210. But in the same article Liu also refers to the practice as “slogan” (ibid., p.186), “strategy” (ibid., p.188), “guideline” (ibid., p.190), and “idea”, “concept”, or “notion” (ibid., pp.187, 188, 190, 191.)
64 Hung, War and Popular Culture, p.199.
his mind when he remarked of the new techniques and skills acquired through his wartime writing: “This is not ‘empty theoretical writing’!”

Among the new techniques and skills he tried was the writing of drum song lyrics, with three pieces published before he started Jian bei pian. The one considered his best and reportedly his favourite was Wang Xiao ganlǔ. Yet despite the (apparent) success or popularity of these early drum song lyrics, seen as exemplary models of ‘new wine in old bottles’, he seems not to have taken them as models for Jian bei pian. (As the next section explains, Jian bei pian is not a simple case of new wine in old bottles.)

Also unlike Wang Xiao ganlǔ with its eponymous hero, Jian bei pian has few real human characters. Its only heroes, apart from brief cameo appearances by historical and mythological characters, are the nameless members of groups such as the army or the common people. Even Lao She as narrator is camouflaged and understated to the extent that views and emotions expressed cannot always be differentiated from those of his travelling companions (who remain unidentified throughout the poem as if, in the words of Sugimoto Tatsuo, “he was a lone traveller on that northern journey.”)

As an epic Jian bei pian is significantly longer than his other poetry, whether the satirical verse he had written before the war, or the classical-style verse and drum song lyrics he continued to write throughout the war. Apparently then, it was not the drum song lyric form itself with which he became disillusioned, so what was it about the writing of Jian bei pian that led to the experiment being abandoned? This question is examined in the next three sections.

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65 Lao She, "Bafang fengyu," p.15.
69 Sugimoto Tatsuo, "Yousheng de nahan yu wusheng de nahan," p.201.
70 According to Zang Kejia, Lao She wrote many short war poems, with Jian bei pian his only long poem: Zang Kejia, "Xu," p.5. See also Gan Hailan, “Lun Lao She de kangzhan wenxue chuangzuo,” p.48.
A question of pouring ‘new wine’ into ‘old bottles’?

The wine-bottle metaphor becomes quite mixed when applied to Jian bei pian. If the wine is defined as meaning the substance, and the bottle as the structure containing it, then in Jian bei pian the wine is made up of both new and old ingredients. The new ingredients are, firstly, contemporary themes relating to the War of Resistance, and secondly, the vernacular language (baihua) used to articulate those themes; the old ingredients are the many historical references and terms, allusions to and quotations from classical literature, and popular idioms of antique origin.

At the same time, the bottle is an alloy of forms originating in several different periods. As Lao She explained it, in its structure he aimed to blend the tone-rhymes of traditional drum songs popular in northern China since the Qing dynasty period with the style of classical poetry. While he did not specify which classical poetry he meant, his focus in Jian bei pian on the Tang dynasty suggests he had in mind classical verse from the Tang era which, according to Owen, “set the model for poetry in traditional China for the next thousand years.” In its entirety the poem may also be seen as belonging to the classical Chinese tradition of travel record literature (youji wenxue), which includes poems chronicling journeys, and likewise dates from the Tang dynasty. But according to his comments in the appendix he also wanted Jian bei pian to be a composition in the unstructured style of “modern poetry” which developed out of the May Fourth New Culture Movement.

How all these elements – new and old, substance and structure – played out in Jian bei pian, and whether his experiences in writing it were at least partly responsible for his change of heart over the ‘new-wine-in-old-bottles’ approach are discussed in the following section.

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71 The vernacular was officially adopted in the 1920s as an early outcome of the May Fourth Movement (see Chapter Two pages 15-16).
72 Hung, War and Popular Culture, p.207.
73 Lao She, “Xu.”
74 See Chapter Two pages 54-56.
76 A point discussed further in The classical literary travelogue and Jian bei pian.
77 Lao She, “Fulu.”
Harmonious blend or discordant medley

Lao She’s aim of blending modern poetry with a traditional drum song lyric style, and relying on vernacular speech to convey his message, reflected his awareness of the patriotic obligation to develop a national style for War of Resistance literature that was accessible to ordinary people. But in attempting to write Jian bei pian as modern poetry using vernacular speech he faced several challenges, which he enumerates in the appendix. Firstly, although aiming to follow the unstructured style of modern poetry, in the absence of clearly defined formats he could not be sure it was poetry. Secondly, he felt that everyday vernacular expressions had few poetic qualities. Thirdly, he was unable to rid himself of artistic concepts instilled by his early education, especially when trying to write scenic description. Fourthly, in a clear rejection of foreign influence, he confessed that he could not bring himself to imitate the Western style of new poetry. Finally, and perhaps the greatest challenge, was that although free-form modern poetry should not use tone-rhymes, he had committed himself to quite closely following the tone-rhymes of a particular drum song lyric mode. In each of his 27 cantos Lao She adhered to one of the specified tone-rhymes, but the effort left him with mixed feelings. On the one hand, from a performance point of view, using the tone-rhymes was aesthetically satisfying: he found that every line when recited was “clear and pleasing to the ear”. Furthermore, he had little difficulty finding suitable tone-rhymes, and the result was even better when they arose naturally. His colleague Zhu Ziqing agreed:

I asked Mr Lao She to read [Jian bei pian] aloud to me on one occasion; his manner of reading was entirely according to the natural rhythms of speech, without at all emphasising the rhyming words at the end of a line. This way of reading… made me feel [the poem] was capable of holding together naturally as a long ballad, without allowing the tone-rhyme to become fragmented.

At the same time, Lao She admits in the preface that having to follow the tone-rhyme in every line made for a cumbersome writing process. Because it inhibited his ability to express his ideas, he felt the verse sometimes lacked animation. Moreover (but

78 On the sense of obligation driving Lao She see Wang, Fictional Realism in Twentieth Century China, p.158.
79 Lao She, "Fulu."
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Zhu Ziqing, "Kangzhan yu shi".
somewhat contradicting his previous remarks about finding suitable tone-rhymes) pursuing the tone-rhymes turned out to be a painstaking, protracted, and ultimately fruitless effort. In his view, the rigid adherence to tone-rhyme would irritate readers, and this, together with the overuse of antiquated language, meant that *Jian bei pian* had none of the unregimented and fluid style of new poetry.\(^83\)

Notwithstanding the inconsistency between his remarks in the preface and appendix, both testify to his sense of the poem’s failure as modern poetry, a failure that may seem largely attributable to his decision to follow the prescribed system of tone-rhymes. One commentator who describes *Jian bei pian* as “a daring first attempt at modern poetry” exploiting the musical qualities of folk verse, outlines the poem’s successes and failures but points to problems caused by the tone-rhymes as its major weakness.\(^84\)

Clearly, incompatibility between the very different styles Lao She was attempting to marry – traditional drum song lyric and modern poetry – was at the heart of his difficulties with *Jian bei pian*, difficulties that were compounded by his aim of mixing ingredients of vernacular speech with the poetic language of classical verse. His inability to resolve those difficulties arose, in my view, because of incompatibility between his previously-noted feelings of being duty-bound to develop a modern national literary style with mass appeal, and his fondness for China’s traditional performing arts and its classical literary heritage. That fondness apparently diluted his commitment to modern poetry and thus sabotaged the externally-imposed obligation. This issue is placed in a wider context of his ambivalent relationship with aspects of modern life in the following section.

**Lao She and modernisation – an uneasy balance**

As noted earlier,\(^85\) Lao She’s non-involvement in political activity or literary discourse during the May Fourth Movement’s early years, and his lack of identification with many of its aims, meant that his engagement with China’s

\(^{83}\) Lao She, "Xu."
\(^{84}\) Zeng Guangcan, "Zang ge, zhan ge, songge," pp. 85-86, 89.
\(^{85}\) See Chapter One pages 3, 10, 19-20.
modernisation was not articulated in a general cultural sense. (Although he later claimed in a 1957 essay that the May Fourth Movement, with its challenges to Confucianism and feudalism, was responsible for his becoming a writer,86 that claim was probably made to protect his ideological credentials in politically difficult times.87) Yet nor did Lao She’s reputation as pioneer of humour and realistic fiction in New Culture Movement literature accurately epitomise that engagement. His fiction (particularly when read as autobiographical) reveals a variety of attitudes to the intellectual and social changes that developed out of the May Fourth Movement and came to be associated with modernisation. For example, views expressed about Chinese marriage, family customs, and the role of women, aired in Xiao renwu zishu88 do not suggest outright rejection of the Confucian tradition that had for so long dominating thinking and practices to do with Chinese education, marriage, family and government – a dominance seen by May Fourth intellectuals as essentially authoritarian, conservative and patriarchal. If Lao She sometimes portrayed modern (revolutionary) students with derision,89 as a teacher and educator he valued the opportunities for enlightenment and social progress brought by education.90 His despair at the damage wrought on ordinary people’s lives by ignorance and unscientific attitudes is clearly reflected in the satirical story Bao sun [Treasured grandson] in which an old woman’s insistence on traditional childbirth rituals and practices results in the deaths of her daughter-in-law and new-born grandchild,91 and

86 Lao She 老舍, ‘‘Wu si’ gei le wo shenme’ ‘五四’给了我什么 [What the ‘May Fourth’ movement gave me],’ in Lao She duben, ed. Wang Haibo (Beijing: Zhongguo renshi chubanshe, 1998).
87 First published in Jiefangjun Bao [People’s Liberation Army Daily], the essay appeared at the height of the Hundred Flowers movement just before it was overtaken by the Anti-Rightist campaign (on these campaigns see Schoppa, Revolution and its past, pp.327-329. During the 1950s Lao She revised and criticised his early work, apparently to make it more ideologically acceptable: see Vohra’s discussion of his 1952 essay Mao zhuxi gei le wo xin de wenyi shengming 毛主席给了我新的文艺生命 [Chairman Mao Gave Me a New Lease of Literary Life]: Vohra, Lao She and the Chinese Revolution, pp.152-153.
88 In which the narrator admits “Some intellectuals may advocate the destruction of the family system. But… I would be happy to declare myself a conservative… I always looked down on a woman who couldn’t or didn’t like to take care of household matters, no matter how interesting and how learned she was”: Lao She 老舍, “Autobiography of a Minor Character,” in Blades of Grass: The Stories of Lao She, ed. Howard Goldblatt (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), pp. 244, 252.
89 For example, in his earlier novels Zhao ziyue and Niu tianci zhuan 牛天赐传 [Biography of Niu Tianci]: Vohra, Lao She and the Chinese Revolution, pp.30-32.
90 Ibid., pp.88-89.
in his account of *Luotuo Xiangzi*’s wife dying in childbirth.\(^92\) Perhaps it was the pragmatic, utilitarian aspects of modernisation that he approved of, rather than ideological or cultural aspects.

This interpretation is underlined by Lao She’s comments in the appendix suggesting he was neither wholeheartedly committed to writing modern poetry, nor completely comfortable in his role developing it as a national style or form of art. His opinion of modern poetry – “it has no form” – does not indicate unqualified approval of such freedom from control. It was this lack of form that undermined his confidence, leading him to label the result “new-fangled old-style verse or a Chinese dish served Western-style”.\(^93\) This metaphor, with its less than complimentary allusion to the foreign origins of modern poetry, is echoed in his reference to the “peculiar agony”\(^94\) associated with writing modern poetry.\(^95\) The disquiet it reflects over the bracketing of modernisation with foreign and especially Western culture has also been observed in his early fiction.\(^96\) In other contexts he might express a more positive view of modern poetry, even taking on the role of critic-advocate,\(^97\) for among his literary colleagues were several modern poets, including Zang Kejia and Zhu Ziqing. The one he was perhaps closest to was Wang Lixi 王礼锡 (1901 – 1939), who like Lao She returned to China after studying in Europe in the 1930s, and was sent from Chongqing in 1939 to lead a “writers’ battlefield interview group”.\(^98\) Wang Lixi, who wrote both old-style and new poetry, was like Lao She committed to writing in the modern baihua yet similarly fond of the patriotic poets of former dynasties, and also like Lao She left a record of his journey *Zuojia zhandi fangwen tuan riji* 作家战地访问团日记 [Diary of


\(^{93}\) Lao She, "Fulu."

\(^{94}\) 洋罪 (yangzui): literally, unusual suffering from an unexpected source.

\(^{95}\) Lao She, "Fulu."


\(^{97}\) See Zeng Guangcan, "Zang ge, zhan ge, songge," p.84, citing *Jian bei pian*’s appendix and Lao She’s 1941 essay on writing new poetry (Lao She 老舍, "Lun xin shi 论新诗 [On new poetry]" in *Lao She xin shi xuan* 老舍新诗选 (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 1983).

a writer’s visits to troops]. But the task Lao She set himself in writing *Jian bei pian* clearly provoked conflicted feelings.

His selective view of modernisation, as outlined earlier, is evident in *Jian bei pian* itself. The only passages endorsing modernisation refer specifically to industrialisation required for the War of Resistance:

> We need factories, lining riverbanks below the mountains.  
> Instead of birdsong and warbling streams, the music of machines…  
> only by building industrial capacity can we fight the War of Resistance!

> 我们要烟囱，林立在山脚河边。  
> 以马达的音乐，代替啼鸟鸣泉…  
> 只有建设才能抗战！

> Listen, water rushes day and night through Baoji’s gorge:  
> electric power for five northern provinces stored here;  
> swiftly, swiftly, with the speed of electricity,  
> exploit the alpine wealth of this cradle of East Asian civilisation.

> 听，宝鸡峡水日夜催促：  
> 北五省的电力在此藏储；  
> 快，快，用电的速度，  
> 开发这养育东亚文化的高山厚土。

Yet these are more than matched by passages in which Lao She comments on the traditional technology which people relied on for their old way of life:

> Coalfields all along the way:  
> on small hillsides, quiet river banks,  
> the precious black seams on rock surfaces everywhere,  
> pile together a basketful, maybe collect enough to fill two buckets,  
> it will keep a family warm for several days.  
> Small oil wells, also on the roadside,  
> half a dozen workers, blackened brows and grimy faces.  
> Crude oil separated into heavy and light, refined using old methods,  
> as if done in play,  
> only a few drops of oil produced each day!

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100 Canto 4 lines 66-67, 75.
101 Canto 6 lines 142-145.
102 Approximately 50 kg, carried in two buckets on a shoulder pole.
103 This passage describes part of the journey between Yongpingzhen and Qingjian north of Yan’an. The Shaanxi Basin coalfields, both near-surface and deeper deposits, run north from Yan’an into Inner Mongolia and northern Shanxi. Oil deposits were known to exist in this Basin, but only relatively
Similarly canto 25 describes Qingjian’s traditional slate architecture;\textsuperscript{105} the cottage-industry salt extraction from desert around Suide;\textsuperscript{106} and sheep hide and wool production on the northern border.\textsuperscript{107}

And even these are out-numbered by passages throughout the poem celebrating the landscape’s untamed grandeur or tranquil beauty, the elegance of ancient cities, the time-honoured fruitfulness of many different agricultural zones, and the unique response of local people to the challenges of wresting a living from their environment. Aside from the fact that industrialisation and its associated technological advances would have posed a serious threat to such celebrated features (something Lao She was surely aware of from his time spent in Britain and Europe), the point being made here is that his isolated calls for the exploitation of natural resources do not indicate wholesale approval of even those few pragmatic and utilitarian aspects of modernisation. Like his aim of writing \textit{Jian bei pian} as a modern poem in a national style, such calls were almost certainly driven by a sense of duty towards the War of Resistance effort, a patriotic motivation undermined in the end by his preference for China’s traditional performing arts and classical literary heritage. The next section explores how that preference played out in \textit{Jian bei pian}, identifying the sources of China’s traditional and classical culture which influenced the writing of the poem.
Traditional and classical influences – structure and substance

Lao She, folk culture, and drum songs

As noted previously, the working-class Beijing neighbourhood where Lao She grew up exposed him to traditional culture through its teahouse and theatre performances of popular legends and folk tales. His childhood affection for these forms of folk art, especially drum songs and drum singing, endured into adulthood, providing him with models for some War of Resistance writing as well as material for his last full-length novel and a post-war play. More significantly for this discussion, that affection seems to have been the force behind his writing Jian bei pian as a form of drum song.

Despite labelling it modern poetry, his description of the poem as “quite closely following the tone-rhymes of drum song lyrics”, and specification of the precise rhyme-scheme used – the “zhe” – suggest the influence of those treasured boyhood experiences.

Guci, a traditional oral storytelling ballad mode in which the sung or chanted recitation is accompanied by drum or clapper, had many regionally-based variants of which around a dozen, strongly associated with northern China, shared similar structural features. One of the better-known of the northern guci variants, and one with which Lao She was very familiar, was the Jingyun dagu [Beijing drum song]. Like other northern guci genres and like Beijing opera, Jingyun dagu used

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108 Lao She’s fascination with drum singing led to his studying the art with professional performers during the war period. His post-war novel Gushu yiren was written during his time in the USA, and first published in English as The Drum Singers (1952): Hung, War and Popular Culture, pp.199-200, 207.

109 Fang Zhenzhu "Pearl Fang" (1950).

110 Lao She, "Fulu."

111 Ibid. The zhe is an abbreviation for shisan zhe, a form of traditional chanted music originating in northern China which, according to classical principles, employs a strict scheme of tone-rhymes for the last sound of each line. On the thirteen tone-rhymes see Ma Zhikai, ed. Zhonghua hanyu shisan zhe yun dian [Chinese language 'Thirteen rhymes' system] (Beijing: Zhonghua xiju chubanshe, 2007).


113 According to Stevens, even by the late 1950s more than 200 types of performed narrative were in existence in China: Catherine Stevens, "Peking Drumsinging" (Harvard University, 1975), p.13.

114 Li, "Lao She and Chinese Folk Literature," pp.6-7, 9-10. See also Stevens, "Peking Drumsinging," pp.77-78. Jingyun dagu emerged in the 1870s with the migration of Hebei-based performers to Beijing.
the *shisan zhe* rhyme-scheme.¹¹⁵ Lao She used eleven of the available thirteen tone-rhymes¹¹⁶ in *Jian bei pian* and followed, almost¹¹⁷ faithfully in every line, the chosen tone-rhyme scheme for each canto.

By the second decade of the 20th century, *Jingyun dagu* lyricists appear to have moved away from using the complete suite of thirteen rhymes towards using a narrower range of about half a dozen tone-rhymes and avoiding vowel-ending rhymes,¹¹⁸ a development coinciding with the period when the famous drum singer Liu Baoquan 刘宝全 (1869-1942) was at his most influential.¹¹⁹ Lao She’s exposure to such performances as a schoolboy¹²⁰ would have been when this transition had mostly been accomplished. Thirty years later when he used all but two (vowel-ending) tone-rhymes in *Jian bei pian*, he may not have been taking *Jingyun dagu* as his only model. Another possible influence was that of Manchu ballad forms. Manchu ballads or “bannermen tales”, known by the Chinese term *zidishu* 子弟书,¹²¹ were a genre of sung narrative possibly originating in the early 18th century as a Manchu gentry adaptation of *guci* that went on to gain general popularity among both Han and Manchu audiences. Whether there was *zidishu* influence on the structure Lao She used for *Jian bei pian* is considered in the next section.

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¹¹⁵ Stevens, “Peking Drumsinging,” pp.9, 104-105.
¹¹⁶ With minor aberrations in 8 lines, found in cantos 1, 5, 22, 23, and 24.
¹¹⁷ The tone-rhymes used in *Jian bei pian* were: *Jiangyang* 江阳 for cantos 1, 11, 19; *Zhongdong* 中东 for cantos 2, 9, 18, 23, 26; *Yanqian* 言前 for cantos 4, 7, 8, 16, 17, 22, 24, 25, 27; *Renchen* 人辰 for canto 3; *Huailai* 怀来 for canto 5; *Gusu* 姑苏 for canto 6; *Yiqi* 一七 for canto 10; *Yaotiao* 遥条 for cantos 12, 20, 21; *Huidui* 灰堆 for canto 13; *Suobo* 梭波 for canto 14; *Fahua* 发花 for canto 15. The unused tone-rhymes were *Miexie* 乜斜 and *Youqiu* 由求.
¹¹⁸ Stevens, “Peking Drumsinging,” p.106.
¹¹⁹ Stevens credits Liu Baoquan with ultimate creative responsibility for the form that Beijing drum singing took after 1910: ibid., pp.81, 88-90, 100-101, 106. See also Suet-Ying Chiu, “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales (Zidishu)” (University of California, Los Angeles, 2007), p.165.
¹²⁰ Among the performers seen, Liu Baoquan made sufficient impression for Lao She to cite him as exemplar: Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, p.199. Lao She also wrote a commemorative essay *Jiyiyouxin* 记忆犹新 [Still Fresh in my Memory] about Liu Baoquan some 40 years later (a connection noted by Stevens, “Peking Drumsinging,” p.284).
¹²¹ For an explanation of the term and discussion of the origins of *zidishu* see Elena Suet-Ying Chiu, “The Origins and Original Language of Manchu Bannermen Tales (Zidi Shu),” *CHINOPERL Papers* 30, no. 1 (2011).
Manchu influences on the structure of Jian bei pian?

The issue of *zidishu* influence may relate to the wider question of Lao She’s ethnic self-identification as a writer with Manchu ancestry. Prado-Fonts, in comprehensive analyses of Lao She’s fiction, argues that his ethnic background and upbringing in a Beijing Manchu neighbourhood were critical factors which explained his alienation from Chinese national identity.\(^\text{122}\) Other recent studies focusing on the Qing dynasty and the Manchu as one of modern China’s ethnic groups openly identify Lao She as a “Manchu” writer\(^\text{123}\) articulating a “Manchu viewpoint”,\(^\text{124}\) a viewpoint which from the early 1950s he was, according to Towery, empowered to express openly.\(^\text{125}\) While this did not extend, even had he so wished, to asserting Manchu political aspirations, much of Lao She’s work with Beijing settings\(^\text{126}\) has increasingly been characterized as semi-autobiographical in its depiction of aspects of Manchu folk culture.\(^\text{127}\)

Yet Dong, who describes Lao She as “[old Beijing’s] most eminent literary spokesperson”, argues that the old Beijing he portrayed was that of the Republican period,\(^\text{128}\) a Beijing no longer politically dominated by the Manchu Qing. What continued to be reflected in Lao She’s work even when the Republican period was over was what Chiu characterises as “the Manchu-Han hybrid culture in Qing Beijing.”\(^\text{129}\) I would suggest that for Lao She, being a ‘son of Beijing’\(^\text{130}\) was possibly an even more powerful an identity than being Manchu.

\(^\text{122}\) Carlos Prado-Fonts, "In Alien Nation: Returned Writers in Modern China" (University of California, Los Angeles, 2011); Prado-Fonts, "Beneath Two Red Banners"; Prado-Fonts, "The Anxiety of Fiction." For an early exploration of this theme see Vohra, *Lao She and the Chinese Revolution*, pp.2, 9, 20, 84.


\(^\text{124}\) Crossley, *Orphan Warriors*, n.21 p.251.


\(^\text{126}\) For example, Xiao renwu zishu, *Wo zhe yibeizi* 我这一辈子 [This is my life], Zhenghongqi xia, and his best-known play *Chaguan*.


\(^\text{129}\) Chiu, "The Origins and Original Language of Manchu Bannermen Tales,” p.2.
A particularly pervasive aspect of Beijing culture was patronage of and devotion to popular performing arts. Prado-Fonts speculates that Lao She’s partiality for such arts possibly explained his unwillingness or inability to identify with elitist literature. Li similarly suggests that Lao She’s enthusiasm for traditional folk performing arts was attributable to his Manchu background, quoting Lao She’s wife Hu Jieqing, and her example of Manchu family entertainment featuring “the three-stringed banjo-like instrument sanxian 三弦, and the octagonal tambourine bajiaogu 八角鼓“. The first of these instruments had strong associations with Manchu ballads: according to Chiu the only accompaniment for a zidishu performance was “the three-string plucked lute (sanxian)”. Bajiaogu, as well as being an instrument which had acquired special significance for Manchu, also referred to a type of variety-show involving several performance arts with and without instruments. Yet Lao She is not recorded as having discussed any instruments to accompany a performance of Jian bei pian. His comment “each canto can be read as a single piece”, and his colleague’s recollection of Lao She reading the poem aloud “according to the natural rhythms of speech”, suggest that the author envisaged Jian bei pian as a text to be read, aloud or in silence, not as a traditional oral performance.

The question of influence on the poem’s structure is more complex, reflecting the blurred relationship between guci, Jingyun dagu and zidishu. Stevens’ description of the many structural differences between zidishu and Jingyun dagu is relevant to analysis of Jian bei pian’s structure. Chiu’s investigations of the origins and evolution of zidishu, which highlights features shared by zidishu and guci, also sheds light on Jian bei pian’s structure. From these two studies certain conclusions can be drawn.

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130 Lao She’s identification with, and affection for, Beijing and its way of life occasionally emerge in references whose nostalgia also embraces the northern China lifestyle. See for example: Canto 7 lines 85-88; Canto 23 lines 72-76, 83-85; Canto 25 lines 82-87, 139-141.
131 Prado-Fonts, “In Alien Nation,” p.73. See also Crossley, Orphan Warriors, p.84.
132 Prado-Fonts, “In Alien Nation,” p.73.
133 Quoted in Li, “Lao She and Chinese Folk Literature,” p.2.
135 Ibid., p.6. For more detail on bajiaogu see Chiu, “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales,” pp.82-84.
136 Lao She, “Fulu.”
137 Zhu Ziqing, “Kangzhan yu shi.”
Firstly, in its use of 11 out of 13 shisan zhe tone-rhymes, Jian bei pian is closer to both guci and zidishu which generally used all 13,\(^{138}\) than it is to Jingyun dagu. Secondly, while Jingyun dagu were composed in sets of rhyming couplets,\(^{139}\) Jian bei pian was not, in this respect also resembling guci and zidishu.\(^{140}\) Thirdly, Jian bei pian mostly observes a zidishu convention\(^{141}\) noted by Stevens whereby the end of a section usually involved a change to a different tone-rhyme,\(^{142}\) whereas the Jingyun dagu in Stevens’ study apparently kept the same tone-rhyme throughout.\(^{143}\)

Yet in other respects Jian bei pian differs from guci and zidishu as well as Jingyun dagu. Firstly, as far as is known, Jian bei pian was written without sung parts whereas guci, zidishu and Jingyun dagu all had melodic components, only differing in the degree to which the text was recited or sung.\(^{144}\) Secondly, Jian bei pian’s line structure is irregular, varying between only one character per line (canto 2) and as many as 17 characters per line (cants 10, 20, 21, 23, 26) with an average 11 characters per line. If it owes anything to the basic seven-character line structure on which guci, zidishu and Jingyun dagu were built, it would be in a very generic sense only.\(^{145}\) Thirdly, not only does Jian bei pian fit none of the three structural types of

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\(^{138}\) Chiu, without mentioning the avoidance of any rhymes, notes that both Manchu ballads and guci followed the ‘thirteen rhymes’: Chiu, “The Origins and Original Language of Manchu Bannermen Tales,” p.11. Her earlier and more detailed study focuses on the use of six particular rhymes: Chiu, “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales,” pp.165, 208, 263-264.

\(^{139}\) Stevens, “Peking Drumsinging,” p.104.

\(^{140}\) A conclusion deduced from Chiu’s omission of any reference to rhyming couplets in her studies, apart from the observation that the “loose alternated end rhyme” employed in a particular zidishu was not at all characteristic of rhyme-schemes used in Manchu poetry: Chiu, “The Origins and Original Language of Manchu Bannermen Tales,” p.20.

\(^{141}\) The exceptions are cantos 7 and 8, 16 and 17, 20 and 21, 24 and 25; consecutive pairs sharing a common tone-rhyme.

\(^{142}\) Stevens does not mention section breaks or changes in tone-rhyme for these or any other Jingyun dagu.

\(^{143}\) Stevens, “Peking Drumsinging,” n.1 p.271. Chiu’s studies do not mention this convention.

\(^{144}\) According to Chiu, the majority of zidishu were wholly sung whereas guci had both spoken and sung sections: Chiu, “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales,” p.51. Stevens refers to a “spoken Introduction” in Jingyun dagu (Stevens, “Peking Drumsinging,” pp.123,149,192) as well as spoken phrases or whole sentences in the narrative parts (ibid., pp.151,191) and contrasts this with guci in which “sung rhyming couplet sections [were alternated with] spoken prose sections” (ibid., n.9 p.273).

\(^{145}\) Chiu notes that both guci and zidishu texts allowed for frequent use of “extra words” in order to adapt the original 7-character line of classical poetry but does not define line lengths after such adaptation: Chiu, “Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales,” p.51. Stevens analyses the ways a fundamental 7-character line became amplified in Jingyun dagu through the use of such extra words, noting Jingyun dagu line lengths between six and 20-plus characters: Stevens, “Peking Drumsinging,” pp.111-119.
"Jingyun dagu" identified by Stevens, in its total length (over 3,500 lines even unfinished) divided into 27 cantos (the shortest of 104 lines, the longest 194 lines), it follows neither the "Jingyun dagu" Stevens analysed nor even the longest "zidishu." Chiu’s observation that "guci" were generally longer than "zidishu" may point to "Jian bei pian" owing its length to a "guci" model. However I would suggest that it was China’s classical verse tradition (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) that led to Lao She writing a poem of such length.

Taking these six features altogether, my conclusion is that "Jian bei pian" was a hybrid form of "guci." If its structure resembled "zidishu" in any respect this was as much due to common elements shared by "zidishu" and "guci," reflecting Lao She’s upbringing in Beijing’s “Manchu-Han hybrid culture.” Yet that hybrid form is also clearly an outcome of Lao She’s experimental response to the debates on national forms. According to Day, who links the lack of definition and direction in those debates to the emergence of hybrid forms, styles and genres during the War of Resistance, resorting to hybrid forms allowed some writers of that period the “space and autonomy… to pursue their own aesthetic ideals and aims”.

Besides the traditional influences on its structure, "Jian bei pian’s" content frequently features aspects of China’s traditional and classical heritage which similarly reflect Lao She’s aesthetic preferences: these are examined in the next three sections.

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146 1) Short non-narrative pieces of around four couplets; 2) brief stories of between 26 and 35 couplets; 3) full-length narratives averaging around 90 couplets, with the longest at 148 couplets: Stevens, "Peking Drumsinging," pp.119-123.
147 Ibid., pp.130-135.
148 According to Chiu, "zidishu" texts ranged between one and 30 cantos, but texts longer than nine cantos were uncommon: Chiu, "Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales," n.105 p.122; n.152 p.227.
149 Ibid., n.116 p.209. However Chiu does not quantify this observation or discuss total length. Stevens’ estimate of the longest "zidishu" with 28 chapters and an average 80 lines per chapter would give a maximum length of 2,240 lines: Stevens, "Peking Drumsinging," n.1 p.271.
150 See pages 81-82.
151 See page 70.
Traditional drama and opera in Jian bei pian

Lao She was as familiar with traditional drama and opera (especially the Beijing-based genres) as he was with drum songs, and equally fond of them. His partiality for Beijing opera (Jingju 京剧) apparently led to his early attempts at writing libretto scripts for this in 1938, before committing himself to writing huaju. In Jian bei pian his knowledge of Jingju appears in references to a performance of Ku Zu Miao 哭祖庙 [Crying at the Ancestral Memorial], and to erhuang 二黄, one of the two main types of aria melody in northern opera. Similarly his acquaintance with other genres of traditional Chinese opera (xiqu) is displayed in numerous references to Qinqiang 秦腔, and in an appraisal of different regional forms of bangzi.

Canto 20, titled “Viewing Chang’an drama” 长安观剧, functions as an extended discussion of various drama forms, both traditional and modern. It begins with Lao She voicing support for reforms to traditional drama to promote the War of Resistance:

It is because of this need, 
for such warfare to be in harmony with art, 
that I care about reform of drama.

就是因为这样的需要, 
这样的战争与艺术的谐调,
我关心着戏剧的改造。161

Here, and in canto 19 (lines 80-107) the editorialising voice of a practising playwright162 surfaces, with a hint of self-promotion when he laments “this shortage of play scripts is a spiritual hunger” 这剧本的缺少是精神上的饥荒。163

Yet canto 20 also reveals Lao She as a drama critic who delights in traditional drama, recording his anticipation over seeing traditional QinQiang for the first time, and his mixed impressions of the performance.164 His view of modernised QinQiang is not entirely positive: “lyrics are too literary, lines get spoken hurriedly” 剧词太文，道白急躁。165 Complaining that in modern Beijing bangzi troupes the “painted face” role (damian 大面) 166 has degenerated to “a third-class supporting role” 三路的配角,167 he expresses a preference for traditional Puzhou bangzi 蒲州梆子 performances where that same role:

Still acts as a symbol of independence,
that deep and powerful tone, actions tasteful and profoundly skilled,
send me into raptures, as if seeing a cherished asset!

还有他独立的旗号，
那声调的雄沉，动作的大方与老到，
使我狂喜，如见至宝！169

161 Canto 20 lines 39-41.
162 By the time he was writing Jian bei pian he had already written the play scripts for Canwu, Guojia zhishang, Zhang zizhong, and Mianzi wenti.
163 Canto 19 line 103.
164 Canto 20 lines 50-65.
165 Canto 20 line 76.
167 Canto 20 lines 94-95.
168 Also known as Puju 蒲剧, this ancient form of Bangzi opera originated in Puzhou, in south-western Shanxi near the border with Shaanxi and Henan, during the late Ming dynasty, and is now performed in Shaanxi, Henan, Gansu and Qinghai; Zhang Feng 张峰, "Puju 蒲剧,” in Zhongguo dabaikexiqu quyi, ed. Encyclopedia of China Editorial Committee (Beijing: Shanghai: Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, 1983), pp.280-281.
169 Canto 20 lines 96-98.
His fondness for certain aspects of traditional drama is reinforced by a passage clearly displaying nostalgia for the past, a nostalgia that perhaps has wider application:

Ah, society’s preference for vulgarity, the tedium of city life, will praise to the skies heavily made-up female roles, but coldly reject and underrate the ancient sounds!

啊，社会上趣味的低级，都市中生活的无聊，
会把油头粉面的小旦捧入云霄，
而把黄钟大吕之音由冷淡而弃掉！

Other cantos of Jian bei pian feature drama by non-professional performers – village children in Henan and Hubei (cantos 15 and 16), army drama troupes at Shangxian (canto 19) and Qiulin (canto 23), and what may have been a group of students from the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts in Yan’an (canto 26). In these Lao She comments on the singing and dialogue, diction and acting, plot, instrumentation, costumes, make-up and even acrobatics, usually evaluating such aspects in terms of their ability to promote the War of Resistance effort:

Gowns are too short, the face-paint doesn’t gleam;
who cares, ah listen, the music isn’t bad, there’s tone and melody!
An old play’s final gong dies away, a modern drama takes its place,
step by step a tale about the War of Resistance gets people keyed-up;
simple stories, simple make-up,
relying on actors’ sincerity, with the silvery moon for lighting,
spreading fervour for war effort and hopes for victory.

袍子太短, 粉未擦光;
谁管, 听啊, 不是合槽中板, 有调有腔!
旧戏杀锣, 话剧上场, 
抗战的故事节节紧张;
简单的故事, 简单的化装, 
仗着演员的恳切, 借着银色的灯光, 
把抗战的热情与胜利的希望.

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170 Xiaodan 小旦, the young female character type in Beijing opera traditionally played by a male.
172 Canto 20 lines 103-105.
Descriptions of the atmosphere and spectacle also convey a sense of excitement perhaps like that experienced by the schoolboy who had haunted the teahouses and theatres of old Beijing:

A belt of willows in a grove,
noise of gongs and drumming,
teahouses quick walks apart,
outdoor theatres too,
Henan zhuizi paired with droning strings,
Handiao tunes in Beijing dialect contending with the clapper-board,\textsuperscript{174}
sweat streams like rain,
cloaked in clouds of tobacco smoke,
crowds of people watch Shandong circus.

柳林一片，
锣鼓喧天，
三步一家茶馆，
五步一座戏园，
河南坠子配着单调的丝弦，
汉调京腔争鸣着鼓板，
如雨的汗，
不断的烟，
山东的马戏人海人山.\textsuperscript{175}

Lao She’s understanding of and love for China’s classical heritage is similarly evident throughout \textit{Jian bei pian}, as discussed in the following section.

**Classical poetry, calligraphy, and painting in \textit{Jian bei pian}**

Lao She’s acquaintance with classical poetry dates from his early teens when he studied at the Beijing teacher training college and came under the guidance of traditional scholars who taught him not only to appreciate poetry in the traditional

\textsuperscript{173} Canto 19 lines 72-78.
\textsuperscript{175} Canto 16 lines 8-16.
style, but also to compose it.\textsuperscript{176} (According to his wife he was able to recite from memory a great deal of classical poetry.)\textsuperscript{177} During the War of Resistance period he continued writing verse in the classical-style for his own enjoyment,\textsuperscript{178} including observations from the journey documented in \textit{Jian bei pian}.\textsuperscript{179}

His comments in \textit{Jian bei pian}'s appendix suggest some reasons for his pleasure in writing classical verse – the guidance of clear formats, the “poetic” expressions, and the “aesthetic concepts” – which meant that composing such verse gave him very little trouble.\textsuperscript{180} However if he had resigned himself to doing without those classical formats in \textit{Jian bei pian}, it seems he did not always abstain from poetic expressions, and nor did he completely abandon his classical notions of aesthetics. The author of a recent Chinese study is in no doubt about classical poetry’s influence on \textit{Jian bei pian}, describing this influence as:

Direct and obvious… even to the extent of deliberately following and absorbing old patterns… [in his] conscious use of old-style poetic forms… his vocabulary that is closer to that of classical poetry… and his scenic descriptions using artistic concepts and styles of classical poetry.\textsuperscript{181}

The previous chapter has noted the frequent reference to China’s classical poets in \textit{Jian bei pian}. Lao She’s affection for these poets is revealed not only in allusion to their lives and work, but also in direct quotation. In describing his journey through the mountains of northern Sichuan (“Sichuan roads are hard to travel” 蜀道难行\textsuperscript{182}) he borrows from the title of Li Bai’s famous poem. He references Bai Juyi’s \textit{Chang hen ge} when commenting on the Tang Emperor’s “golden house for a concubine” 金屋藏娇,\textsuperscript{183} and cites Bai Juyi again with “Bai Xiangshan’s tomb and shrine” 白香山的祠

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\textsuperscript{176} Sui-ning Prudence Chou, "Lao She: An Intellectual's Role and Dilemma in Modern China" (University of California, Berkeley, 1976), pp.7-8.

\textsuperscript{177} Hu Jieqing, "Qianyan."

\textsuperscript{178} Chou, "Lao She," pp.8, 98. See also Shi Chengjun, "Lao She he Wang Lixi, Lu Jingqing fufu," p.107.

\textsuperscript{179} Li Yuchun 李遇春, "Youhuan zhi shi yu anle zhi shi - Lao She jiutishi chuangzuo zhuangxing lun [Poems of hardship and happiness - on the transformation in Lao She's old-style poetry]," \textit{Fujian luntan (Renwen shuhui xue ban)} (2007), p.90.

\textsuperscript{180} Lao She, "Fulu."

\textsuperscript{181} Shi Xingze, \textit{Lao She yu ershishi jinwuwenxue he wenhua}, p.41.

\textsuperscript{182} Canto 2 line 81.

\textsuperscript{183} Canto 21 line 42. Bai Juyi was himself drawing on \textit{Han Wu gushi} 汉武故事 [The Story of Emperor Wu of Han] by Han dynasty historian and poet Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE): (金屋藏娇 “Cihai.” p.3883). The expression has now become an idiom meaning to keep a mistress in a luxurious love-nest.
When questioning the point of refining ancient lyrics and melodies his line “for Xiaohong’s soft voice to accompany my flute” is adapted from the poem Guo chui hong [Hanging Rainbow] by Song dynasty poet Jiang Kui 姜夔 (c1155-c1221).

Another significant quotation clearly calls up Du Fu’s Yue ye 月夜 [Moonlight Night]:

Mournful moonlight, symbol of sorrow for a thousand years, venerable Du Fu’s sad thoughts, then and now we feel the same; jade-like arms shining bright, cloud-like hair coiled and fragrant with mist, heartless autumn moon, shining again on parting and upheaval!

伤心的月色，千载同怜，
老杜的悲思，古今同感；
清辉玉臂，香雾云鬟，
秋月无情，又照着一番离乱！

Du Fu’s poem reads as follows:

Tonight in Fuzhou the moon shines. In her chamber, my wife must watch alone. I pity my distant boy and girl who don't know why she remembers Chang'an, her cloud-like hair coiled and fragrant with mist, jade-like arms cold in the moonlight. When shall we lean in the open window, together without tears in moonlight?

今夜鄜州月
闺中只独看
遥怜小儿女
未解忆长安
香雾云鬟湿
清辉玉臂寒
何时倚虚幌
双照泪痕干

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184 Canto 12 line 117. The Fragrant Hills Monastery, where Bai Juyi lived in retirement until his death, also gave its name to the title of the poet’s anthology Bai Xiangshan shiji 白香山诗集.
185 Canto 20 line 29.
187 Canto 24 lines 72-75.
188 This translation, and the explanation of the probable circumstances around its writing, are based on those of David Hawkes, A little primer of Tu Fu (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp.30, 32.
Lao She has taken Du Fu’s original five-character lines 5-6 and transposed them, with final characters omitted, into a single line. Here recording his arrival in Fuxian, Lao She not only pays homage to the great poet but appears also to compare the War of Resistance “upheaval” with that experienced by Du Fu, who wrote his poem in 756 CE, the year after the decade-long An Lushan rebellion began, when he was trapped by the rebels in Chang’an while his wife and children remained in Fuzhou (now part of Fuxian).

Aside from such recognisable, and clearly intentional, borrowing from the language of classical poets, idiomatic expressions of ancient origin are frequently used in Jian bei pian. Despite his protestations that colloquial speech lacked poetic qualities, Lao She was surely aware that some expressions he used, while originating in classical literature including poetry, were common idioms in everyday speech. The expression for something arising or emerging at the opportune time (应运而生) occurs twice and derives from a phrase used by Eastern Han historian Xun Yue 荀悦 (148-209) in his Qian Han Ji 前汉纪 [Western Han Chronicles]. Another common idiom indicating the swift passage of time, literally ‘blue sea turns into mulberry fields’ (沧海桑田), derives from the ancient collection Shenxian zhuan 神仙传 [Lives of the Immortals] by Ge Hong 葛洪 (284-364). Another example is the expression for “a simple agreement” (约法三章) referring to the basic contract made with the people by a new government, first documented in the Shiji 史记 [Records of the Grand Historian] of Sima Qian 司马迁 (145-86 BCE). Further instances of idiom usage in Jian bei pian are found throughout the poem.

Lao She’s aesthetic sensibilities, shaped by his love of classical poetry, are displayed in several features of Jian bei pian. Describing a dream-like rural scene, he invokes

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189 Lao She, "Fulu."
190 Canto 6 line 45; canto 23 line 127.
191 应运 “Ciyuan,” p.0633.
192 Canto 13 line 36; canto 17 line 119 uses a variation of this.
194 Jin dynasty Daoist and alchemist.
195 Canto 18 line 97.
the spirit of Tao Yuanming 陶渊明 (365-427), Six Dynasties period poet also known as Tao Qian 陶潜:

When resting in the date groves,
that peaceful carefree shade, with its fragrant sweet atmosphere,
it’s as if we’re in that place of Yuanming’s verse.

Yuanming acquired a reputation as ‘recluse’ poet from his work written when he withdrew from official life to live in seclusion, a lifestyle celebrated in his prose piece Taohua yuan ji 桃花源记 [A Record of Peach Blossom Spring]. He re-appears in a nostalgic reference to a slower pace of life when:

We could all be like Yuanming in his leisure,
writing a few plain phrases like running water with lovely tones!

Such self-aware allusion suggests that Yuanming had a special appeal for Lao She, who invokes Taohua yuan ji twice. Chou goes so far as to suggest that this affinity influenced some of Lao She’s writing.

More recent studies have identified other classical poets as possible influences on Lao She’s wartime classical-style verse. A discussion of his classical poems written during this period, some from his northern journey (but omitting Jian bei pian, presumably as modern poetry), concludes that they clearly belong in the poetic tradition of Lu You and Wu Meicun. One study explicitly linking the writing of Jian bei pian to that of Wu Meicun sees parallels in the way the narrative poetry of Lao She and Wu Meicun reflected the turbulent historical events they experienced, its authors concluding that Jian bei pian was influenced in some aspects by Wu Meicun’s “seven songs” style of

197 Canto 10 lines 49-51.
198 Canto 17 lines 36-37.
199 Canto 4 line 112 and canto 22 line 84.
200 Chou, "Lao She," p.18; n.32 p.110.
201 Li Yuchun, “Youhuian zhi shi yu anle zhi shi,” pp.89-90.
Another study suggests that the influence of Lu You (also known as Lu Fangweng 陆放翁) was even stronger: in the early months of the War of Resistance, before leaving Jinan, Lao She reportedly took consolation in Lu You’s patriotic verse contained in the volume Jian nan shigao [Southern Poems]. Perhaps not only consolation but also inspiration: since ‘Jian’ in both cases is read as indicating Jianmen [Sword Gate Pass] Lao She’s Jian bei pian does not merely echo the title of Lu You’s volume but serves as a mirror image. Lao She’s admissions that China’s tradition of long poems had a bearing on his decision to write Jian bei pian, and that when he first learnt poetry it was “in the style of Lu Fangweng and Wu Meicun” seem to support arguments for the influence of those two poets.

Further evidence of Lao She’s aesthetic sensibilities is found in relation to two other art forms associated with China’s classical tradition – calligraphy and painting. In that tradition both are closely connected with poetry, much as they are in Jian bei pian. Turning firstly to calligraphy, Lao She’s longstanding appreciation of the calligraphic art is signalled in the statement that as a young man he enjoyed “copying” (moxie) classical texts from the Longmen Grottoes:

Whenever I unfolded a page of rubbings, admiring the original characters’ sharp outlines, then, indulging my idle and unlimited imagination, Longmen became for me, the grandest and most elegant creation of human hand and heavenly skill.

每逢把拓页展开, 欣赏着字的棱角, 我就把龙门, 任着想象的虚渺, 想成最雄奇伟丽的人工天巧.

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202 Chen Lin and Xie Zhaoxin, "Lun Wu Meicun dui Lao She wenxue chuangzuo de yingxiang," p.113.
204 The ‘Jian’ of the titles is the same character (剑). Lu You also wrote the short poem Jianmendao zongwu weiyu (see Chapter One footnote 1).
205 Lao She, "Fulu."
206 As quoted in Chen Lin and Xie Zhaoxin, "Lun Wu Meicun dui Lao She wenxue chuangzuo de yingxiang," p.112.
208 The copying of an original Chinese text by transcribing directly or tracing from a stone rubbing (拓), described by Lao She as a hobby (canto 12 line 109). In the classical tradition it was a teaching method for calligraphy.
209 Canto 12 lines 110-112.
His knowledge of calligraphy surfaces when recording his visit to a site outside Luoyang, where he praises ancient inscriptions on an excavated monument,\(^{210}\) and again when he admires the work of Yao Boduo 姚伯多 (c.496 CE), a calligrapher from the Northern Wei dynasty period famous for his Daoist inscriptions carved in stone, and of Zhang Anshi.\(^{211}\)

Lao She’s interest in painting possibly predated his marriage in 1931 to Hu Jieqing, who later became a well-known painter in her own right. Two pieces of wartime writing suggest that he was also a keen collector of painting and calligraphy.\(^{212}\) In *Jian bei pian* the impression of his respect for classical notions of aesthetics in the visual arts is reinforced by the many descriptions of scenes as if they were paintings done in classical *shanshui* 山水 style. The artist’s handiwork is at times directly evoked, with “forests bright as paintings” 林光如画 near Nanyang,\(^{213}\) a “coloured tapestry of autumn fields” 织锦的秋田 north of Xi’an.\(^{214}\) The town of Yulin bordering the Gobi Desert is described as:

> This precious greenness, amid bleached sand and barren mountain ranges, how intense it is, how clear and fresh, like ancient Song and Yuan paintings on silk, a mottled bright green!

> 这宝贵的绿色，在白沙荒岭之前，
> 是多么浓厚，多么清鲜，
> 象古绢上宋元的绘画，明绿斑斑！\(^{215}\)

The journey through southern Shaanxi offers a variety of visual images:

> A small plain of fragrant rice with red autumn leaves, boat sails slowly appear, the river widens.

> 种着红叶香稻的小平原，
> 帆影缓缓，江水展宽.\(^{216}\)

> Mountain creeks, dots of distant villages,
a few thin bamboo poles,  
several terraced fields;  
bright red and yellow Shaanxi peppers and pumpkins,  
tint the northern farmland scene.

山腰溪畔,
远村点点,
瘦竹几竿,
梯田几片;  
秦椒与倭瓜红黄灿烂,
点染出北方景色的田间.217

A grove of green bamboo,  
a few fallen flower-petals;  
amid bright green a startled squirrel flees,  
a flash, it disappears.

绿竹千竿,  
落花几片;  
绿光中松鼠惊窜,
一闪，不见.218

Dawn at Zhongnanshan’s summit reveals:

Hills below are small;  
... peaks like a chain of islands in a gently shifting sea of clouds;  
lower down the mountain, forests and gardens lightly float among the rosy clouds,  
shadowed woods, yet some escaping light shows winding creeks and pathways;  
... green peaks concealing green peaks, pines sheltering green grass,  
between the dark green, faintly yellow trails;  
only a line of white cloud twines around the mountain-top.

...群山皆小;  
...云海轻移，峰如列岛;  
山下彩云朵朵，在林园上轻飘，  
遮暗了远林，却放一些光明给湾湾的溪道;  
...青峰掩着青峰，青松护着青草，  
碧绿之间，夹着微黄的小道;  
只有一线白云在山头上盘绕.219

217 Canto 4 lines 103-108.  
218 Canto 4 lines 148-151.  
219 Canto 21 lines 114-117, 124-126.
The poem’s final canto, recording in detail the ascent of Huashan, contains the greatest concentration of visual imagery, again often deliberately conjuring up an artist’s handiwork:

Like the magical work of a heavenly painter,
a sequence of peaks drawn in a few straight graceful strokes.
There are no needlessly chaotic broken lines,
opt smudging in search of perfection,
every stroke succinct, not one could be added or removed.

象画家的神工鬼遣，
挺秀的几笔绘就了层峦。
没有枝冗破乱，
没有涂抹求全，
笔笔简洁，无可增减.220

Cliffs above the rushing river are shadowed, patched with green moss stains,
imagination, along with sun and shadow and drifting mist,
turns it into a drawing with people, pavilions and parks.

峭壁上水冲成影，苔色斑斑，
随着想象，随着日影流烟，
也都化作图画，人物亭园.221

At Huashan’s highest point (South Peak) the poem ends with views of:

North Peak clear and distant,
solid Huashan till now empty and faraway, 
golden earth, far-off mountains undulating, 
clouds and fog that seem to float like gentle smoke, 
autumn wind and colours, a sloping line of wild geese flies across the sky.

有北峰的清远，
紧凑的华山至此萧然疏散，
金黄的大地，起伏的远山，
似云似雾流荡着轻烟，
秋风秋色，雁字斜列在天边.222

This painterly approach to the recording of scenery, with its tendency for landscape descriptions to glow with enthusiasm, pervades Jian bei pian. A particular feature of

220 Canto 27 lines 7-11.  
221 Canto 27 lines 135-137.  
222 Canto 27 lines 190-194.
that approach to landscape is the frequent and vivid use of metaphor, simile and personification. Sometimes the scene is compared to a living creature:

Like a huge whale’s mouth, mountains for teeth, stone the lips, the raging river dashed ahead, gulping, spouting spray, … a range of hills like bolting wild horses, heads raised, manes all bristling, racing toward white clouds.

似巨鲸之口，山是牙，石是唇，激荡，控制，吞吐，激喷，…群山象野马狂奔，昂首竖鬃，飞向白云.223

Bulky hills with rounded tops, waves of sand joined end-to-end, like giant camels in a train, a camel-caravan of many humps.

山肥顶圆，沙浪相连，象巨驼成阵，驼峰万千.224

Similarly, crops and animals of that landscape acquire human characteristics:

Auburn tassels of maize lovely as village women.

带着红缨的玉米美如村妇.225

Tiny red dates with smiling faces hang from trees.

微红含笑的枣儿把树树压低.226

Sorghum drooping red-faced as if drunk.

似醉的高梁低垂着红脸.227

Mules’ heads and tails adorned with bright red ribbons, like new brides decorated from top to toe.

骡子的头尾，红缨鲜艳，
象新嫁的娘子，打扮得齐全.228

Whole geographical zones are treated as iconic. The Qinling Mountains, forming a natural barrier between the Guanzhong plain and Han River valley, are the subject of

223 Canto 3 lines 5-6, 14-15.
224 Canto 25 lines 116-117.
225 Canto 6 line 111.
226 Canto 10 line 42.
227 Canto 22 line 4.
228 Canto 25 lines 30-31.
an extended rhapsody in which Lao She mixes climatology and geology with metaphor to give them an almost imperial aura:

Forceful and vast is Qinling’s presence.
Cutting across China’s central plains, stopping desert sandstorms;
South China Sea’s warm winds, the rainclouds flying over Sichuan, all barred by Qinling in its costume of bright green, constantly refreshed by mountain rain and dew… like some giants vying for this single bit of land, shoving and squeezing each other out of the way, their feet stamped into ravines, bodies of stone, bones of stone, wearing strange and majestic robes, white clouds for crowns, jade-green trees for cloaks.

雄浑苍茫是秦岭的风度。
横断中原，把大漠的风沙截住；
南海的温风雨云，飞过巴蜀，
也被截住，把自己装成明绿的画图，
时时给自己一山雨露…
象些巨人争着向人间插足，
无可插足，挤在一处，
山头掩着山头，脚板踏陷了深谷，
石的身，石的骨，
奇伟的装束，
冠是白云，衣是碧树；^{229}

The loess plateau, covering much of the Shaanxi sector of the journey, is similarly eulogised in canto 9,^{230} although evaluated more critically in canto 22 as “fascinating… harsh… stable… unstable…”.^{231} The omnipresent Yellow River, often portrayed as an unrestrained if not savage power, is also referred to as “mother of the nation”^{232} emphasising its nurturing qualities.

Thus landscape becomes the dominant character of Jian bei pian, a complex and volatile personality that is in turn powerful, gentle, arbitrarily cruel, sustaining and benign, violent, tranquil, beautiful, skittish or solemn, noble but degraded, threatening yet promising. As much as being a record of the journey, Jian bei pian can be seen as an ode to the character of China – a very physical entity whose features are those of

^{229} Canto 6 lines 74-78, 90-95.
^{230} Lines 11-48.
^{231} Lines 40, 45, 61.
^{232} Canto 6 line 149: deriving from the expression *muqin he* 母亲河.
the beloved – the muse for the poet as well as the patriot. This passage encapsulates Lao She’s devotion to his muse, and perhaps explains his idea of patriotism:

Ah, these most powerful and unusual colours, the beauty of mountain forests, capture people’s compassion, as romantic love is won by good looks, and bind it firmly to our country’s territory; sublime beauty, is what persuades our love of country, when fine farmland and countryside suffer wanton violence, no-one could willingly sit by and watch without picking up a weapon.

啊，这最色的雄奇，山林的美妙，把人们的爱心，象爱情之与美貌，在国土上系牢；美的崇高，是爱的开导，当美的田园与河山受到淫暴，谁肯坐视，不拿起枪刀？

If what inspired Lao She’s task of recording the journey was China’s powerful landscape, it was a landscape whose features had been celebrated by painters and writers for many centuries. One tradition associated with such celebration was the classical literary travelogue. Whether Jian bei pian, in its content or its form, can be seen as part of that tradition is discussed in the next section.

The classical literary travelogue and Jian bei pian

The classical Chinese tradition of travel record literature is generally seen as having evolved from ancient practices of keeping historical and geographical records for official purposes. These were not necessarily always in prose: for example, the Warring States period anthology Chuci 楚辞 [Verses of Chu]. The travel diary (youjì) may have emerged in the Six Dynasties period, but its development as a distinct and popular literary genre occurred much later, during the Southern Song

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233 Canto 21 lines 130-136.
period, with the appearance of Lu You’s *Ru Shu ji* [Record of a Journey to Shu] and Fan Chengda’s *Wuchuan lu* [Record of a Boat trip to Wu].\(^{237}\) While lyrical poetry devoted to descriptions of landscape (both real and imagined) had been a significant part of Six Dynasties literature,\(^{238}\) again it was not until the Southern Song period that poems about travel (*jiyoushi*), also known as “on the road” poems (*daozhong* 道中) became common.\(^{239}\) In the lives of the literati who were disposed, or had the leisure, to record their travels in verse, a frequent impetus for the journey was a form of exile, whether self-imposed or officially decreed – what Strassberg refers to as the “exilic syndrome”.\(^{240}\)

If Lao She saw himself as an exile, was it any more than in the sense of sharing with his compatriots the condition of being displaced by war? His 1946 essay records his pleasure at seeing new places and describes his favourites among those he visited during the eight years of war,\(^{241}\) yet he introduces that essay as a journal of “exile (流亡 liuwang), grief and hardship”.\(^{242}\) And in *Jian bei pian* his repeated invocation of poets Li Bai\(^{243}\) and Du Fu,\(^{244}\) who in exile travelled (and recorded in their verse) similar paths to his, and to the self-exiled poet Tao Yuanming,\(^{245}\) indicate some degree of identification with “exilic” poets of old.

More specifically, given Lao She’s long acquaintance with China’s tradition of long poems, and his desire to create mementoes of the journey\(^{246}\) he perhaps hoped *Jian bei pian* would be part of the *youji* tradition whose texts, according to Hargett, “(1) describe a journey; (2) contain sustained, impersonal (or objective) descriptions of landscape; (3) express the personal or subjective views of the author.”\(^{247}\) Yet in


\(^{240}\) Strassberg, *Inscribed landscapes*, pp.33-56.

\(^{241}\) Lao She, "Bafang fengyu,” pp.3, 13, 15.

\(^{242}\) Ibid., p.1.

\(^{243}\) See footnotes to canto 2 lines 54, 81; canto 8 lines 23, 27-28; canto 13 lines 8, 22-23; canto 17 line 120.

\(^{244}\) See pages 90-91.

\(^{245}\) See page 92.

\(^{246}\) Lao She, "Wo zenyang xie Jian bei pian."

contemporary Chinese scholarship only two sources identify Jian bei pian as belonging in the literary tradition of travel poems, one claiming that “Jian bei pian is a rare example of the long jiyoushi in our literary history,”248 while the other, describing Jian bei pian as “youji”, asserts that “due to its lyrical and narrative qualities, as poem and as reportage… Jian bei pian… has taken an acknowledged position in China’s tradition of long poems.”249

Taking Hargett’s first condition, Lao She’s approach to recording the journey was, as Chapter Two observes, less than systematic and not entirely chronological, with several indications that the cantos of Jian bei pian do not strictly reflect the sequence of time. Canto 7 (“Baoji Station” 宝鸡车站) is essentially an exercise in nostalgia for places (Beijing, Tianjin, Qingdao, Jinan’s Daming Lake) from his past.250 Canto 20’s focus on drama (but not only Chang’an drama) in the context of the War of Resistance has almost no locational setting. If canto 27’s detailed log of the Huashan ascent is the closest to youji its precise timing in the overall journey is not clear. Secondly, landscape descriptions in Jian bei pian are not sustained, being repeatedly interrupted by passages about the War of Resistance, China’s people and its army fighting this war, and digressions into history and mythology. Yet the frequent interpolation of references to history or mythology, including borrowings from the classical texts, into scenic descriptions was apparently a favourite practice of Lu You in his youji – a practice done to “enhance a landscape description or to identify a specific place.”251 Awareness of such cultural associations was part of belonging to a literary tradition in which landscape was “inextricably linked with language and history.”252 Jian bei pian does appear to satisfy Hargett’s third condition in clearly expressing Lao She’s personal views, whether on the subject of historical events and persons, the reliability of myth, the savagery of the enemy, or the grandeur of the scenery. Furthermore, in its hybridised language, I would suggest that Jian bei pian’s mix of baihua and classical poetic expressions may occasionally have achieved the alternating effect of prose and

248 Guan Jixin, Lao She ping zhuann, p.327.
250 Tianjin was where Lao She taught at Nankai Middle School in the early 1920s before leaving for England. Qingdao and Jinan, in Shandong, were where he spent time teaching in the 1930s before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war. Daming Lake probably had added significance for Lao She as the title of his unpublished novel whose manuscript was destroyed in 1932 by Japanese aerial bombardment of Shanghai.
252 Strassberg, Inscribed landscapes, p.6.
poetry that features in some youji. In this respect it could be argued that Lao She adapted selected features of youji for his hybrid purposes in Jian bei pian. And as noted earlier, Jian bei pian’s extraordinary length places it on the margins of guci form. An alternative explanation may be that Lao She looked to the epic size of Lu You’s Jian nan shigao as a precedent, if not justification, for the length of his own poem.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the factors that led Lao She to write Jian bei pian, arguing that he was driven firstly, by his desire to create a narrative of the whole journey as a series of impressionistic mementoes, and secondly, by a sense of obligation to blend old and new poetic forms in what he saw as an experiment. Lao She’s readiness to experiment, already evident from his earlier fiction, plus his dislike of theory and reluctance to be identified with or restricted to any literary school or style, led to his trying out several new genres during the War of Resistance. However the experiment of writing Jian bei pian was challenged by incompatibility between old and new forms – traditional drum song lyric and modern poetry – a challenge compounded by his other aim of finding vernacular speech that was accessible to ordinary people but also had the lyrical qualities demanded by his aesthetic standards. That incompatibility between old and new was paralleled by his difficulties in reconciling the obligation to help develop a modern national style for War of Resistance literature by writing Jian bei pian as modern poetry, with his own fondness for both traditional folk entertainment and classical forms of lyrical verse.

In its form, Lao She’s choice of rhyme-scheme for Jian bei pian demonstrates some of the traditional influences absorbed during his Beijing upbringing. Analysis of how he applied that rhyme-scheme concludes that it owed little to specific Beijing drum song or Manchu ballad forms, but was his own hybrid version of traditional oral

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253 See for example the translated passages by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) also known as Su Dongpo 蘇東坡 in ibid., pp.186, 192.
254 Originally a 20-chapter collection of poetry published by Lu You in his lifetime, it was expanded with the inclusion of some of his prose writing to 85 chapters: Burton Watson, "Introduction," in Late poems of Lu You, the old man who does as he pleases (Burlington, Ontario; Berkeley, CA: Ahadada Books, 2007), p.x.
storytelling ballad modes common to northern China. *Jian bei pian*’s text constantly reflects his familiarity with and affection for not only China’s popular traditional culture, especially northern forms of drama and opera, but also its classical poetry, calligraphy and painting. Furthermore, in both form and content *Jian bei pian* shows features of China’s classical literary travelogue, demonstrating that Lao She’s travelogue observations of geographic China place him in that literary tradition whereby landscape is defined by its associations with history, both ancient and modern. The thesis suggests that in its treatment of China’s landscape, allowing Lao She to find and express his very personal notion of Chinese identity, *Jian bei pian* can be seen as an ode to the character of China - a muse for poet as well as patriot.
Chapter Four – Conclusion

The curiosity that first led me into this study of Lao She’s epic poem Jian bei pian in some respects remains unsatisfied. My research began with a contrarian suspicion that the generally dismissive view of Jian bei pian in the West (in the rare instances when it was considered) was unwarranted. My discoveries confirm that suspicion; I have found Jian bei pian to be complex and intriguing. Like the ‘elephant touched by the blind men’ (xiazimoxiang 瞎子摸象) the poem has been judged by a few selected features, and is the more mysterious because a part remains missing.

In challenging such one-dimensional verdicts, this thesis arrives at a reading of Jian bei pian as a multifaceted work that defies simple labelling either as patriotic propaganda or as a case of Lao She dissipating his literary talent on then-in-vogue revival of a popular folk ballad form. In both its structure and substance Jian bei pian displays a diversity of influences, testifying to the personal motives and obligations driving its creator and also suggesting why the poem was unable to realise his conflicting goals.

As Chapter Two shows, the patriotic rhetoric found in Jian bei pian disrupts but does not dominate the narrative, and its message is not without the kinds of contradictions and insecurities identified in other of Lao She’s wartime writing. These ambiguities and reservations prevent the poem functioning as a work of imaginative invention which, if it had promoted a convincing vision of unified China, might have contributed to nation-building during the War of Resistance. Instead, the inconsistent and uncertain political vision of China emerging from Jian bei pian must have diluted any impact the poem had as wartime propaganda. For similar reasons, the poem fails to measure up as a narrative affirming China’s national identity through history. While frequently invoking China’s history as both inspiration and instrument for fighting the War of Resistance, Jian bei pian’s approach to that history is unsystematic, incomplete and comparatively superficial. Finally, when viewed as an ethno-symbolist celebration of outstanding epochs and iconic sites, cultural elements so crucial to the reinterpretation and reconstruction of national identity, Jian bei pian again falls short. Although Lao She’s record of the journey frequently features such
material, his sometimes ambivalent, even disparaging treatment of those elements of traditional culture undercuts the poem’s ability to function as a meaningful re-configuring of national identity.

On these three counts then, *Jian bei pian* fails theoretical tests for qualifying as a work contributing to the wartime nation-building of modern China. But was nation-building Lao She’s intention? Chapter Three explores this question, and concludes that *Jian bei pian* was primarily a personal project, written to satisfy several sometimes incompatible ambitions. Of these, the principal two were his desire to create a memento of the whole journey based on his recorded impressions, and his sense of being duty-bound to help develop a distinctive national style through an experimental blending of old and new poetic forms, an obligation shared by many of his literary peers. However, in trying to achieve a harmonious blend he faced several challenges: incompatibility between the traditional drum song lyric he chose as his model and what he saw as the formlessness of modern poetry; difficulties in finding vernacular expressions with lyrical qualities that satisfied his aesthetic criteria; and a parallel conflict between his attitude to the modern and his enduring affection for traditional and classical elements of Chinese culture.

That affection is revealed in a number of ways, and especially in the abundance of textual allusions to his classical heritage. Chapter Two shows how an awareness of China’s history pervades *Jian bei pian*’s account of the journey through references to seminal events, exceptional periods, and significant individuals (both actual and mythological) associated with specific locations. Lao She’s constant invoking of the history and mythology linked with a place emphasises its significance for him, a significance he would have assumed at least some of his audience shared. But it also serves to locate his memento of the journey in China’s literary travelogue tradition, a tradition whose authors imbued their landscapes with many kinds of significance – aesthetic, personal, historical, mythological, philosophical and religious.

Chapter Three, exploring other dimensions of *Jian bei pian*’s historical awareness, demonstrates how its textual allusions to classical poets (sometimes borrowing directly from their work), to Buddhist sculptures and ancient works by celebrated calligraphers, and to classical *shanshui* painting, all reflect the esteem in which Lao
She held those particular traditions of China’s classical culture. His frequent invoking of eminent poets such as Du Fu, Li Bai, Lu You, and Tao Yuanming, suggests that he identified with the exilic aspects of those poets’ lives, aspects which in some respects he shared. Inevitably, it also invites critical appraisal of Jian bei pian's aesthetic qualities. In my view the poem, despite lapses in its narrative resulting in unevenness of tone, mood and subject, is an absorbing travel account. This is achieved through its ability to project a powerful and lyrical sense of scene: sometimes using the well-known lines of favourite poets and colourful idiomatic expressions; at other times subtly modifying common idiom or generating fresh and striking metaphors; and at others relying on Lao She’s skill in realistic description, so typical of his fictional work, to achieve either comic or tragic effect.

Chapter Three also highlights how Jian bei pian reveals Lao She’s fondness for traditional popular entertainment forms of northern China, with several of the poem’s cantos and one in particular, describing performances of popular drama and opera seen on his journey. In its structural features, as Chapter Three shows, the poem displays some influences of the traditional oral storytelling ballad modes that Lao She became familiar with while growing up in Beijing. Although his choice of form for Jian bei pian might have been seen as a dutiful attempt to fit in with a trend for reviving ‘old bottles’ with ‘new wine’, it was an attempt driven more by his longstanding affection for the narrated drum songs of Northern China than by literary fad or ideology. And while the attempt began with apparent enthusiasm for creating his own hybrid version of a guci form, after barely a year’s writing he abandoned the poem and soundly rejected the ‘new wine in old bottles’ mantra. Other structural features of Jian bei pian, including its length (even in unfinished state) suggest that the classical literary travelogue tradition also had some bearing on Lao She’s decision to record his journey in the way he did.

In demonstrating that Jian bei pian was not, at least in its author’s intention, unconditional wartime propaganda, this thesis adds to the gathering body of recent work that discusses Lao She’s difficulties in conveying a patriotic message through his wartime fiction. But it also draws attention to previously overlooked aspects of his writing, because Jian bei pian is a significant departure in subject-matter and tone from his work before, during and after the war. Where his fiction mostly treated its
modern urban settings with unsentimental realism, Jian bei pian’s record of his journey through the vast and diverse countryside is coloured by historical and cultural associations viewed through a lens of nostalgic sentimentality, sometimes with the kind of “melancholy reflections” on the instability of history that have marked certain classical literary travelogues. Jian bei pian’s scenic descriptions often turn into rhapsodies expressed with the sensibilities of a painter. Only when the narrative describes the impact of the war, particularly of aerial bombardment, on the land and its inhabitants, are idyllic descriptions replaced by a grimmer realism. Yet that realism is not inevitably accompanied by the cynical humour and almost despairing social criticism for which Lao She’s fiction was noted. An earnest if erratic optimism underlies Jian bei pian’s realism and fuels its patriotic rhetoric. The poem’s rare instances of humour appear as a few pointed barbs at the expense of Daoist priests, some mild scepticism aimed at popular myth, and occasional lines of heavy irony directed at enemy forces. While Jian bei pian is not entirely without the tendency to mock his fellow-citizens that was so prevalent in Lao She’s early fiction, the majority of people featuring in the poem are the anonymous representatives of groups – peasants, soldiers, refugees – who are generally praised en masse for their endurance and heroism in the face of hardship, warfare, and exile.

What underlies these differences in subject-matter and tone is Jian bei pian’s rather different view of China. As I argue in Chapter Two, the view of China projected in the poem is probably not the kind of political vision that successfully promotes nation-building or affirms a new kind of national identity. However it does represent a significant, mostly positive, shift in Lao She’s view of China, and in his psychological approach to what and how he wrote about it. The social criticism of his early fiction condemned China the weak Republican state, lamented its structural and socio-cultural shortcomings and described the many flaws of the Chinese national character. But in Jian bei pian Lao She shows a China with which he could more readily identify, a geographic China whose physical presence is overlaid with the intangible sense of its history, literature and art. His selections of site and topography making up the narrative reflect the foundations for that vision of China, while his frequently metaphorical descriptions of the landscape construct a China that is in effect Jian bei

1 Strassberg, Inscribed landscapes, p.25.
pian’s protagonist, a volatile character capable of eliciting a range of emotions – nostalgia, sorrow, pride, exasperation, and hope. In his travelogue observations, the treatment of landscape allows him to find and express his personal notion of Chinese identity, one very much informed by his love for its classical literature and arts. In the course of that discovery this personal idea of China seems to have been transformed into a poetic muse, so Jian bei pian can be seen as an ode to his China – the muse for a poet as much as for a patriot.

In arguing that Jian bei pian represents a change in Lao She’s view of China, this thesis also adds another perspective from which to assess recently emerging claims that Lao She’s ethnic self-identification as a Manchu was responsible for a sense of alienation from Chinese identity. While as ACRAWA president he may have argued against the kind of educated writing that May Fourth literati tended to produce,² and while he may also have been somewhat estranged from modern “elitist literature,”³ this does not necessarily mean that he was alienated from a more enduring sense of Chinese identity. In fact the reverence displayed in Jian bei pian for China’s classical literature and art suggests that that classical heritage was the foundation for his sense of identity. If, as Hung observed, “the war, instead of undermining his emotional and spiritual ties with the past, only strengthened his love for his country’s multi-faceted traditions,”⁴ it may well have been that the wartime journey, and then his subsequent creation of its record in Jian bei pian, were pivotal to that strengthening process.

Lao She’s other writing – fiction and drama, pre-war as well as wartime – was often set in Beijing. Some of it described places that were identifiably Manchu neighbourhoods; sometimes it featured characters of Manchu background, or described behaviour reflecting particular Manchu cultural practices. These are the kinds of work that have come to be described as semi- if not entirely autobiographical, and cited as evidence of Lao She’s Manchu identity which he was driven to articulate. Yet if Jian bei pian as a travel diary can be considered essentially autobiographical, it offers no evidence that Lao She, either overtly or even covertly, identified himself as Manchu above being Chinese. Compared to his other work, there is no explicit or

² Hung, War and Popular Culture, pp.197-198.
³ Prado-Fonts, “In Alien Nation,” p.73.
⁴ Hung, War and Popular Culture, p.197.
exclusively Manchu cultural material in the poem. Perhaps this omission simply reflects the route of his journey and its itinerary of locations, but it might also suggest that over the course of the journey Lao She was able and willing to explore another identity. Writing Jian bei pian, back in Chongqing but still far from his hometown, he was freed from the constraints of being a ‘son of Beijing’: much as he loved his Beijing (with its possibly significant Manchu associations) it was not his China.

Over and above the many specific classical and traditional influences on Jian bei pian discussed in this thesis, there is a broader sense in which the poem belongs to China’s literary tradition – the way in which it conforms to what Andrew Plaks delineated as “theoretical parameters of Chinese narrative art”. Firstly, in its achieved size alone; in its breadth and ambitious scope, reaching far back into ancient history while placing itself in the very heart of China’s resistance to Japan during the Second Sino-Japanese War; in its nature as a personal travel record whose sense of geography goes far beyond the narrow confines of Lao She’s route; even when it might be deemed an epic failure – I would argue that Jian bei pian projects what Plaks refers to as a “sense of monumentality”. As an exercise in remembering, extracting and reconstructing significance from the journey, the poem consolidates the many different voices which articulate that significance – nostalgic historian, ardent patriot, devotee of classical poetry, landscape enthusiast, drama critic, pilgrim, and cynical iconoclast. The sense of its epic scale is not undermined by the frequent departures from the poem’s linear narrative, both within cantos and between cantos, and still manages to emerge through the whole collection. In this last respect Jian bei pian shows a second feature of the Chinese narrative tradition identified by Plaks – the “anthologizing of smaller narrative forms” which taken in their entirety convey a deeper meaning. Furthermore, in its episodic nature as a record of stages on a journey, together with its recurring focus on the cyclical turns of history, Jian bei pian displays a third element noted by Plaks – that of “spatial patterns” interwoven with “temporal rhythms” to create a fabric of endlessly repeating and intersecting layers. This fabric is visible with particular clarity in Jian bei pian’s descriptions of mountain ranges that rise and fall,

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6 Ibid., p.322.
7 Ibid., p.350.
8 Ibid., pp.333-337.
flowing into one another as far as the horizon (cantos 2, 4, 22, 27); in its association of the Yellow River and loess with history’s wave-like progress (cantos 5, 9, 22); and in its imaginative linking of landmarks on the journey to a cosmic map of rather more timeless dimensions (canto 17). Beneath its tracing of dynastic rise and fall, despite its alternating view of history as static or progressive, *Jian bei pian* conveys through such recurring motifs the sense of continuity also noted by Plaks:⁹ seasons that roll over eternally and new journeys that begin, epitomised in the description of wild geese flying across the autumn sky like an oblique brush-stroke that abruptly, and yet perhaps fittingly, closes the poem.

⁹ Ibid., p.352.
North of Jianmen Pass 剑北篇

by

Lao She 老舍 (1899-1966)
1 Introduction

Travelling the great road of China’s revival,

four times I passed through Xi’an, three nights lodged in Pingliang,

- like the prodigal son, ah, how many years of roaming,

to visit the nation’s heartlands –

Riyue mountain grasslands,

both sides of the tombs of Zhou and Qin

where ancient battlegrounds prepare for combat once again,

going to visit and cheer our heroes in this War of Resistance!

All along the road, traffic noise and gunfire,

cannot drown out constant chanting of resistance songs:

in towns and villages, and out beyond the Great Wall,

China’s people loudly sing of rising up to save her;

their lives and fervour guarantee our hopes,

today’s Great Wall\(^1\) is founded in the people’s hearts!

Everywhere, in this great chaotic stream of people,

I meet with China’s men of iron heading for the front.

No matter ten-\text{\text{-}zh\text{\text{-}hang}} snowdrifts on the Wusha\(^2\) ranges,

or timeless harshness of the Gobi Desert,

neither can stop the heroic warrior’s advance, or curb his song:

before he even reached the front his boundless exhilaration

had defeated thirst and hunger, wind and frost!

Look, heroes with giant bamboo rain-hats all askew,

sweat-soaked foreheads, firearms grasped in hand,

tramping down the newly opened roadways,

treading on the ancient plank roads\(^3\) both sides of the gorge,

to fords and ferries, hills and ridges,

to the green shade of the villages;

from so many different paths and places,

\(^1\) 长城 (Changcheng): abbreviation for 万里长城 (Wanli changcheng) referring to the Wall’s reputed length of 10,000 li.

\(^2\) 乌鞘岭 (Wushaling): typographical/author error for the 乌鞘岭 (Wushaoling) mountains in Gansu. Lao She wrote a short poem about these mountains – \text{Guo wushaoling} 过乌鞘岭 [Crossing the Wushao ranges] – that was published in 1940 in the January 2\text{-}nd issue of Xin shubao.

\(^3\) 古代栈道 (gudai zhandao): roads built on trestles across a cliff-face.
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all going to attack that white flag with its rising sun!
They bring their toil and devotion, striding out high-spirited,
showing all their fervour in their simple songs:
“Only when our people have been set free,
will we return triumphant to our homes!
Ah! In our towns and villages,
as long as enemy troops ride in and out,
their army’s cannon booming,
we cannot, our conscience does not let us,
lay down sword and rifle in fear of death and greed for life!

While our heads stay on our necks,
we will not let the devils run wild on our land!
Southeast, northwest, all four corners,
the path of sacrifice is the only fitting way!
Let us take our songs and laughter to the battleground,
raising high the country’s flag,
rooting out the enemy.
The flag is soaring,
high as mountains, enduring as the river.⁴
What slave dares to make a sound,
showing his petty struggle to unlock his fettered thinking?
What meek citizen dares to argue,
that his spirit, precious as a pearl, is his alone to govern?
Ah! Only as warriors standing tall can you dare to sing aloud!
Resist the urge to weep, crying is for conquered peoples!
Look at us, from South China Sea to northern border,
five million heroic warriors singing with one voice:
like the joyful wild frontier wind,
with the surging power of the Yellow River:
the lion roars in fury at East Asia’s setting sun,
a sudden thunderclap⁵ that makes the storm more violent!

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⁴ “山高水长 Shangaoshuichang: idiom usually meaning a noble and long-lasting reputation (山高水长 "Ciyuan," p. 0501).
Yes, descendants of the Yellow Emperor,\textsuperscript{6} for the sake of peace take arms,
go forward, singing loudly!

The song is paused, sharp and strong the bugle calls,
so solemn and unyielding,
waiting for that call to wipe the enemy out,
we seem to hear the snowflakes falling on Tianshan.\textsuperscript{7}
Ashamed because we have no fat lambs,
wear no gorgeous clothes befitting heroes,
sent to trench and battlefield,
sharing drink like wild men we shake earth with our laughter:\textsuperscript{8}
all we bring, besides a few bright banners,
is four hundred million fellow citizens’ heartfelt care and praise!

Warriors, we hear you singing all along the way,
and see the dawn frost on your hair and beards:
who does not know your forthright generosity,
your utter faithfulness and decency?
What sort of gifts are these, no wines or meats,
that could inspire and encourage heroes?

We have only one enemy, our minds are all the same,

ah, come on, let’s wear laughter and tears together on our faces,
like long-separated siblings who meet in unfamiliar places:
let’s shake hands, chat of daily life,
you tell about the front line, I of how it is behind,
everybody’s suffering and hopes:
let hardship yield to hope,
and justice drive back the devils’ madness!

We chant, we sing in unison,
bubbling over with excitement, heroic tunes,
by fire beacon’s glow, bright moon or morning sun,

we sing and dance as well:

\textsuperscript{5}惊雷 (jinglei): also a metaphor for a surprising turn of events (in this case giving the resistance greater urgency).

\textsuperscript{6}黄帝 (Huangdi): Emperor of China who, according to mythology, reigned during the period 2697 \textendash 2597 BCE.

\textsuperscript{7}Tian Shan, Mountain range on the border of Xinjiang, Mongolia, and Kyrgyzstan.

\textsuperscript{8}震动天地 (zhendong tiandi): modification of the idiom 震天动地.
winds gust, clouds fly over,
China’s fierce warriors die but none surrender,
holding fast on all sides,
from Purple Border\(^9\) to Pearl River,
flow endless waves of blood,
singing through those rippling waves,
China’s history, new and brilliant, shines!
Listen, the northern border nightingale\(^{10}\) also sings,
the southern rose perhaps is just about to bloom,

100 ashamed, we bring no fragrant flowers fresh with dew,
to put as cordial offering beside your decorated shrine,
no strong spirits or fine fragrant wine,
to soothe dry throats and warm the hero’s belly,

apart from this token of a sincere heart, from the rear-guard to the frontline bringing
greetings and best wishes for our warriors’ health:
what else? Oh, a nightingale singing,
if you don’t mind such wretched gifts, but like the solemn and the stirring,
comrades, I put together these few verses as offering!

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\(^9\) 紫塞 (Zisai): the northern frontier area within and beyond the Great Wall (紫塞 “Ciyuan,” p.1313).

\(^{10}\) 夜莺 (Yeying): the common nightingale. The juxtaposition of nightingale and rose (in the following line)
suggests Lao She’s familiarity with Western literature (see Lao She 老舍, "Du yu xie.") perhaps especially
Oscar Wilde’s children’s story *The Nightingale and the Rose*, and Keats’ *Ode to a Nightingale*. 
I left the heart of war in Chongqing, walking between green hills and clear waters of early summer’s first fine day: my mind held images of May Fourth’s bloodstains and flames: before my eyes the thousand miles of mountain-light and bird-song, on the way to Chengdu, western China’s Beiping: anger and beauty, darkness and light; what words could tell the turmoil in this poetic heart, like uncertain weather, with its sudden showers, sudden sunshine? What phrases could express this utter love and hate, laughter interleaved with tears of deep emotion: so the poet’s indignation, curses, pain, sometimes like thunderclaps, sometimes like ancient gongs, make demons and vicious brutes tremble with alarm! Look, this sweetness that once was Chengdu, like a flower in its quiet grace, light rain moistening wutong trees! Oh, the ghostly hand stretched from the sky, scattering salvoes of hellfire’s evil across Chongqing, a debt of blood forever, never to be cleared, and then let loose its barrage on Chengdu’s calm and ancient elegance! Who can still be idle and carefree, visiting the Shrine of the Marquis Wu and Xue Tao Well, going out to pay respects, chanting verses, sipping cups of fragrant tea in bamboo groves?

1 Chongqing was then the seat of China’s Nationalist government and centre of resistance against Japan.  
2 青山绿水 (qingshan lüshui): idiom commonly meaning ‘pleasant scenery’.  
3 The protests of 1919 that sparked nationalistic unrest throughout China.  
4 Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, is referred to in the poem by its alternative name of 蓉城 (Rongcheng). Beiping 北平 was the official name of Beijing from 1928-1949.  
5 金钲 (jin zheng): used to halt troops (金钲 “Ciyuan,” p.1719).  
6 梧桐: also known as the Chinese parasol tree (梧桐 “Cihai,” p.2985). In classical literature, wutong often featured with melancholy associations e.g. in Bai Juyi’s Chang hen ge.  
7 鬼手 (gui shou): referring to Japanese air raids in Sichuan in 1939, some of which Lao She experienced while still in Chongqing (see Mitter, Forgotten ally: pp.3-4.)  
8 武侯祠 (Wuhouci): memorial hall of Shu Han chancellor Zhuge Liang, known posthumously as Marquis Wu.  
9 Commemorating Tang dynasty poetess Xue Tao.
Flames of fury rage within the heart that once was quiet and content!
Look! The orderly displays of prosperous marketplace,
now reduced to rubble;

in ashes and in smoke
what’s left of lives and property:
desolate, no sounds of habitation,
a ghostly place created out of blood and fire:
the reek of blood blown on the breeze proclaims the carnage,
a charred tree stump leans by a wall in moonlight!
The ghostly hand arranged this hellish scene,
and only devils regard their murderous fire as peace!
We will use our freshly flowing blood,
to wash away the nation’s shame,

we will die, we will sacrifice ourselves,
but we will not take “peace” from the ghostly hand.  

Filled with indignation, under brightly scattered morning stars,
I take a northbound truck:

I gazping at huge tracts of green-gold pasture,
cries of chickens carried on the light breeze;
the loveliness of plains to Chengdu’s north,
the peacefulness of bustling fields,

ah, the settled order far behind the front line,
human labour’s boundless energy;

peasant families, men and women, hot sweat dripping as they toil:
endless crops of green grain gathered for the battlefront!

Through tranquil fields and forests,
countryside and city noises interchange and mingle;

we stay the night in Mianyang, 13 hurrying to reach Zitong. 14

10 Apparently referring back to lines 36-37 with their implication of Japanese propaganda.
11 车 (che): generally translated as ‘motor vehicle’, and in the modern context specifically as ‘car’. However it seems unlikely that Lao She and his group travelled for any distance in a car, few of which would have been on these rural roads during the War of Resistance. Regular army trucks were probably reserved for transporting military personnel and supplies, but perhaps a smaller truck (something the size of a jeep, perhaps with an open or canvas-covered tray) had been made available to this expedition in aid of troop morale. On this assumption, Lao She’s mode of travel is read as by truck (unless otherwise specified).
12 千顷: literally, 1,000 qing
Alas, that city of Mianyang left behind with such regret:
clean roads, bright streets,
narrow lanes lined with wutong trees:
I follow green shady paths,
gradually entering a domain of birds and flowers:

weather unsettled, overcast then clear,
light cloud and bright blossoms:
strolling round flowerbeds, bamboo groves,
bridges crossing shallow streams,
sounds of water trickling over moss and rocks.
Beneath the trees, or leaning on green vines,
among north Sichuan’s great parks,
refugees from Hebei or Shandong resting,
schoolchildren without homes;
bamboo forests quiver to the beat of northern singing,
songs of hope, of sorrow,
each heart like a fresh flower bears a sense of injury!
Those accents of my hometown evoked a vivid fantasy,
as if I heard the sounds of the surging Yellow River;
head down, like a travel-weary Buddhist monk,
I walked back to the quiet beauty of that city;
at the Sichuan hostel with its lonely lamp, drizzle
dripping through my broken dreams, dripping until dawn!
Already morning, but skies not yet clear,
hurrying through Zitong in misty rain and haze.

Travelling:
Sichuan roads are hard to travel,\(^{15}\)
thousands of green hills row after row:
up and down, moving and stopping;
fast corners, drawn-out bends, the engine howls in fear!

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\(^{13}\) 绵阳: sometimes claimed as the hometown of Li Bai.

\(^{14}\) Zitong county in northern Sichuan, location of the historic site described in lines 114-116 below.

\(^{15}\) 蜀道难行 (Shu dao nan xing): directly borrowing from the title of Li Bai’s poem Shu dao nan [Hard roads of Shu].
Winding over hilltops,
sliding into valleys,
and more steep green peaks!

Withered pines on overhanging cliffs,
life dangling by a thread;
scraped the cliff, watch out, clouds in mountain gorges!

Changes:
clouds, mist, fog, rain, peaks of mountain ranges,
all flow into one another.

No north or south, no east or west,
the road is in the clouds.
Clouds turn into drifting mist,
mountain peaks uncovered,
mountain peaks all veiled:
green pine tree islands appear and vanish in a sea of cloud and mist.

Close by, fine rain sometimes falls then ceases,
silently the mountain flowers and wild herbs release their sweet perfumes.

Far off, white mist gently drifts,
now a dark green peak shows itself, another is obscured.

Then in the distance, clouds break, a ray of light,
a pale green flash of clear hillside.

Endless, innumerable,
ah, these hard to travel Sichuan roads,
clouds within and sky beyond, countless tall and piercing summits!

Mountain peaks, cloud shadows,
a thousand shades of green,
repeated layer after layer.
Roads revolve on lines of clouds,
green shadows multiply and deepen,
countless pines on top of Qiqushan;\(^\text{16}\)

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braving a pine-clad mountain’s slanting rain and wind,
we go to see that giant cypress and ancient Wenchang Palace from the time of Jin:
free-spirited Wenchang, with its young boys,
laden donkeys, bamboo rain hats, Qingming forever remembering.
I left the secluded place of pines, bamboo bells and chime-stones,
and once more crossed several ranges of green hills;
Jiange – all recall that tragic sound of bells –
today is desolate in the rain!
What a small town Jiange is,
one tiny street, several oil lamps.
It seems to hold fast still to memories of a peaceful ancient time!
Night rain only, no sound of ringing bells;
listen, we sing of history’s new beginning!

17 Qiqushan is renowned for its ancient cypress trees. Here Lao She perhaps alludes to the legend according to which Liu Chan 刘禅 (207–271), vanquished last Shu Han emperor of the Three Kingdoms period, took shelter under a huge cypress on Qiqushan while going to Luoyang and ‘forced retirement’.
18 清明节 Qingming festival or Tomb-Sweeping Day, a traditional Chinese festival and Daoist holiday celebrated in spring, involving ceremonies at tomb and grave sites. Lao She’s specific reference to it in the context of Wenchang Palace is not clear.
19 磬 (qīng): ancient percussion instrument made of stone or jade pieces hung in a row and struck as a xylophone.
20 Historically a garrison town of strategic importance due to its proximity to Jianmen Pass, Jiange is also mentioned in two famous poems which Lao She alludes to here: Bai Juyi’s Chang hen ge (in which the Emperor Xuanzong hears ‘bells’ or wind-chimes while travelling through Jianmen Pass) and Lu You’s Jianmendao zhongwu weiyu.
3 Jianmen – Guangyuan

Overcoming the Yangtze’s massive rolling waves,¹
we’d met with Sichuan’s natural water portal;
ah, that strange grandeur of Kuimen’s² mighty gorge:
like a huge whale’s mouth, mountains for teeth, stone the lips,
the raging river dashed ahead, gulping, spouting spray,
making boats and small ships spin and skip and drop like feathers,
and yellow water flowing east to thrash about and groan:
raging waves that serve as bolt, steep cliffs the door,
even a mighty army of cavalry and men,³
just like howling apes and circling birds is stunned and panic-stricken!

Now, through early summer’s rain and sunshine, endless green hills,
I catch a glimpse of Jianmen’s gap in wooded mountains:
in the mountain pass, a range of hills like bolting wild horses,
heads raised, manes all bristling, racing toward white clouds;
passing through a narrow valley, a tiny village;
between crevices in rocks, a snatch of tinkling sound,
green grass and trees shielding plaque-stones to Jiang Wei,⁴
gorgeous flowers mingle in the shade;
loath to go, wandering aimlessly, I left the pass behind me.

See, that crazy rushing range of hills is still not standing steady,
oh, for a blade to fell those towering⁵ cliffs!
Unshakeable walls of nature, making apes and monkeys faint!
Suddenly, turning my head to face the peaks, the endless path of heaven,
a double-edged sword of green hills pierces clear sky!

Sword-summits on high, sun not yet set,
rose-tinted rays of light pass through the dust and haze,
each sharp sword-blade glittering like gold,
as if the torch of heaven has lit the universe!

¹ This reference, out of the journey’s context, apparently recalls Lao She’s impressions from his travels up the Yangtze River from Wuhan to Chongqing.
² 壬门: another name for Qutang Gorge, the upper of the Three Gorges.
³ 万马千军 (wan ma qian jun): literally, 10,000 cavalry and 1,000 foot soldiers.
⁵ 万丈: literally, 10,000 zhang high.
Below, that narrow northern pass of Jianmen,
just a natural cleft in the wall of stone:
a single lane roadway, looming giant stones,
a narrow creek, a few people:
this matchless natural barrier, quiet dusk,
makes me feel nostalgia, excites me,
some mysterious power gives me confidence!
Ah, the east has Kuimen,
the north has Jianmen,
between these two narrow gaps the War of Resistance will be decided;
the waters of the Yangtze flow on eastwards,
replenished with the blood of those dying in this war;
both the material and the spiritual
from Sichuan’s year-round bright green gardens,
new China’s robust core,
supplied to soldiers and the struggling suffering people.
To the north, following traces of the old plank road;
listen, within Jianmen Pass, infinitely profound,
sounds of axe and chisel, echoing through many mountains.
The road goes to the summit, across a bridge of clouds;
thousands of toiling workers,
through ageless scrub and barren steepness,
through mountain and river set by heaven to block the way,
with bare hands built the roads and river crossings.
Look, inside and out the mountain pass, constant mule-trains,
crossing bottomless black mountain streams, cold still shadows,
oxen, big carts, donkeys, horses, all laden,
breathing laboured, pouring sweat;
the torch of war, through day and night regardless,
carried past the Purple Border, to the Yellow River’s banks!
I left Jianmen’s ever-captivating scene,
and crossed three river-fords within a range of hills:

看不厌 (kan buyan): literally, that I could never tire of seeing.
mules braying, horses neighing, whitecaps rolling on;  
mountain-light shines green upon the boatmen;  
a huge stone pulls the cable tight;  
one voice shouts, several reply;  
clumsy old boats, the old-time spirit,  
aha, the War of Resistance is our resolve to wipe out humiliation,  
imagining the misery and hardship when Han and Wei were enemies?  
Bitter struggle has replaced sticking with the old ways;  
look! On this side the slow and clumsy wooden boat;  
over there, a solid and fine-looking bridge is built;  
metal hammers ring, white rocks move into place;  
aha, this resolve to fight  
sweeping aside hills and rivers that block and trap us,  
we remake history and geography with our blood and sweat!  
Fatigue forgotten, I feel only exhilaration,  
with the curiosity of a small child still at school,  
heading to Guangyuan through evening scenery.  
Green hills all round, the city on the riverbank,  
a leafless forest of countless boat masts standing still.  
Red clouds of sunset hide the mountain villages,  
bend after bend the waters of the river drift into nightfall,  
a tall and elegant town stands on a large embankment,  
like a powerful painting, simple and utterly lifelike.  
This river’s lovely southern aspect, once we enter by the city gate,  
suddenly becomes warzone’s bustle, uproar and confusion:  
hordes of carts and horses heading north,  
in offices, oh – every army corps  
has pasted cards all over doorways and hung signboards through the street –  
inns and hostels – big and small, old and new,  
the strangest of guesthouses, all jam-packed with people –  
though still not evening the northern-style inns with yards outside for pack-animals,

7 Refers to the time (approximately 383-368 BCE) during the Warring States period when the Han and Wei states were major contenders for power in the area (with Luoyang at its centre) roughly partitioned south and north by the valleys of the Wei and Yellow Rivers.
are all closed up, ready for the daybreak scramble out the city gate!
Every kind of food and drink, the dialect of each region,
placards of all sorts, foot-travellers from every province,
smells, colours, sounds, filling up the long and narrow streets!
A burst of song, far-off then closer,
straw sandals and bamboo rain-hats, a company of soldiers,
controlled clamour, the spirit of resistance stirs and resonates!

Hotels, tea-houses, public baths, in single file,
set up for the army on its northward push;
barrels and wooden basins placed under veranda eaves,
we washed our feet in peace, wiped away the dust;
unrolled woven mats and rugs, exchanged some heartfelt words,
fell asleep as soon as possible, to rise and set off early.
Rooster calls at first light, night mist still hangs heavily,
in the lamplight: horseshoes and wheels,
flickering shadows, flying dust,
army troops, foot-travellers,
heading south and north, welcoming the dawning of this great new era.
In this strategic town linking Sichuan and Shaanxi,
through which pass great armies of cavalry and men,
still in a few small shops, a few old folk,
using fine blades and their inventive minds,
follow nature’s order and designs,
with alternating strips of white and purple ink, meticulously done,
making engraved pictures of red water and white clouds,
of magnificent and wonderful Jianmen.
Through countless mountains I left Sichuan, 
through countless mountains entered western Shaanxi by the First Pass;¹

crystal waters in unceasing flow, 
green hills for riverbanks, 
wild flowers and red beans hang among the rocks.

Clouds and mist linger in mountain ranges; 
the further on we go, the smoother is the road, 
the air more brisk, refreshing and delicious.

Still rice-fields by the roadside, 
yet already speech changed from Sichuan to Shaanxi accents.

Smooth waters of the river Mian, 
suggest its near arrival in the Han’s small plain.

By roadside, slender cypresses and clear creeks, tranquil as the Marquis Wu Shrine,² 
its tomb, ancestral hall and stately buildings; 
a place of slightly sloping banks is Dingjun mountain.³

Peaceful farmland, 
ancient bloody battles, 
make people feel excited, sentimental and nostalgic:

so long a history, so lovely a landscape, 
in tiny villages, ancient history of sacred sites handed down through generations, 
green trees flutter against sunlit blue skies.

Entering a small plain of fragrant rice with red autumn leaves, 
boat sails slowly appear, the river widens; 
its scenery is of both north and south, 
in its river resembling Jiangnan,⁴ 
yet we are in Shaanxi’s plain.⁵

¹ 西秦第一关 (Xi Qin diyi guan): the ‘first pass of the western Qinling’ refers to a series of seven mountain ridges, also known as ‘the seven chessboard passes’, on the border of Sichuan and Shaanxi (七盘关 “Ciyuan,” p.0013).
² See canto 2 footnote 7.
³ Mountain of twin-facing peaks in Mian county, southern Shaanxi province, well-known Three Kingdoms period battlefield site and said to be the site of Zhuge Liang’s original tomb (定军山 “Cihai,” p.2317).
⁴ 江南: the region south of Yangtze River (south Jiangsu, south Anhui and north Zhejiang).
⁵ 秦川 (Qin chuan): an abbreviation, originating in the Spring and Autumn/Warring States periods, for the plains north of the Qinling mountains in Gansu and Shaanxi (秦川 “Cihai,” p.3691).
Baocheng ferry crossing, Hanzhong is not far;  
how this name recalls our long and honoured history!

Ruined Han palace, pavilions and parks of ancient elegance,  
upper balconies for viewing, distant mountains on all sides,  
Han River to the south.

Staring at the hills and plain,  
my thoughts filled with history’s romance:  
now, at the site of great Han’s ancient state,  
on this tiny plain like a single lobe of lung,  
we can breathe, we can defend ourselves and fight;  
nurturing, providing for us, this blue-green river between mighty mountains,  
since ancient times assured success in battle.

The wares from here, displayed in several places visited,  
show the value of this fertile lovely land:  
the river Han’s body fluids\(^6\) fertilise and rinse the fields,  
there is rice, wheat, cotton,  
enough to feed and clothe the people.

Precious land and mountains of plenty,  
copper, iron, asbestos,  
poplar and willow, pine and fir:  
herbal medicines, black and white tree fungus, heaven-sent bonuses.

Without factory chimneys,\(^7\) natural wealth is just a scourge,  
bringing troubles like the Shanghai Incident,\(^8\) Battle of Shanghai,\(^9\)  
the fierce and evil flames,  
of East China’s budding coastal industries bombed to ruins;  
the viper’s method, see,  
as in Korea and Taiwan,  
strangling the barefoot peasant in his fields;\(^10\)

\(^6\) **津液** (*jinye*): a general term in traditional Chinese medicine for bodily fluids, here used to suggest the vital importance of the Han River.

\(^7\) Meaning, without industrialisation and the means of defence.

\(^8\) **一二八** (also known as 一二八事变 *Yi Erba Shibian*): the Chinese protests of January 28 1932 against Japanese control and military build-up in the area, resulting in Japanese bombardment of Shanghai.

\(^9\) **八一三** (also known as 八一三事變 *Ba Yisan Shibian*): the first major battle of the Second Sino-Japanese war on August 13 1937.
likewise, demanding grain, iron, cotton, coal,
always enslaving China’s children and the country!
Today, the staunchest defence of China,
is driven by workers in farming and industry;
our blood and sweat,
required alike for warfare and production;
repaying the invaders’ guns with guns, their bombs with bombs,
shattering their iron chains with steel,
only by exploiting our natural resources will they be saved!
We need factories, lining riverbanks below the mountains.
Instead of birdsong and warbling streams, the music of machines,
why are these abundant natural resources of Hanzhong,
hardly used in industry?
Small industries, just beginning,
paint, paper, soap, still crude and simple methods!
Knowing now the battle is for economic reasons,
we understand the invaders’ savagery,
through their blockades and bombs that drop like rain;
only by building industrial capacity can we fight the War of Resistance!
Blood of the battlefields, smoke of the factories,
from this display of homespun cloth and home-made bombs,\textsuperscript{11}
I dream, I eagerly anticipate,
the glorious beginning of our nation’s spring!
Now, as if peacefully sleeping in the arms of history,
the ancient city, starry night, poetic thoughts, create dreamland’s lovely fantasy;
as dawn’s bright colours briefly show the mountain-tops,
we follow the army’s glorious push north,
enter the gorge, while red clouds light the whole sky.
Deep mountain stream, steep rocks, impossible to climb,
midway through mountains, huge hollow rocks,
showing the northern plank road’s risks and difficulties.

\textsuperscript{10} While referring to a small venomous snake (毒蛇 dashe) common throughout China, Lao She here attributes to it the strangulation (缠死 chan si) method of something like a python.
\textsuperscript{11} 土药 (tu yao): here read as meaning locally-made components for explosives.
A line of blue sky,  
a thousand zhang abyss,  
new and old stone gates wedged between riverbank and hill;  
ancient challenges,  
blood and sweat of today’s people,  
history’s stubbornness persists through time!  
Villagers grasping bamboo poles,  
as if guiding the blind, slowly step by step,  
lead curious visitors from afar toward a stony beach;  
green waves break in spray, boulders like sea-turtles;  
leaning over, our faces splashed with spray,  
the King of Wei’s “imperial robes of snow”\(^\text{12}\) engulfed in turbulent waters.

Winding blue-green mountain streams, looping mountain road,  
sacred sites of legend like unceasing birdsong,  
recounting the struggle and splendour of history.  
Mountain creeks,  
dots of distant villages,  
a few thin bamboo poles,  
several terraced fields;  
brilliant red and yellow Shaanxi peppers and pumpkins,  
tint the northern farmland scene.  
Tiny county town of Liuba, like an unseen orchid,  
hidden on the hillside;  
vehicles and horses come and go, constant dust-clouds,  
disturb this Garden of Immortal Peaches,\(^\text{13}\)  
outside the town one or two ramshackle shops,  
in reed huts pine logs for boiling clear spring water.  
Forest gradually thickens, air gets colder,  
streams run off the mountain, people enter;  
mountains on all sides, pine and cypress green up to the tops;

\(^{12}\) “衮雪” (gun xue): referring to characters allegedly engraved by the Eastern Han warlord and later King of Wei, Cao Cao 魏王曹操 (155-220 CE), on a giant stone in the Bao River near Liuba. It seems the characters were not visible when Lao She visited.  
\(^{13}\) 世外桃源 (Shiwai taoyuan): often translated as a Utopian paradise, this common expression for a secluded land of joy and plenty derives from Tao Qian’s Taohua yuan ji (世外桃源 “Cihai,” p.85).
dark green mountains,
encircle blue sky,

bamboo, cypress and evening mist in mountain shadow,
the setting sun long since gone behind high peaks.

In the depths of a distant mountain road,
I look round blankly,
at last see Marquis Liu Shrine, make out Zibai Mountain.
Outside the shrine several restaurants,
two or three small shops,
serving travellers with snacks and lodging for the night.
Passing hurriedly, a constant stream of vehicles,
petrol fumes pervade the small streets.

Different accents call out for tea and rice,
men and women, old and young, gathering then scattering;
like ants in a quiet courtyard,
as if some mighty power controls our fates,
and sets in motion this rushing round to meet and part:

ah, we are at war,
see, even babies’ faces are reddened by rough mountain blasts,
youngsters already used to living like this,
in dismal southern rain, northern wind and mist!

As if the noisy mayhem,
is kept outside,
within the shrine still is peaceful as a painted garden,
the hero’s tranquil grace,
dominates the pine-clad moonlit mountain scenery.

Vulgar Daoist priests, vulgar shrine,
vulgar pilgrims, vulgar monumental plaques,
none can ruin the lovely natural scene!

Below Zibai’s softly tinkling mountain spring,

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14 留侯祠 (Liuhouci): also known as the Marquis Liu Shrine, commemorating Zhang Liang.
15 紫柏山: mountain noted for its forest cover of ancient trees, known as purple cypress, as well as for the Marquis Liu Shrine. Lao She’s original gives the name of the mountain as 赤柏山, literally ‘Red Cypress Mountain’, almost certainly authorial misprint for 紫柏山 [Purple Cypress Mountain].
breezes blow gently through a grove of green bamboo,
a few fallen flower-petals;

amid bright green a startled squirrel flees,
a flash, it disappears,
feelings of infinite serenity!
Stone steps curve around,
traces of bamboo among shady pines,
hauling a small pavilion, cool breezes on all sides.
High stairway taken slowly,
halting at every step;
at each tall step, another layer of green hills.
Schoolhouse stands alone among the clouds,
at left from wide to narrow, narrow to wide,
a pale yellow line,
curves winding through green hills,
curves vanishing in green hills,
like toys on the road,
dots of motorcars,
high and low, near and far,
trailing small ribbons of grey dust.
At right, near hills that block the setting sun,
darkness of deep green shadows;
pale outlines of distant mountains,
gradually merge into clear sky.
Down below, trees cluster thickly by shallow streams,
at mountain’s foot some fields,
slowly rising chimney smoke hangs over huts.
Way above, mountains beyond mountains,
many shades of green,
all alike lovely and serene,
a kind of nameless feeling,
makes me stand mindless and silent.
Inside the building, the aged Huangshi’s\textsuperscript{16} statue emits benevolence, Marquis Liu sits upright, youthfully sincere and modest. Inside, motionless smoke from burning incense, outside, motionless green hills, as if some silent language, passes on for eternity, to the ends of the earth, handed down to every youngster!

\textsuperscript{16}黄石: meaning Huang Shigong, the reclusive Qin Dynasty sage who tutored the young Zhang Liang (黄石公 "Cihai," p.4705).
5 July Seventh at Marquis Liu Shrine

Because of Marquis Liu – that forever youthful patriot, brave and talented –
temple buildings, clouds of burning incense,
mournful music,
Daoist priests chant, common folk sacrifice to ancestors;
deep in mountains on July seventh, ah, already in the war’s third year:
a few bowls of vegetables,
soul tablets¹ offered,
saluting and mourning heroes who gave their lives for country!

Here, no gifted orator,
aroused to tell of heroes’ selfless sacrifice;
no altar of splendid solemnity,
that makes plain candles and fresh flowers glow with brilliant colour;
here, passers-by and villagers, pine-tops and sea of cloud,
stand quietly before soul tablets,
with only sincere tears and silent indignation!

July Seventh,² in two years,
those little tablets,
have amounted to a sea of blood!

This vast sea of blood,
this mighty era,
the foam of every breaking red wave radiant with history!

Five thousand years of ancient might enfeebled and defeated,
ah, five thousand years of culture shamed by being enslaved!
China’s spirit loudly shouts: arise!
China’s people drop their hoes, leave their villages,
straighten backs, and tighten belts,
caring not for fame, thinking not of gain or loss;
do they think about their hometowns, or their sweethearts?

¹ 灵牌 (lingpai): also known as memorial tablets, these are usually strips or scrolls made of wood or bamboo and inscribed with the name(s) of the deceased.
² Although July 7th in the modern context refers to the Marco Polo Bridge incident which officially began the 2nd Sino-Japanese War, it can also mean the 49-day period during which traditional funeral and memorial ceremonies for the deceased are carried out (七七“Ciyuan,” p.0011). Here Lao She brings the two meanings together.
All are thrown out!
All cast aside!
China’s people know only love for China!
We need no propaganda, no preferential treatment,
mountains and rivers can be moved, inborn patriotism is hard to change!
Besides the freedom to grow our crops, or do a bit of trading,
except for good children and grandchildren, friends and love,
we hope for nothing more, we never dream of harming others!
Our toil is what makes us happy!
Rice sprouting in water, slopes of buckwheat,
orchards of pears and dates, small plots of green vegetables,
docile donkeys and horses, plump healthy children,
year-round hard work, life-long patience;
hoping only for enough to eat and drink, some clothes,
a couple of fat pigs, to slaughter at year’s end,
half to celebrate the New Year, half to go on sale;
crops harvested early, minds soon set at ease;
hoping to save a bit of cash, store a little rice and wheat,
to guard against rainy days, drought and natural disasters!
Alas, man-made disasters fly toward us like locusts,
murder and arson replaced filial piety and love,
fields and farmland seized, villages looted,
they want to uproot our simple dreams and livelihoods.
Ah, we are honest, placid, yet we can feel righteous indignation too:
when finally we must shed blood, fear of death counts for nothing.
With two clenched fists, why would we kneel?
Blunders can be pardoned,
hardships painfully endured,
but the murder of his people and destruction of his country,
that no man can bear!

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3 宣传 (xuanchuan): this term, translated here as ‘propaganda’ to fit the context, does not always have the pejorative associations it does in English. It can also have more neutral meanings of: to declare, announce, disseminate or publicise [information]; to explain or promote a point of view.
4 枣 (zao): the Chinese red date (also known as jujube).
5 不知好歹 (buzhihaodai): literally, not to know good from bad (idiom).
How we get rid of locusts, that’s how to eliminate this scourge,
we repay our debts, so we will claim the blood-debt too!
When facing calamities of hail, drought and flood,
we give no thought to death;
unafraid to die, thus we conquer death,
we will attack the enemy to open up a living road!
Simple as that wooden soul tablet,
and just as sacred, this simple song the people sing in unison,
in the mode of ancient epics,
simple, yet solemn and forthright,
in blood, in blood, already three years writing,
the song goes on being written, till the army of dwarf slaves\(^6\) is utterly defeated!
See, facing those silent soul tablets,
deep in the mountains our compatriots offer silent sacrifice,
yet in their hearts is that great song:
those who died have joined that sea of blood,
those still living cry “I’m ready”!
As the sound of wind in pine trees echoes round the rim of sky,
so this mighty inner voice can topple mountains and overturn the seas,\(^7\)
nameless heroes, nameless indignation,
history’s accumulated grief set free from opened hearts,
artless as a child’s delightful way of speaking!
It is not ideal, like moss and wild herbs,
but gales that have toppled mountain pines and mighty cypresses,
cannot move a bit of moss from rock;
on our soil, rivers and mountain ranges,
like moss beneath the stony shade,
like plants upon the banks of streams,
there our feet, hearts, souls take root.
We plant melons, or grow grain,
or ploughing, watch the sun setting behind mountains,


\(^7\)排山倒海 (paishandaohai): idiom indicating something of earth-shattering significance (排山倒海 ibid., p.0691).
our own views, our own plans,
land and views we won’t let others change,
let alone turn us into slaves!
People not enslaved have already risen,
for two years now they have been arising!
Even if we have no food and clothing, what do we care,
as long as we’re alive we’ll fight, even if it means we die!
Fight, strike the enemy to make them realise,
that we will tolerate no more!

Mountains of corpses, seas of blood,
fight, bring them satisfaction!  
These small tablets two chi\(^9\) in length,
are glorious for all generations;
our whole country forever unchanging,
you died for it, we come to serve it,
come to offer sacrifice, to mourn,
to tell you, your loyal spirits rule over all the country!
Believe it, loyal spirits, when before these tablets,
we say, those unafraid of death will not be defeated!

\(^8\) 打个畅快 (da ge changkuai): literally, make the dead carefree (by bringing redress).
\(^9\) 二尺: literally two foot long.
For their land,
for their crops of grain,
for freedom of thought, independence,
our illiterate peasants,
village women who have never been to cities,
will look on laying down their lives without alarm,
and give their flesh and blood to support the shattered country!
This great people standing in silent sincere mourning,
at the moment of crisis, will straight away take the path of sacrifice;
suddenly, docile sheep become fierce tigers,
a sudden thunderclap has shaken and dazed the eyes and ears of the world,
this great people, who may be killed but never disgraced,
have their culture to give them clear minds at this critical time!
Because of this skill at surviving, throughout history they overcame hardship,
if our warm-hearted peasants,
like earthworms turn sandy soil to fertile land,
oh then, our peddlers and small merchants also cope with great hardship!
they don’t look at maps, whether river-way or road,
wherever business takes them they go to sell their wares;
way out to Qinghai, Xinjiang and Mongolia,
even equatorial southeast Asia, Europe and America,
their step by step unhurried advance cannot be resisted!
Speaking their own languages, groping for their own path,
only when rich returning to their native land,
with this innate ability, habits of hard work,
enduring wind, snowfall, drought and desert, extraordinary cold, extreme summer heat,
they drift with the current, look back in longing,
their ancestral homeland the ultimate paradise;
like the purple swallow urged by autumn rain and frosts,
to spread his wings and fly over wild islands and hot deserts;
when springtime winds make pictures with peach and willow blossom,
singing all the way he flies back to his old nest!
Ah, I love this great people,
what words can do justice to this admiration!
They will endure anything, will be content,
then when the moment comes, they will be enraged!

See, to avenge humiliation,
this people who tolerate no more,
still have the courage and persistence that built the Great Wall,
now like mountain flash floods engulfing quiet creeks and blue-green lakes,
as the war has spread, they use their lives to open up new pathways.
Consider this Shuangshipu that emerged to meet historic destiny,¹
now the hub for transport between Shaanxi, Gansu and Sichuan,
linking Guanzhong² and Tianshui³ by a single road.

Decent people, for whom gunfire and abuse ended yesterday,
now enduring exile, hunger and hardship,

yet cannot bear to bend the knee and yield;
from Henan and Hebei, from land in enemy hands,
the nation’s flag is their goal, their life, their belongings,
heading west and south, heading in all directions,
where the flag flies is indeed their promised land.
They, like this just-yesterday created Shuangshipu,
in newly-put up shacks and awnings, show their wares,
the shouting out about the food and wine for sale sounds like singing,
ladles rapping on the pans like gongs and drums.
Several packs of cigarettes, a pot of tofu,
or some date cakes spread out, some pails of oil and vinegar,

¹应运而生 (yìngyùn’ěrshēng): Lao She’s application of this idiom is not quite correct. Shuangshipu was a small village in western Shaanxi near the border with Gansu. In 1937, driven by the anti-Japan resistance effort, a new railroad was laid between Baoji and Shuangshipu to transport military as well as civilian supplies. However Shuangshipu, now and also formerly known as Fengxian, was an important staging post on one of the old Shu roads known as the Chencang Road that terminated at Chencang (the ancient name of Baoji). Rather than emerging at the opportune time and being ‘just-yesterday created’ (line 55), Shuangshipu actually re-emerged to meet historic destiny.
² The Guanzhong Plain, or lower valley of the Wei River in present-day Shaanxi. The term, meaning ‘land within the passes’, was first recorded in Sima Qian’s Shi ji (关中 “Ciyouan,” p.1770).
³ In eastern Gansu.
youngsters and the elderly, or a middle-aged couple, 
they have turned their exile, their suffering, 
into the basis of their self-reliance. 
Refusing pity and thus unwilling to surrender, 
they are willing to strive and struggle free using their talents to help others, 
this strength, this hope, this richness of our national culture, 
out of exile and death they find the way to live! 
Ah, this great nation, 
this mighty territory, 

having just stepped off the Bashan

4 plank road, 
we now face clouds across the Qinling mountains

5 to find our way! 
Majestic crests of Qinling, forests of Zhongnanshan, 

6 one pulse pounding fast, a thousand undulating summits, 
forceful and vast is Qinling’s presence. 
Cutting across China’s central plains, 

7 stopping desert sandstorms; 
South China Sea’s warm winds, the rainclouds flying over Sichuan, 
all barred by Qinling in its costume of bright green, 
constantly refreshed by mountain rain and dew. 
None of Bashan’s annoying dawn fog, 

8 nor of Badaling’s wind wild as a tiger, 
these strange peaks divide the massive valley into north and south, 
northern sunshine, flashes, flashes, 
southern deepest green of greens, 
and extremely vivid, 
then like dragonflies round lotus ponds on sunny afternoons, wings quivering on thin air, 
the shining sky and mountain are so clear and glittering to our eyes, 
so distinct it makes us dance in ecstasy, 
makes us cheer with joy! 
Peaks covering peaks, trees hiding trees, 

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4 巴山: read as an abbreviation for the Dabashan range running roughly along the border between Sichuan and Shaanxi that separates Guangyuan from the Han River valley. 
5 The Qinling mountain range, lying north of the Han River valley. 
6 终南山: part of the Qinling range, is also referred to as Nanshan 南山 in the poem. 
7 风度 (fengdu): read in the sense of ‘influence’ as outlined in the next four lines. 
8 中原 (zhongyang): the middle and lower regions of the Yellow river, including Henan, western Shandong, southern Shanxi and Hebei.
like some giants vying for this single bit of land,
shoving and squeezing each other out of the way,
mountain tops masking mountain tops, their feet stamped into ravines,
offspring of stone, bones of stone,
wearing strange and majestic robes,
white clouds for crowns, jade-green trees for cloaks;
eternally standing still,
lofty\(^9\) and erect,
its huge shadows hiding wolf and tiger!\(^9\)

Extraordinary roads,

sharp turns straight up,
constant cries of alarm,
unrelenting slopes,
at critical moments, the car roars like tiger!
Through the main pass, gradually onto level roads,
turn around to look back, blue sky everywhere,
undulating green summits,
the more distant the lovelier it appears, obstacles forgotten,
forgotten are the terrifying thrills, looking at the view.
Now, northern scenery spread out:

110
tall sorghum, drooping heads of millet,
auburn tassels of maize\(^{11}\) lovely as village women.

Heavy vehicles, roads of yellow loess,
silent cattle listening while small donkeys bray and the headman shouts.

Leaves of trees, people’s faces, all wear a layer of loess,

\(^9\) 万丈 (wanzhang): literally, 10,000 zhang high.
\(^{10}\) 狼虎 (lang hu): here read literally in the context of Lao She’s detailed descriptions of the Qinling Mountains’
topography and vegetation, and assuming that he was thinking, with some poetic licence, of the Tibetan wolf
and South China tiger. The Qinling mountains are recorded as having been a habitat of these now endangered
animals: see David Jupp, "An introduction to the “Hard Roads to Shu”, their environment, history, and
adventures since ancient times."
http://members.iinet.net.au/~jupps_22@ozemail.com.au/docs/PDF/Shu_Roads_Introduction.pdf, p.26; also
Armand David, Journal de mon troisième voyage d’exploration dans L’Empire Chinois, (Paris: Libraire
Hachette, PDF e-book, 2011), pp.209, 218. In other contexts the expression is used as a metaphor for bandits cf.
the idiom 如狼似虎 (rulangsihu) meaning ruthless people.
\(^{11}\) 红缨的玉米 (hong ying de yumi): with its suggested comparison to a woman’s hair, this is read as indicating
the colour of the corn silk, which appears yellow or golden while the corn ripens before turning a light brown
colour.
a village girl, charmingly shy, carrying a hoe,  
furtively watches us passing by;  
we, with bodies sweating, dusty faces,  
like some new-dug sweet potatoes,  
barely walk the patched-up avenue outside Baoji’s city wall.

New roads, new shops,  
new atmosphere as if from new awareness;  
this tiny smoke-grimy county town,  
some years ago, was like a dying man with both eyes closed,  
unable to see the coal, iron and timber in the mountains,  
unable to see the water resources and other riches;  
in today’s War of Resistance, the scenery is as before,  
Wei River still pours at speed, between clay banks of sheer hillsides,  
but the sound of Tongguan’s battle\(^{12}\) roused the sick man,  
he realised what treasure lay in hills and rivers outside the gate!

Go, get the natural resources stored in mountain and river!  
Take the means of rescue that saved Taiyuan and Kaifeng;\(^{13}\)  
come, you workers who take no enemy wages!  
Come, you decent men and women who refuse to be enslaved!  
Rip up railroad tracks to make knives and hatchets,  
treat the worn-out engines as motors in a whirling dance!  
Come, you people working wholeheartedly as one!  
Make simple yet suitable plans,  
use our local produce, our hardworking people,  
to lay the foundations for the War of Resistance!

\(^{12}\) The town of Tongguan, in eastern Shaanxi near the Henan-Shanxi border, is in a narrow and steep pass which acts as gateway to the Wei River valley and Shanxi province generally. While not named as the site of a major battle during the 2nd Sino-Japanese war, it was subjected to aerial bombardment and shelling by the invading Japanese forces, apparently what is referred to here.

\(^{13}\) Taiyuan is Shanxi’s provincial capital. Although it was the scene of a battle during the 2nd Sino-Japanese War over the period Sept-Oct 1937, the result was a loss for the Chinese forces. The ‘means of rescue’ presumably refers to earlier history, including Taiyuan’s role as capital of the ancient Zhao state during the Warring States period (464-221 BCE), as an important centre of Buddhism during the Tang dynasty, and as provincial capital since the Ming dynasty. Similarly Kaifeng, in northern Henan, one of the seven capitals of ancient China, has been destroyed, abandoned and rebuilt several times since the Warring States period and at its peak was the Song Dynasty capital. Its only role during the 2nd Sino-Japanese War was as part of the Japanese front line in Northern China until late 1939.
steam whistles hoot, motors thump!
Listen, water rushes day and night through Baoji’s gorge:
electric power for five northern provinces\(^{15}\) stored here;
swiftly, swiftly, with the speed of electricity,
exploit the alpine wealth of this cradle of East Asian civilisation;
the eastern coastline’s prosperity is thin as skin,\(^{16}\)
return, return our culture, back to the path of our revival.
Rejuvenate the northwest, revive the people,
bring glory to this mother of the nation!

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\(^{14}\) 人马 (renma): literally, men and horses (a common expression for military forces).

\(^{15}\) 北五省 (bei wu sheng): It is not clear which provinces this refers to, but in describing an area drained by the Wei River, Lao She possibly meant Gansu, Ningxia, Shaanxi, Henan and Shanxi.

\(^{16}\) Because it is dependent on and subject to the occupation by foreign powers, especially since the beginning of the 2nd Sino-Japanese War.
7  Baoji station

Beiping, Tianjin, Qingdao, on Jinan’s Daming Lake,
four great cities, with their woods and spring-fed landscapes,
memories of hard work and idle times there,
often bring a little fragrance to my dreams.
In evening wind and rain or bright moonlight,
whether in Qingdao, Beiping, Tianjin, or Jinan,
far-off, intermittently, I hear,
– a sound that brings a bout of bitter sorrow –
that sudden train whistle long then short,
relentlessly, it brings fear to sad partings,
tearfully urging sweethearts and much-loved sons to dodge bullets.
Standing between Beiping’s solid ancient city walls,
or by Qingdao’s green sea waves,
each time I hear this desolate call,
I think of snowy ground and icy skies in Suiyuan,¹
or of facing one another across the dividing river at Wuhan,²
how many travellers, how far they’ve come, how much emotion,
this plaintive whine, how much mournful sighing!

Meanwhile, by mountain, or maybe riverside,
whether spring rains bring blossom, or autumn clouds the gloom,
the whistle sounding up ahead sends messages before the train gets to the station,
so many worries and doubts that trouble and leave us in suspense,
suddenly become wild outbursts of joy!
Old friends, perhaps ten years unseen,
fathers and sons, couples, apart for many years,
hands grasping hands, shoulder to shoulder clasped,
joyful tears streaming down have soaked their smiling faces!
Children, scrambling to move bamboo baskets,

¹ 绥远: read as indicating the province of Inner Mongolia.
² Wuhan (the composite city comprising Hankou, Wuchang and Hanyang at the junction of the Han and Yangtze rivers) was the KMT government base briefly in 1927 and again in 1937 until it fell to Japanese advance in October 1938.
or taste boxes of sweet pastries,
so happy it seems like New Year!
Ah, what grief and gladness from our world of partings and reunions,
contained within this lonely hoot,
which has no melody yet gushes forth with feeling!
What else could be more practical, yet more romantic,
this machine that weeps aloud,
every cry, though like cuckoo’s call in springtime woods,
heightens the poet’s sadness!

40 Ever since the war’s beginning,
in Qingdao and Jinan,
at daybreak, dusk or midnight,
I hear, I hear,
that steam whistle, that call to war!
Ah, how brave, how steadfast,
towing army vehicles, artillery, explosives,
braving bombardment, facing danger,
heading for the frontline, answering the challenge,
aha, mighty China faces the attack, fights back!

50 No time for poets’ idle daydreams and lamenting,
for dwelling on those sorrows and joys of travellers far from home,
that brief time of peace and security for which we grieve;
listen, hear this urgent voice calling out,
it is the sound of China’s roar and wild battle cry!
I hear, I also see:
when sea winds break up Qingdao’s late night fog,
or blue-grey evening smoke masks stars and islands\(^3\) off the coast,
the steam whistle as the train pulls out from Jinan,
groups of stumpy-legged pedlars and petty traders,
60 carrying their earnings in China’s old silver coinage,
or several bags of “white flour”\(^4\) not yet sold.

\(^3\) 星岛 (xing dao): an alternative reading might be ‘points of light on islands’, but would add no clarity to this slightly puzzling phrase, apparently echoing the place-name Qingdao in the previous line.
Short men, short wives and children,
their wild arrogance of former days all gone,
holding back tears, heads hanging, they walk out of the station;
the dark row lining the seashore,
their enormous warships,
but their smiles have gone!\(^5\)
A quiet night in Jinan,
long drawn-out whistle, starlight shines,
a train of heroes hurries to the frontline.
Carriages camouflaged by trees, trembling willow branches,
inside the carriages, no lights, silent soldiers,
rushing like the raging tide that only when the shore is reached lets fly its foaming spray,
ah, not until they finally reach battlefield, will these warriors attack with earth-shaking yells!
What heartbreak, in that early autumn dusk,
three loud bangs, flashes of red light,
ten \(^6\) outside orchards of leafless trees,
Quehua Bridge\(^7\) trembled, Thousand Buddha Mountain\(^8\) quaked,
a giant steel bridge stuck fast in silt!

Those seventy-two springs\(^9\) of Jinan,
soon after, May Third’s\(^10\) tragic events repeated;
at Xuzhou, Zhengzhou, Wuhan,
with the unyielding people exiled and dispersed,
that steam whistle’s sobbing hoot has been my guide!


\(^5\) The passage apparently describes an evacuation of Japanese civilians, perhaps arranged in the expectation of the Japanese assault on Jinan (alluded to in lines 75-80). The reference to waiting ‘warships’ (lines 65-66) implies that the evacuees would be ferried from Qingdao across the Bohai Gulf to Japanese-controlled Manchuria.

\(^6\) 十里 (shi li): approximately five kilometres.

\(^7\) 鹊华: an arched stone bridge on Jinan’s Daming Lake, sometimes called ‘Magpie Bridge’ or ‘Crescent Moon Bridge’. It was almost completely destroyed by Japanese forces in 1937.

\(^8\) 千佛山 (Qianfoshan): southeast of Jinan.

\(^9\) 七十二名泉 (qi shier ming quan): the famous list of natural springs giving Jinan its reputation as ‘City of Springs’.

\(^10\) 五三 (Wu san): the Jinan incident of 3 May 1928, when armed conflict broke out between the Japanese Army and the KMT National Revolutionary Army.
Ever since I entered Sichuan’s mountains,  
only in dreams could I seem to hear:  
oh, midst Beiping springtime’s bright red cherry blossom,  
mingled with flower-sellers’ voices calling out their wares,  
that gentle trace of care for travellers,  
making me imagine rushing at once to far-off places,  
wanting at once to praise this majestic country.

Oh, from East China Sea to Xi’an,  
when Luoyang’s tree peonies have barely opened,  
crossing Tongguan’s rolling Yellow River,  
bright green steel carriages speeding past bright green Huashan!  
Oh, already one year gone, a year already,  
only in dreams can I see, and hear,  
those simple birdsongs, those magnificent hills and plains!

But now,  
in evening breezes on the river Wei,  
I hear again,  
like home town dialect after many years away,  
that steam whistle, sweet and clear it drifts around the landscape.  
Through tears I see again,  
those spraying sparks, black smoke spewing out,  
fierce and eager the engine leaps ahead,  
like every party and each faction united in this War of Resistance,  
a Qingdao-Jinan line, a Beiping-Shenyang line, a Beiping-Hankou line,\(^{11}\)  
different forms and markings, yet linked from start to end,  
each railroad part of a group that works as one.

To Xianyang, to Xi’an, travellers rushed and muddled,  
to Luoyang, to Tongguan, fighters off to war,  
ah, off to battle!

\(^{11}\) 胶济 (Jiao-Ji), 北宁 (Bei-Ning), 平汉 (Ping-Han): abbreviated forms of railroad names, referring to significant railroads in the war against Japan, or campaigns reportedly conducted by railroad workers as part of the resistance effort. The Jiao-Ji railroad, critical to Japanese control of Shandong, ran from Qingdao to Jinan. The Bei-Ning railroad from Beijing to Shenyang fell wholly under Japanese control after July 7, 1937. The Ping-Han railroad from Beijing to Hankou, captured by the Japanese in October 1938, was sabotaged by railroad workers, an act of defiance celebrated in a poem by Lao She’s contemporary Ke Zhongping 柯仲平 (1902-1964): Zhu Ziqing, “Kangzhan yu shi”. 

150
Take back the Beiping-Suiyuan, Beiping-Hankou railroads, and every line; the country’s territory is the body, railroads its arteries and veins, to regain all our country, first we must extend the blood vessels!

The whistle sounds, the train is moving, lights swing haphazardly, ah, Baoji, take care, goodbye!

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12 平绥 (Ping-Sui): abbreviated form.
13 还我山河 (huan wo shanhe): adaptation of the slogan 还我河山 that originated in the Southern Song period and was revived during the 1920s and 1930s.
Xi’an

Xi’an, Xi’an!
Yellow earth, blue sky.
Ancient elegant city walls,
bearing so much history and calamity,
yet still so open-minded and serene,
gazing leisurely at Nanshan!
Tombs, gardens, pavilions, mansions,
ancient roof-tiles and brickwork everywhere;
this historic city, parks of poetry,
cradle of culture,
within its margins stands
our first and former capital, no others, not even ancient Rome and Athens,
were so complex yet so simple;
like clouds on Zhongnanshan,
like the Jing and Wei rivers flowing into distant mist,
it changes in countless ways yet stays eternally the same,
after so many generations of poets’ sighing praises,
is it still here smiling on this earth?

Here whether paying homage, researching ancient texts, or sightseeing,
Zhou, Qin, Han or Tang, we cannot escape its history!
Look, locust trees from Han times, Tang steles and sculptures, fallen monasteries,
roadside taverns where the immortal poet got drunk!
Look, scenery on the outskirts, villages, green fields,
every step is poetic inspiration;
tombs of Qin and Han, green grass and clear blue sky,
Baqiao’s breezes still recalling bitterness and grief of ancient partings;

1 汉瓦秦砖 (Han wa Qin zhuang): literally, roof-tiles from the Han and bricks from the Qin dynasties.
2 Xianyang, capital of the short-lived Qin dynasty. After Xianyang’s destruction a new city, which became the Han capital Chang’an, was built on the opposite side of the Wei River.
3 The Jing River flows into the Wei River just north of Xi’an; the Wei joins the Yellow River further east.
4 唐的碑 (Tang de bei): Xi’an’s Beilin Museum or ‘Forest of Steles’.
5 Meaning Li Bai.
6 秦陵汉墓 (Qin ling Han mu): read as referring generally to tombs of both dynasties. 秦陵 now specifically refers to the tomb of the First Emperor Qin Shihuangdi 秦始皇 (259 – 210 BCE). From Sima Qian’s Shiji onwards there is recorded historical evidence about its appearance and location. The site apparently inspired Wang Wei’s poem Guo Qin Huang mu 过秦皇墓 [Passing the Mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shi Huang].

I found no forest park, no palaces, several piles of yellow soil, water lying round in shallow ponds, a few croaking crows, a wood of chirping orioles, but following directions from helpful villagers, still I could imagine the splendid majesty of Han and Tang! See, in the aftermath of earthquakes, Wild Goose Pagoda still cracked and unrepaired in the city’s south, from surviving fragments’ beauty we visualise the perfect whole! Oh, this immortal city, where history began.

Splendid fragrant flowering of culture, that created its lovely forests and parks, then drew on foreign culture’s truth and beauty to attain perfection: Nestorian Christian Gospels, Buddhist scriptures, with painting, engraving, theatre and music, when the sun of Rome was setting, when Vikings went slaughtering with hatchet and halberd, like bees and butterflies after nectar,

7 霸桥: a bridge over Xi’an’s Bashui River. This alludes to the bridge’s reputation during the Tang dynasty as a favoured place from which to farewell departing guests (霸桥 "Ciyuan," p.1819), exemplified by Li Bai’s Ba ling xing songbie 瀛陵行送别 [Farewell at Ba Hill].
8 曲江池: a popular Tang dynasty scenic spot in Chang’an, particularly at festival times (曲江池 "Cihai," p.3163). It featured in Du Fu’s Qujiang er shou 曲江二首 [Two Qujiang poems].
9 来游原: read as authorial error for 乐游原 (Leyou yuan). Another popular Chang’an scenic spot in the Tang era (乐游原 ibid., p.181) that featured in verse by Li Bai (乐游苑 "Ciyuan," p.0881).
11 未央: a royal palace during the Western Han dynasty (未央宫 ibid., p.2855).
12 上林苑: a Qin dynasty park expanded into an imperial park during the Han dynasty (上林苑 ibid., p.391).
13 雁塔 (yanta): it is unclear whether this refers to the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda (Dayanta) or the Small Wild Goose Pagoda (Xiaoyanta). Both are in Xi’an’s southern suburbs and both were damaged in the disastrous Shaanxi earthquake of 1556. The badly damaged Giant Wild Goose Pagoda had major repairs done during the Ming dynasty, whereas the smaller one suffered less serious damage and is reportedly still unrepaired, so it could be the latter.
14 弦管 (xian guan): literally, the music of string and woodwind instruments.
15 Here Lao She apparently cites two periods in European history. Line 45 suggests the Western Roman Empire’s period of decline from around the mid-5th century CE. By the beginning of the Tang dynasty the Western Roman Empire had been superseded by the Byzantine Empire, also known as the Eastern Roman Empire, based in Constantinople and oriented around Greek rather than Latin culture, which lasted until the fall of Constantinople in the 15th century. In line 46 北海的强盗 (Beihai de qiangdao), literally ‘North Sea robbers’, is taken to mean the Vikings, who raided Britain’s east coast from late in the 8th century until the 11th century.
prosperity and plenty came to this world of Chang’an!
Whenever chilly north-west gales whirl,
50 spoiling flowers and plants of Shanglin Park,
from west to east, north to south,
sweet-smelling blossom spreads and scatters all around,
like wind-blown willow catkins, like duckweed rolling in the waves,
the seeds of culture are spread around the earth!
Like plants meeting the soft warmth of sea-breezes,
culture’s centre shifted to the coast with new mansions, forests, gardens;
with Nanshan deserted, Chang’an silent,
poets’ imaginations moved southeast to Jiangnan!16
As children grow up, and move away,
the loving mother in her waning years is left keeping watch at home alone!
Today, we are at war,
for our nation to survive, we recall our distant past,
enthusiasm overflows, our culture regained,
from Beiping-Tianjin, from Taiyuan, from Wuhan,
the new plants are returned to their place of origin.
Xi’an, this immortal Xi’an,
with many generations’ knowledge and experience,
and many generations’ unwavering courage,
rub your old eyes, straighten up your chest and go forward!
70 Bravely undertaking to defend the northwest border,
raising barriers on the Yellow River, tightly guarding Tongguan,
the Guanzhong plain, this culture’s fountainhead,
cemeteries of former sages and ancient philosophers,
sacred and inviolable!
Ah, old but spirited Xi’an,
through the War of Resistance with its excited haste and chaos,

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16 Lines 56-58 refer to the end of Tang dynasty cultural dominance that was followed by a period of political upheaval, succeeded by the Northern Song and then the Southern Song dynasties when the cultural centre moved east to Kaifeng, then southeast to Hangzhou, the most important coastal city on the Yangtze River delta. Hangzhou was the acknowledged cultural centre of the Southern Song dynasty and home to the poet Lu You. Even before becoming Southern Song capital in 1123, Hangzhou had been governed by two notable poets: Bai Juyi and Su Shi.
through wanting to regain the majesty of former days,
also by joining the whole nation’s stampede into bloody battle,
it has gained yet more sublime and magnificent inspiration:

looking north to Yuguan, then distant Suiyuan;
with their own oilfields, cotton and coal,
from start to end a chain of army provisions, hides and wool, alkali and salt;
through the Jinfo Gorge, over the Mayaxue Mountains,
mighty roads, connecting Gansu and Shaanxi,
to Gaolan, Qinghai, the Soviet Union,
starting a new age of Asian-European transportation;
look, along the loess layers of Jiangsu-Gansu railroad,
linking the Jin-Pu and Ping-Han railroads,
or direct, between the Yangtze and the Yellow River,
speeding to the sea;
like mighty Peng standing on the plateau,
wings outspread, head lifted to the sky,
this new China symbolized in Xi’an!

New China, oh, an ideal that’s no mere dream,
Beiping the university city, blossoming gardens everywhere,
Tianjin and Qingdao harbours jam-packed with our boats,
then Xi’an, in that moment,
though far from coast,
but spacious and open, with many rivers on its outskirts,

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17 楼关: another name for Shanhaiguan, the eastern pass of the Great Wall in Hebei into Inner Mongolia (樓关 "Ciyuan," p.0870).
18 Referring to the Shaanxi Basin coalfields, also known to contain oil deposits. See canto 24 lines 170-179 for a description of the small-scale nature of coal and oil ‘production’.
19 鹽 (jian).
20 金佛峽口 (Jinfo xiakou): sometimes translated as ‘Golden Buddha Gap’. Historically of strategic importance, this pass in Ningxia just over the border from western Gansu, is now known as Sanguankou 三关口.
21 马牙雪山: in northern Gansu. The name refers to the jagged horse-teeth shape of the rocky peaks, with the label ‘snow-capped’, describing the white colour of their surface rocks rather than the (infrequent) presence of snow on the peaks.
22 皋兰: in central Gansu, on the upper reaches of the Yellow River.
23 陇海: Long-Hai, abbreviated form of the railroad then running between Lianyungang in Jiangsu and Baoji.
24 平浦: Ping-Pu, taken as meaning the railroad from Tianjin to Pukou in Jiangsu; a reading supported by line 96 referencing Tianjin, the major seaport and gateway to Beijing.
with Guanzhong’s cotton, Tongguan’s\textsuperscript{27} coal,\textsuperscript{28} with the northwest’s rich resources,  
being the hub for road and rail in all directions,  
for domestic and foreign traffic routes,  
with both industry and trade to launch a brilliant history,  
will make all on earth speak in praise of Xi’an!  
And then scenes portrayed in Han and Tang verse will once again be seen,  
from Weiqu and Wangqu\textsuperscript{29} all the way to Zhongnanshan,  
dizzying displays of colour,\textsuperscript{30} paddy fields of crying frogs,  
public parks all along the way;  
likewise, fragrant hot springs known throughout the ages,\textsuperscript{31}  
Lantian’s Shuifu Nunnery and Huazi Ridge,\textsuperscript{32}  
at Dragon-Boat and Mid-Autumn Festivals, every holiday time,  
from early until late, voices always singing,  
well-fed well-clad workers, bringing their families along,  
with students, merchants, even policemen, all happily beaming,\textsuperscript{33}  
here to rest, to stroll about,  
thus will pavilions, pools and mansions of ancient monarchs,  
the lovely mountains and rivers,  
the duties of history, the nation’s strength,  
be accessible for all people to enjoy!  
For these ideals of freedom and equality, we fight this War of Resistance,  
officers and soldiers, you loyal and courageous ones,

\textsuperscript{27} 浦关: not the same as Tongguan 潼关 (see canto 6 footnote 12), but the historical place-name of present-day Tongchuan 铜川 (同官 “Ciyuan,” p.0257).
\textsuperscript{28} A major coal deposit of the Shaanxi Basin running in a loop from south of Yinchuan in Ningxia, through Tongchuan, to north of Taiyuan in Shanxi.
\textsuperscript{29} Read as referring to places in present-day Xi’an’s Chang’ an district. Weiqu was a scenic location known for its beauty during the Tang era and its association with a poem by Du Fu (韦曲 "Cihai," p.2824). Wangqu 王曲 is also in this area.
\textsuperscript{30} 恼人的花色 (naoren de huase): literally, a maddening variety of colours.
\textsuperscript{31} Hot springs at Lishan southeast of Xi’an, famous for Huaqing Pool and its association with Tang Emperor Xuanzong and his imperial consort Yang Guifei.
\textsuperscript{32} 水陆庵 (Shuifu an),…华子岗 (Huazi gang): both places allude to Tang poet Wang Wei, who lived at Lantian on the northern slopes of the Qinling Mountains, for much of his life. Shuifu Buddhist nunnery or monastery may have had particular significance for Wang Wei in his later years when he was heavily influenced by Buddhism. His poem Huazi gang is included in the famous Wangchuan collaboration poems (Wangchuan ji 鋼川集) co-written with his friend Pei Di 裴迪 (716? - ?).
\textsuperscript{33} 春风满面 (chunfengmanmian): literally, with spring-like atmosphere and satisfied face (idiom).
worthy of eternal praise,
ah, let me describe even greater blessings, even higher acclaim,
with candid passionate words,
to show on your bright banners and flashing swords for inspiration when you fight!
We defend Xi’an with our blood!
We create Xi’an with our blood!
With our blood we enhance history’s brilliance,
130 leaving earthly paradise to our descendants!
9

**Tongguan**

When clouds and mist moved dream-like to and fro round Zhongnanshan,
when Huaqing’s\(^1\) clear warm springs soothed Lintong’s night,
Chang’an’s lights glowed in empty silence,
quietly we took leave of the old town.
When dawn clouds dyed Taihua’s lotus summit\(^2\) vivid red,
when dewdrops on green leaves glittered in the morning sun,
excited, like just awoken small birds spreading their wings to fly off chirping,
we set foot on the great loess road, singing all the way,
excited at being on our way to Tongguan!\(^3\)

Oh, this largest loess-covered zone on earth,
spread from Gansu, Shanxi, Shaanxi, right over to Shandong;
high and steep as mountains, flat-topped,
track by track, layer by layer,
yellow plateau and ridges of yellow earth,
oxen\(^4\) slowly ambling in the gullies.
Roads in gullies, small hamlets on hilltops,
caves dug into sheer walls of clay hills,
where smoke from kitchen chimneys rises, chickens squawk outside,
at night, the distant light of closely clustered stars.

Oh, yellow soil, yellow water, yellow wind,
yellow simplicity, yellow stillness,
as if the Yellow Emperor’s\(^5\) voice were audible!
This lovely loess, how solid,
and yet how yielding too:
forming mountains, ridges,
vast areas\(^6\) of fertile land;
yet drifting through the air as tiny specks,
slightly irritating to the nostrils;

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\(^1\) See canto 8 footnote 31.
\(^2\) 太华: another name for Huashan.
\(^3\) 洛关: see canto 6 footnote 12.
\(^4\) 黄牛 (huángniú): China’s common yellow cattle.
\(^5\) See canto 1 footnote 6.
\(^6\) 万顷 (wànníng): literally, 10,000 qīng.
by day, escorting the parade of travellers,
at night, accompanying our dreams upon the big *kang*,
this solid and yielding loess,
airy yet thickly congealed,
gives the central plain its unique colour and landscape,
and gives the north its unique unyielding nature.
This golden mother gives life to northern China,
with double harvests year after year;
she brings to life, and buries, so many capital cities,
and so many generations of heroes,
the nation’s history and its struggle,
all recorded in this dusty golden soil.
Praise, oh, descendants of the Yellow Emperor, come and praise,
as disciples praise their generous gods,
praise these yellow mountains and rivers, plateaus and ridges,
praise these skies filled with flying yellow sand,
yellow sand that flows into the Yellow Sea, forever flowing,
eternally replenished,
every tiny grain with its historic mission!
Praising, oh, not only praising,
we also go to war for it!
Those pirates of East Asia, with devilish arrogance,
with gunfire, with slaughter, attacking this loess country,
rushing to plunder these sleek yellow wheat fields, these jet-black seams of coal,
wishing to make Huashan’s highest peak stand majestic and silent beneath their ‘Sun’ flag.
This kindly land is no longer stable and calm,
with rainstorms, with gales,
the Yellow River rises,
Qinling mountains quake in fear,

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7 炕: a heatable bed made of bricks. In this case, the bricks are made from the yellow loess.
8 东亚的海寇 (*Dongya de hai kou*): meaning the Japanese.
9 太阳旗 (*taiyang qi*).
10 While clearly part of an extended metaphor for aroused resistance to Japan, this may hint at the catastrophic floods of 1938, caused when Chiang Kai-shek ordered the breaching of dikes on the Yellow River to halt the Japanese advance and save Wuhan. Whether Lao She knew about this order is uncertain: his journey would not have taken him through the affected areas. At the time the Nationalist Government denied responsibility, and much of the data on what happened — farmland inundated in Henan, Anhui and Jiangsu; a death toll of at least
rousing the docile peasants all at once;  
arise! From the Yellow Emperor’s mausoleum,  
to the sacred sites of Confucius and Mencius;  
don’t stop till the humiliation ends,  
only victory can bring us peace!

Yellow sandstorms, yellow silhouettes,  
the noise of slaughter sounding like the Yellow Sea is boiling!  
This gold-like loess, benevolent and holy,  
for its sake we go to war, we kill, we sacrifice ourselves,  
to preserve our loess, preserve our culture,  
not until the loess is safe will we be freed from suffering!

Listen, this rumbling of the guns,  
with devilish arrogance defiling our clear skies,  
screaming shells, explosions, ground cracks open, landslides;  
to the devils we declare - yield, or perish!

Braving barrages of gunfire, we head towards Tongguan,  
ah, devils’ arrogance, artillery’s incompetence;  
see, a hundred thousand dwellings turned to rubble,  
constant shelling has flattened bridges on the streets;  
ah, how to repair the land, renovate the buildings,  
make the devils miss their aim, come off empty-handed,  
defying gunfire, we build new cities from the broken pieces!

Filling holes in bridges with planks and sand,  
stacking planks and bricks to make sheds and shelters,  
still raising chickens and dogs, earning a living,  
preserving the famous pickled vegetables in jars!

These hopeful, these valiant ones,  
who, though plagued by enemy cannon from night till daybreak,  
treat it as New Year firecrackers noise!

Boundless hatred sustains our gentler feelings,  
these are our homes, our towns,  
if we must die, then we will die defending them!

half a million; between 3 and 5 million refugees – only came to light in later decades: see Mitter, Forgotten ally, pp.160-164.
This great tenacity just like those stubborn layers of loess, 
unmoving, forever motionless, 
always using clumsy foolishness to deal with clever folk!

See, this yellow mountain, ancient city, 
though scarred and battered, 
still has the country’s flag hoist high, soldiers coming and going; 
brave soldiers, common people who have not fled, 
by enduring hardship they have forged a brotherhood. 
The desolation in the city, our compatriots’ suffering, 
icite heroic battle beyond the city walls, 
every bit of broken brick, every trace of blood, 
all will, all must be paid for by the enemy!

See, Tongguan standing tall, the rolling Yellow River, 
yellow water coming east like ocean-waves that mount the wind; 
yellow hills and water, sun centred in the sky, 
no clouds, no shadows, no sounds, 
only a few white gulls circling aimlessly; 
yellow waves, grey mist, all is vague and formless, 
suddenly dark then bright, suddenly light then heavy, 
sometimes washing all away in a layer of green shadow.

Torrential yellow waters flowing freely without hindrance, 
suddenly forced between banks of yellow hills, 
the precipitous imposing mountain pass becomes Shaanxi’s throat; 
unruly yellow waters form a single mighty wave, 
a mass of breakers clashing altogether, 
a multitude of breakers howling all at once, 
like so many river dolphins splashing spray; 
furious yellow waters, turning to red-gold, 
rolling on the yellow sands, spurting golden stars, 
sky, water, wind, light, spreading and rushing onwards.

Besides the river and gunfire, no other sound is heard.

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11 千疮百孔 (qianchuangbaikong): literally, riddled with a thousand sores and a hundred holes. An idiom also expressed as 百孔千疮.
12 江猪 (jiangzhu): the Yangtze porpoise, also known as baijitu. (Cihai p.4040)
cattle concealed in gullies, trains hidden in caves,
this cruel calm is in the midst of war!
See, on steeply rising cliffs countless craters in the soil,
one spark, one sound, one shadow,
straight away brings enemy gunfire screaming;
to keep moving with the traffic, and yet avoid the loss of life,
our plucky driver, brave yet prudent,
without lights or siren,
stealthily drives into the cave,

he is courageous, careful,
patiently waiting, waiting until midnight;\textsuperscript{13}
then making every second count, dashing forward one chi on the road,
above us in the air relentless shellfire explodes,
and senselessly shoots down a layer of loess!
Below the mountain, day and night, year round, bravely keeping quiet,
oh, fearless fighters, with sharp eyes,
day and night, year round, aiming their guns at tiny targets,
the enemy across the river cannot make a sound,
their horses cannot make the slightest movement,

with our guns, eyes, and quiet patience,
we trap the enemy – like rats – to die in caves!
Sometimes groups of bandits\textsuperscript{14} come on small boats,
thinking to conquer the mighty waves and attack Tongguan,
our guns are less forgiving than the Yellow River,
coolly and precisely they turn the yellow breakers scarlet!
Far back in the mountains, as quiet as the surrounding hills,
just like the solid loess in its brisk cleansing,
we have become accustomed to gunfire in the serious army camp.
Our soldiers, oh, our comrades,

working diligently, by nature able to endure hardship,
adjusting trenches, digging caves,
every cannon, every stone, scrubbed clean,

\textsuperscript{13} 三更 (sangeng): the third of the five night-watch periods.
\textsuperscript{14} 强盗 (qiangdao): a general term but here meaning the Japanese enemy.
turning the battlefield into a clean and tidy household.
Firmly, expertly, manoeuvring cannon into place,
launching a surprise counter-attack on the enemy;
listen, hear our cannon,
all the country sneers defiance, common people cheer,
crossing mountains, crossing rivers, they smash the enemy camps,
the mountains ring, the rivers roar, echoing with sounds of victory!

160 Our officers, soldiers,
oh, beloved comrades,
so diligent, so brave,
yet still so amiable and modest when meeting travellers from afar,
in the trenches, on hearing gunfire,
he wryly estimates for you the cannon’s range;
on the street, pointing out the damage and desolation,
lamenting the sacrifices of ordinary people,
he still does not forget the courage of Five Tiger Generals and Ma Chao;
see, how old this tree, how wide the gun barrel,
in those days, how terror-stricken Cao Cao’s white face must have been!
Quiet smiles, leisurely chatter,
oh those courageous comrades,
as if they have forgotten the threat to their lives,
forgotten in those idle times about responding to danger;
as if born to serve Tongguan and the Yellow River,
blood like the Yellow River bubbling up,
minds resolute like Tongguan,
defending Tongguan’s great river is their honour and their glory!
Officers, soldiers, oh, beloved comrades,
oh, heroes of the nation!

15 幽默 (youmo): the English loan-word for humour, suggesting an attitude of ‘black’ humour in the face of danger, with some mockery directed at enemy forces.
16 Legendary general Ma Chao 马超 (176-222), military commander of Shu state in Sanguo Yanyi, and one of the designated ‘Five Tiger Generals’ (wu hu shangjiang 五虎上将) of the Shu Han 蜀汉 state. The other four were Zhang Fei 张飞 (168-221), Guan Yu 关羽 (died 219), Huang Zhong 黄忠 (died 220) and Zhao Yun 赵云 (died 229).
17 白脸的曹操 (bailian de Cao Cao): referring to the mask in Beijing Opera depicting the main villain in Sanguo Yanyi. See canto 4 footnote 12 on the actual historical character Cao Cao.
I wish you victory, wish you success!
I pray that you will dye these yellow hills and waters red with enemy blood!
When the rule of reason yields to military force, 
gunfire is the only game that fools can play. 
So amidst the cruel enemy’s crazy cannon fire, 
both sides beg “Take care”, gazing in mutual regret at parting, 
we shake hands with the brave warriors guarding Tongguan, then leave, 
following the great loess road to enter western Yu.¹ 
Ah, this countryside of dates and cotton, ancient grounds of Yu and Guo,² 
now also knows the enemy from their bombing.

Thousands of shells fired at iron bridges, 
showering the Yellow River’s spray with sparks, 
so much money, so many troops, 
just to earn, what a pathetic prize, unanimous outrage from every corner of the nation!³ 
See, in mountain groves and rugged places roused by shellfire, 
no more can one find, as it used to be in western Henan, 
any trace of bandits who once terrified travellers; 
feelings founded in “Liangshan”⁴ mean loyalty is not forgotten, 
this ruthless gunfire rouses heroes’ righteousness; 
“Uncle! Father-in-law!”⁵ with rough and robust phrases of the Central Plains, 
“Go for them, drop everything to fight the devils!”

Pathetic, insane minds still playing with their airplanes, 
deliberately launching air raids on tiny cotton factories; 
fine, we’ll plant no more cotton, we’ll switch to maize and sorghum, 
there’ll be pancakes⁶ and steamed bread⁷ giving us even more strength to fight! 
Men go to war, women work the land, 
even children happily wear woven rain hats,⁸

¹ 豫: alternative name for Henan, derived from the ancient province name Yuzhou (豫 "Cihai," p.1082).
² 古代华夏族的东土之邦,古国名,位于今河南西部等处,是古国名。(虞 ibid., p.4246) 虢州 (虢) was located across present-day Henan, Shaanxi and Shanxi (虢 ibid., p. 4592).
³ 四乡八镇 (sixiang bazhen): literally, all four villages and eight towns.
⁴ 梁山: Liangshan Marsh in Shandong, base for the outlaw heroes of the classic novel Shui hu zhuan 水浒传 [Water Margin].
⁵ 丈人 (zhangren): sometimes translated as ‘old man’.
⁶ 饼子 (bingzi): maize or millet pancakes
⁷ 窝窝 (wowo): read as abbreviation of 窝窝头 (wowotou), bread made from maize or sorghum.
helping to hoe and weed, spread manure, herd cattle, and feed chickens.
Men go to war, then women take on hard labour,
carrying woven baskets, pulling small children along,
walking up to ten li away,
from east to west along the river,\(^9\)
going to shift rocks, repair roads, or flatten tall slopes into level ground;
maybe on sunny days driving ox-carts, drawing sand,
to stack in piles both sides of the road,
in readiness for bad weather;
after rain, the watery mud is covered with yellow sand,
letting vehicles carry things at high speed.
Ah, these lovely people, this lovely land,
all show us miracles in this War of Resistance!
Is this war, or are we in a dream?
Look, tranquil groves of dates as far as eye can see,
tiny red dates with smiling faces hang from trees;
see, cool breezes caressing fields of wheat and millet,
spreading everywhere the talk of bumper harvests;
observe, no latest fashions here, of women’s issues they know nothing,
those village girls\(^{10}\) with hair combed into plaits, yellow-faced matrons and daughters-in-law,
they can replace men, will be even more meticulous than men,
with climate, location and human relations all in harmony!\(^{11}\)
When resting in the date groves,
that peaceful carefree shade, with its fragrant sweet atmosphere,
it’s as if we’re in that place of Yuanming’s verse;\(^{12}\)
when we flee into date groves to escape air raids,
old and young hurriedly hide cattle and horses,
in countryside’s calm loveliness, panting in fear,

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\(^{8}\) 草笠 (caoli): the large bamboo or straw hat with conical crown and broad rim, strongly associated with the image of the agricultural field labourer in China and many parts of southeast Asia.
\(^{9}\) This was perhaps short-distance traffic observed by Lao She as he travelled along the loess road following the Yellow River in a west-east direction from Tongguan through Sanmenxia to Luoyang.
\(^{10}\) 村姑 (cungu): young women, here distinguished by their plaited hair from older and/or married women whose hair is tied up.
\(^{11}\) 天时地利人和 (tianshidilirenhe): literally, favourable climatic, geographical and human conditions. The expression has ancient origins (天时 “Cihai,” p.2802).
\(^{12}\) Referring to the verse of Six Dynasties poet Tao Yuanming.
naked urchins clutch for dear life at mother earth;  
this stillness then sudden action, restfulness then sudden urgency,  
this poetic country scene along with deadly weapons,  
have shrunk the gap between reality and dreamland;  
this is no dream, but rather is a riddle,  
the elegance of history is that it gives the answer!  
Are we fools, or delicate?  
Whoever dares to judge, will surely meet misfortune!  
Life’s struggle goes on unceasing throughout history,  
more than five thousand years, because we never rest!  
No, we do not rest!  
Now, our people, our animals, even our gardens,  
generate that strength which never dies!  
This simple riddle baffles Japan’s\(^{13}\) intelligence,  
he can only console himself with aerial bombardment.

Oh, bombs, bombs, planes, planes,  
all the way we saw the bombing’s vile work,  
all the way we faced and saw off air raids.  
Ah, the devils’ cleverness deserves our thanks,  
exposing their crimes on our behalf!  
Huge iron bridges, at Shanzhou, at Wendi,\(^{14}\)  
every day endure the devils’ crazy air raids;  
in daytime, or through dark and wretched nights,  
the sound of gunfire, how many rounds, the power of explosions,  
every village child remembers clearly,  
this generation, for ages and ages, never shall forget!  
At Shanzhou, as we went from railway station into town,  
hearing mountain torrents fiercely clash on stones beside the bridge,  
gazing at the fading beauty of distant mountain towns;  
those yellow hillsides, green farmlands,  
I fear they will stay stained with blood;

\(^{13}\) 东洋 (Dongyang): Qing Dynasty term for Japan.  
\(^{14}\)  Shanzhou is now Sanmenxia city, in north-western Henan close to the border with Shanxi. Wendi was a village further west on the Yellow River, between Shanzhou and Tongguan.
when Zhongtiao’s\textsuperscript{15} blood-stained waves and noise of slaughter surged into the Yellow River, this quiet old city had already seen the invaders’ ghoulish banners, seen also, oh, who is able to forget, enemy soldiers struggling to the last breath in green grass and yellow waves!

As we praise Zhongtiao’s glorious military campaign, fresh news of slaughter ripples through the clear fine air; in the blink of an eye no trace of people on the ground remains, the slaughtering devils send the curse of silence.

At the station, on the Xuzhou line, in the bombing of Kaifeng,\textsuperscript{16} courageous and careful drivers of rescue train and vehicles, nimbly all found cover to escape.

Now, those evil silver hawks have reached the river dike, leisurely circling, high above then suddenly swooping low, they separate, gather, join up and return,

finally, with frightful screaming, showing their ruthless pride, precisely hurl their bombs on vacant land.

A boy of ten, maimed by shrapnel fragments,
his short white pants already drenched in blood.\textsuperscript{17}

A white-haired old man, grandfather or father? Bearing the boy on his back, the old man silent, the drooping child whimpering, quietly, slowly, amidst everyone’s anger, heads for the green shade of a short thatch fence, ah, towards eternal memory of blood!

This silent old man, is he shopkeeper or small trader?

Or a farmer raising meagre crops on a few acres of land?

Were it not for the unforeseen blow of this air raid, perhaps they would never have known of the nation’s crisis?

Now, silently carrying his grandson, he says nothing, but knows who is the enemy!

\textsuperscript{15} 中条: abbreviation for 中条山, the Zhongtiao ranges of southern Shanxi where Chinese forces had a minor victory over the Japanese in 1937.

\textsuperscript{16} Lines 94-96 apparently refer (retrospectively, for the purpose of comparison with the following episode) to Japanese bombing of the railway between Kaifeng and Xuzhou.

\textsuperscript{17} 如血洗 (ru xue xi): literally, as if rinsed in blood.
11 Luoyang (part 1)

I know not why it is,
that deep within my soul there is a musical part,
thinking the most melodious name is that of Luoyang.
When colour and tone meet in my poetic imagination,
according to a place-name’s sound,
my mind will often tint it light green or very pale yellow,
like the perfect songbird, whose voice and colour enhance each other’s beauty.¹
Just this way, each time I heard of Luoyang,
- though I had never been there - in my heart
I felt as if a bright bird softly sang in flowering woods.
Ah, today, light summer rain, music playing soft and loud,
the scene which was for so long in my thoughts,
has now become real in my sight.
First, we greet and pay respects to
those battle-hardened soldiers and famous generals of the War of Resistance;
from their words, their firm beliefs,
we visualise Kaifeng, Xinyang,² Zhongtiao and Taihang,³
battlefields that thrilled all the world,
how we squeeze the enemy, and wipe them out,
how our victories make peace and liberation glorious!
Taking matters calmly while tightly stretched,
neither servile nor overbearing they persist in their conviction;
this belief, born of experience and courage,
like May’s south wind, pleasant and healthful,
bloows the scent of victory to the battlefield.
Thanks to their clear minds,
-drifting clouds within my heart become the rosy light of sunny morning;

¹ Here Lao She seems to allude to the cross-sensory neurological condition known generally as ‘synaesthesia’,
and the specific association of sound and colour. For a discussion of synaesthesia (tong gan 通感) in Chinese
literature, see Qian Zhongshu, “Synaesthesia,” in Patchwork: Seven Essays on Art and Literature; translated by
Duncan M. Campbell (Boston: Brill, 2014).
² Kaifeng and Xinyang, which fell to Japanese attack in 1938, were retaken by Chinese forces late in 1939. Here
Lao She may have been writing (in 1940) with the benefit of hindsight.
³ The 1937 battles in the Zhongtiao Mountains and Taihang ranges in which Chinese forces were victorious (see
canto 10 footnote 15).
when the enemy attack, calmly we evade them,
the time to fight, the place to fight,
shall make them crazy like houseflies that dart into a room;
we wait, as hunters wait for tiger and wolf,
hiding at every step, stalking them step by step,
waiting for our time, our battleground;
as when evening mist drifts over lotus ponds,
and restless dragonflies settle on the bulrush leaves,
with ease we reach our hands out, to catch their fragile wings!
Just this way, as at Zhongtiao and Taihang,
each victory is noted in “our” history!

From their words we can visualise their spirit and appearance:
no Germanic warrior’s rough proud wildness,
nor like royalty’s elite guards and generals,
lavishly decorated with gold braid everywhere and swelling with importance;
natural manner, simple uniforms,
their inner sincerity shines upon their brows,
they are informal, good-natured and positive,
self-confident, trusting people, they give belief to others,
like new bamboo that springs up after rain so fresh and strong.
ah, these pillars of new China, and its hope!

In Jinguyuan, on Tianjin Bridge,
or in Zhougong Shrine, oh, happy times!
By history’s bright light, the fragrance of its plants,
we see, hear, no longer need to visualise,
how ordinary soldiers become protagonists in this new poetic saga!
Following a suburban avenue, lined with locust trees and willows,
we reach the quiet old monastery,

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4 蒲菜 (pucai): Lao She uses the ‘culinary’ term for the edible rhizome of the bulrush, more commonly known as xiangpu (香蒲 "Chai," p.4654).
5 Jinguyuan 金谷园 was a park built during the Western Jin Dynasty (金谷 ibid., p.3871). Tianjin Bridge 天津桥 was originally built in the Sui dynasty but abandoned in the Yuan dynasty (天津桥 ibid., p.2811). Zhougong Shrine 周公祠 is a common name for memorial halls and palaces commemorating the ancient Duke of Zhou (~1100 BCE). The Luoyang temple which Lao She may be referring to is in the present-day city centre.
6 庵院祠堂 (an yuan citang): an unidentified Buddhist monastery offering hospital/infirmary facilities for wounded soldiers.
to comfort comrades and officers who shed blood for the nation:
in the main hall, or east and west corridors,
those heroes quietly keep the Buddhist statues company,

bearing the pain and loneliness in their hearts!
Each one could tell about some glorious history,
but used to observing army discipline, or perhaps because of weakness,
merely smiles in reply to visitors,
oh, what powers of description,
what pictures these pure and tragically moving smiles can paint!
Yet these wordless smiles clearly showed the whole battlefield,
its hardship, struggle, perseverance, hope,
the bitter struggle’s courage, with the people’s kindliness,
all in this smile, like sunshine after rain,

when hope and bright prospects were shrouded in grey cloud!
In the courtyard, leaning against old pines, or on wooden sticks,
soldiers already able to move about, wearing Red Cross\textsuperscript{7} badges;
slow in gait, sallow-faced,
when fighting is mentioned, they speak briefly but with insight,
pointing at the battlefield, pointing to their gunshot wounds,
pointing at the sky to curse the bullying pirates!
How many songs, how many essays we should have,
to record, to celebrate,
this sacrifice of flesh and blood, a moving and tragic reality!

However many plays everywhere performed and sung
they could not do justice to this most dramatic campaign of life-and-death importance!
No matter how many books, how much wine and food, how many clothes,
to nurture spirit and body, show gratitude and nurse them back to health,
we could not recompense these heroes who, for you and I, shed blood on the battleground.

In another hospital, sorry but I cannot say where,\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{7} 十字 (shìzì): abbreviation for \textit{Hongshízì huì} [Red Cross Society of China]. This suggests the more able-bodied soldiers had been enlisted as Red Cross helpers in the infirmary (or perhaps wore badges for identification as wounded for protection from Japanese forces). China’s Red Cross had been set up during the Russo-Japanese war (1904 – 1905) to provide relief in the Manchurian war zones for Chinese civilians. During the 2nd Sino-Japanese war while still very active, the Red Cross mainly operated in KMT-held areas of southwest China or a few areas under Japanese occupation, neither of which applies here, so the Red Cross may not have actually run or administered it.
are Jiangsu-Gansu railroad workers equally deserving of admiration, 
braving bombs and gunfire, they rushed about, 
giving their lives entirely to their duties!
Listening out for air raids, worrying about the vehicles, 
their sense of duty ensures the safety of the carriages!
Under cover of snowfall, or by starlight, 
from dusk right through to dawn, 
they rush to repair blown-up tracks and bridges;
to supply the army, they break through Tongguan’s fiery encirclement,\(^9\)
bringing reinforcements, and hurrying comrades to the front;
when the frontline shifts, and cannon fire falls like rain,
the nation’s equipment is more critical than human life!
Sadly, time and aspiration do not aid each other,
the enemy’s sharp blade presses on our necks,
the Jiangsu-Gansu railroad workers seldom surrender,
some were killed, some fled –
forced to live on spoilt tea and leftover food\(^{10}\) all the way to Luoyang!
See, this simple ward, filled to overflowing with small beds,
strapped-up legs, bandaged heads, dangling arms,
every bandage is the nation’s ray of light!
Ah, your blood is given for a just cause,
comrades, here’s wishing you a quick return to health!
Death, disgraceful death,
through you, through me, through national law and natural justice,\(^{11}\)
increases the dishonour of those devoid of conscience!

\(^8\) Apparently not because of a memory lapse but for reasons of security; the surviving railroad workers might have become targets (but of the Japanese or the KMT?)
\(^9\) This suggests a siege or blockade of Tongguan, but may simply refer to the on-going air raids on the Longhai railroad around the vicinity of Tongguan. See canto 6 footnote 12.
\(^{10}\) 残茶剩饭 (canchashengfan): idiom, meaning being obliged to beg for crumbs to survive.
\(^{11}\) 天网 (tian wang): literally, the net of God rather than man-made laws; meaning that evil doers will not escape divine punishment (天网 "Cihai," p.2801).
I was destined to come to Luoyang and meant to stay,
because a bumper year’s rainstorms swept away the Luoyang Bridge!
This northern sky, northern atmosphere,
one black cloud means a massive storm with raging waves;
one of the warm south’s fine rain, tapping lightly on banana leaves,
through lamplight shadows and flowers’ fragrance, dripping until dawn;
here, summer’s heat has not yet gone, but cold winds blow,
slanting raindrops sound heavy as hail;
dreadful dark clouds swoop over distant hills, chasing after birds,
for a moment, all is darkness, a tidal wave of clouds is tumbling;
myriad waterfalls merge to form a single one,
the mass of water suspended in mid-air is dumped onto the ground;
water in a torrent, water bouncing gleefully,
water drumming is the only sound!
In a while, as if worried over something, anxious to escape,
those black clouds, thunderclaps and lightning, roll off elsewhere with their din.
A distant rainbow’s seven colours span the sky!
Thus, from sudden rain to fine, the sky with travellers one minute weeps then smiles:
hearing the falling rain, our hopes of starting out again diminish,
seeing clear sky, we know it’s bound to bring on air-raid warnings;
without planning it but rather to fill in time, I visit a dear friend,
take a look in the markets, idly strolling to the outskirts,
my impatience eased by accepting what is fixed by fate.
Great heroes do not necessarily have tiger’s eyes and bear’s broad back,¹
likewise, Luoyang city is not at all grand and bustling;
very small town, narrow roadways,
petite, pretty, vivacious just like its daughters;
ah, Luoyang’s daughters, even its middle-aged matrons,
all wear short garments, having abandoned long gowns!²

¹虎目熊腰 (hu mu xiong yao): here Lao She apparently modifies the common idiom meaning a tough and stocky build (hu bei xiong yao 虎背熊腰). His modification, with ‘tiger’s eyes’, suggests qualities of sensitivity and discernment as well as physical brawn.

²
Not very busy, nor yet extremely bleak,
despite the constant annoyance of evil enemy planes.

Like a peacock spreading its tail, this small town, tail-heavy,
with wondrously scenic historic sites displayed around its outskirts;
I passed the ancient bridge where Kangjie heard the cuckoo,
dense willow shade shielding avenues,
pavilions and gardens of Song times, a haze of defiant laughter,
today the scene is glossy green fields and grass!

By roadside, a tiny village, tiny shrine,
in a cosy den, a naked urchin says his family name is Shao.

Following the willows’ shade, treading on the grass;
wood wind, blowing golden sunshine into fields of seedlings,
then waves of fragrance prompt us to chat and laugh.

Before reaching Longmen, we first see Guan Temple’s red walls and green cypresses:
inside the temple, a spacious well-lit courtyard, gleaming stone inscriptions,
pine trees reverently shade the shrine;
Guan Gong glares as if his hatred cannot vanish,
face slightly tilted, whiskers almost floating,
in light gown and loose girdle yet with fury on his forehead;
but, being a mighty god now controls his anger,
awe-inspiring righteousness curbs ferocity.

This founded noble notions, subtly expressed,
in countless religious images of striving for the goal!

At the temple’s rear, flawed images in small niches,
for superstitious old dears to make offerings to spirits,

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2 长袍 (changpao): perhaps because of the inconvenience of the traditional Chinese long robe; perhaps due to wartime shortages.
3 康节: Song dynasty scholar and poet Shao Kangjie, better known as Shao Yong. According to legend, Shao Yong was crossing Luoyang’s Tianjin Bridge, and on hearing a cuckoo foretold the decline and fall of the Song dynasty: Feng Menglong, Yang Shuhui, and Yang Yunqing, *Stories to Caution the World: A Ming Dynasty Collection*, (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, ProQuest ebrary, 2005), p.57.
4 邵: here Lao She may be deliberately noting the connection, whether coincidental or not, with Kangjie’s family name (which also conveniently provides a rhyme to fit the yun).
5 龙门: Longmen Grottoes, famous for their Buddhist carvings.
6 关庙 (Guan miao): referring to the temple dedicated to the legendary general Guan Yu (see canto 9 footnote 16). In his position as Daoist God of War Guan Yu is known as Guan Gong 关公 or Guandi 关帝.
7 老太婆 (laotaipo): a sometimes contemptuous way of referring to an elderly woman.
Guan Gong reading, Guan Gong sleeping,
the reverence and devotion has become absurd!
Behind the temple, the quiet shade of pines,
shelters Guandi’s gravestone pavilion and tomb.

60 It’s said another⁹ king’s tomb and shrine are in the eastern suburbs,
the facts of terrain and history are quite reliable;
to fight for a true god, one tolerates no imposters,
folk from two villages, since ancient times,
still argue indignantly about this!
With no time for more thorough inspection,
we face the king’s¹⁰ tomb, even if it be false,
to offer the salutations and prayers deserved.
Having paid homage at the shrine, we turn back down the main street;
mountain, river, and the mighty bridge across,
draw us racing with happy shouts to Longmen!

70 The old man leading the way, like every guide,
has the manner of a hermit, with scholarly pride,
reciting well-known rhyming verse in praise of graceful trees and lofty mountains,
a spring, a rock, all seem to have infinite mystery!
He points out, singing praises:
pearly springs, lotus-flower caves, ancient Tang temples……
in fact, these waters are not remarkable, the mountains are not high,
Longmen’s fame and value were created by skilled workers!
Buddha statues by the thousands, in a surging tide,

80 Buddha caves and cliffs, images of Buddha, castle of the Buddha;
in spaces smaller than a chi, numerous sculptures carved,
on walls of stone the myriad names of Buddha are engraved;
large enough to be read a zhang away, Buddha’s teachings shine from afar,
instructing humankind to tread the path of virtue!
This faith, from Tang and Six Dynasties time,
thrives and flourishes in brilliant religious art;

⁹ There is no indication which king this refers to.
¹⁰ Presumably, the un-named king referred to in line 60.
humble common folk, nobility and the rich,
for those dying of disease, or to live without mishap into old age;
through the ten-"zhang lotus throne,¹¹ majestic and wonderful,
or a half-"chi idol, devout in heart but with little power;
they come to pray, and to repay with thanks,
that mercy shown equally to all, with enlightening inspiration!
Cash encouraging the craftsman’s skill,
sums surpassing actor’s pay, generous rewards,
for blending special points of Buddhist thought and Greek sculpture’s artistry,¹²
with the beauty of the human form shown in mysterious smile.¹³
Hawkers¹⁴ from nearby villages and towns,
sell cheap souvenirs to visitors in a hurry,
who seek only ‘Buddha’,¹⁵ disregarding quality,
crude wooden idols, mass-produced in sets!
A millennium’s wind and rain, stone worn down and spirit withered,
because of calamity and chaos in the human world, monks fled the lonely caves,
with broken arms and snapped-off heads, even gods could not protect themselves!
The more meticulous the creation,
the more likely to draw looters,
while some mediocre little idols luckily escaped the wanton damage!
Ah, Longmen, art, religion,
this ugly world of humans, has wrecked much more than it created!
Twenty years ago, copying¹⁶ ‘Longmen’ was my hobby,
whenever I unfolded a page of rubbings, admiring the original characters’ sharp outlines,
then, indulging my idle and unlimited imagination, Longmen became for me,
the grandest and most elegant creation of human hand and heavenly skill;

¹¹ 连台 (lián tài): this can refer to an actual throne or simply to a statue seated in the lotus position. Lao She here is contrasting the various images through which believers revere the Buddha, without referring to a specific statue. The largest statue at Longmen, known as the Vairocana Buddha, is 17 metres (57 feet tall).
¹² Like the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan, built between 507 and 554 CE, the Longmen statues show the influence of Greco-Roman sculpture.
¹³ Possibly meaning the Vairocana Buddha.
¹⁴ 牛撅 (Niu jue)…阿猫 (A mao): literally, ‘Pouting Niu [and] A Mao’. The names, with their cartoonish suggestion of ‘country bumpkins’, were possibly invented to underline Lao She’s disparaging comments about souvenir-sellers.
¹⁵ 佛多 (Fo duo): literally, plenty of Buddha. This phrase is read as emphasising how the quality of such souvenirs was sacrificed for quantity.
¹⁶ 拷写 (moxiē): making copies of original Chinese texts by transcribing directly or tracing from stone rubbings.
now, gazing up at stone carvings, looking out upon the rushing river,
I am not disappointed, nor yet am I overcome with joy;
perhaps these few lovely remnants have turned my admiration into mourning for the past.
Leaving Longmen’s grottoes, we cross the bridge,
Bai Xiangshan’s tomb and shrine\(^\text{17}\) watch over autumn rains and spring tides.
Oh, who would have thought, who would have thought,
could it truly be that human life is just the stuff of dreams?!

120 Who would have anticipated, that gallant writer,
Wang Lixi, poetry’s new bloom so aptly appearing in spring,\(^\text{18}\)
would come to share Longmen’s loneliness at Xiangshan!
Heavy rain, obstructing our mission south to bring comfort to the troops,
likewise delayed his journey north of Zhongtiao;
regardless of weather, sooner or later,
we call on each other, to chat and laugh.
Brave Lixi, no matter how large the task,
careful and meticulous he toiled:
running everywhere through steaming summer heat or storms;
still thinking about poems, about field reports,
pondering the issue of how to discuss;
trying hard to fight fatigue, calmly he drove away his worries!
With a smile he visualised, shouldering his rations, barefoot,
oh, off to sneak across the Yellow River, and wipe out enemy sentries,
the night black as lacquer, ghostly marsh-lights\(^\text{19}\) dodge and skip about,
reaching the battlefield he hears the guns,
and when daybreak comes sees Zhongtiao!
Then, afterwards, … he was excited, smiling,
in Luoyang, his poetic imagination for so long dwelt on distant rivers and mountains,
yet he would not forget to praise the courtyard’s flowers and plants.

\(^{17}\) 白香山的祠墓 (Bai Xiangshan de cimu): tomb of Tang poet Bai Juyi in the grounds of the Xiangshan Monastery where he spent his last years. With this indirect reference Lao She seems to suggest parallels between Bai Juyi’s life and that of Wang Lixi (see lines 120-122).
\(^{18}\) Lao She’s friend and colleague. See the annotation inserted by Lao She at the end of this canto (footnote 21). After Wang Lixi’s death Lao She contributed to a special memorial issue of the daily newspaper Xinhua ribao 新华日报 (October 8 1939), also writing a poetic tribute to him that was published in Kangzhan wenyi, as well as an essay which appeared in the January 1940 issue of Xin shubao.
\(^{19}\) 鬼火 (guihuo): sometimes translated as ‘will-o’-the-wisp’; the phenomenon of phosphorescence seen over swampy areas at night.
Who would have thought, with this courage and diligence,
that heartless fate would take his life away;
with the illness that tormented him, through wild mountains and ancient roads,
spoiling the brilliant blossoms of his verse and darkening the moon!
When I gazed calmly out from Xiangshan Shrine,
I could imagine you, oh Lixi:
in those suburbs of wutong and hibiscus,\(^{20}\)
writing poems, or smiling at the flowers,
ah, that lingering smile!
150 Soon after, just here, who would have thought,
your new burial mound of flimsy grass would be added next to Xiangshan’s tombs.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{20}\) 木槿 (mu jin)

\(^{21}\) After Mr Lixi returned to his home country he began writing poetry in the style of vernacular speech, and further stated that in future he would no longer use classical Chinese. *Annotation inserted by Lao She at the end of canto 12.*
13 Luoyang (part 3)

Ah, how alarming, the rise and fall of dynasties!
See, Luo River to the south,\(^1\) Mangshan north,\(^2\)
Shouyang\(^3\) and Funiu\(^4\) obliquely facing far apart;
grand and wonderful terrain, bright and lovely landscape,
and in those times, rare and wonderful species,\(^5\) people of outstanding talent,
gathered in this splendid city where Tang poems and Song lyrics were composed;
blessed place of precious objects,\(^6\) though peace and prosperity come and go,\(^7\)
at Beimang’s seventy-two imperial tombs, even in death nobility still has wealth and honour!
Now, evening rain and morning sun make distant mountains bright green,
river willows’ leaves stir gently in the wind, tempted by the lovely weather,
where, oh where, is the luxurious capital of those many dynasties?
Besides Beimang’s lush grass and neglected gravestones,
we see, oh truly, we wish it were not so -
how could ancient Luoyang already be so easily destroyed!?
Muddy little village, roosters crow and dogs bark,
green trees and fields, village children riding cattle,
could this be the pearly dew\(^8\) that brightly shone,

\(^1\) This Luo (not to be confused with the much larger tributary of the Wei River that flows through the Loess Plateau) arises on the southern flank of Huashan and flows eastwards to Luoyang before reaching the plain and joining the Yellow River.
\(^2\) Mountain near Luoyang with many Han, Wei and Jin dynasty tombs, also known as Beimang (北邙); see lines 9 and 13.
\(^3\) 首阳: abbreviation for Shouyangshan east of Luoyang city. Given Lao She’s quite clear description of its geographical orientation, this should not be confused with southern Shanxi’s Shouyangshan, famous for the legend of Bo Yi and Shu Qi 叔齐 (首阳山 "Cihai," p.4674).
\(^4\) 伏牛: abbreviation for the Funiushan mountains running southeast of Luoyang and the lower Yellow River valley.
\(^5\) 异草奇花 (yi cao qi hua): literally, unusual grasses and strange flowers. More commonly expressed 奇花异草 this idiom is used as a literary convention meaning unusual talent or ability.
\(^7\) 凤去龙归 (feng qu long gui): literally, phoenix goes and dragon returns. This phrase is read as another comment on the fluctuations of history, repeating the sentiments of line 1. Dragon and phoenix together have several metaphorical associations, the most relevant here being that of prosperity and good fortune: Williams, *A manual of Chinese metaphor*, p.47. The dragon alone may represent vigilance and defence; the phoenix was believed to appear only times of peace and prosperity under a wise and benevolent ruler: C.A.S. Williams, *Outlines of Chinese symbolism and art motives* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974), p.324. This phrase may also be a partial borrowing from Li Bai’s *Deng jinling fenghuang tai* 登金陵凤凰台 [Climbing Phoenix Terrace], which similarly contemplates historical change.
on emperor’s palace, on golden watchtower’s heavenly power?

That national capital’s city wall, true emperor’s defence!

Aren’t those just piles of loess outside the White Horse Temple?

What violent storm replaced the playing of jade flutes?

What battles with blade and flame displaced the treasures of a cultured life?

Several thousand years of rain and dew, liquor and rich living,
bright mansions with thousands of lovely palace women fluttering in fine dresses,
then in a short time, all flies away to dust!

We pass through village outposts, cross the River Luo,
treading on moist earth of fields after rain,
or sharing grassy riverbanks with tiny butterflies,
to see those excavations of great Jin’s ancient monument,
proof of the status of Luoyang’s ancient Imperial College.

Fragrant winds over fields, pleasant calm of distant woods,
make people long for happiness, and give way to grief;
yesterday’s bejewelled jade palace, today’s dust,
the squandering of human labour is mankind’s tragedy;
time’s great changes slow history’s advance and hasten its reverses!

See, this poor village that’s become a filthy heap,
streets of stagnant puddles, discordant droning of mosquitoes and flies;
exactly here, the Imperial College monument lies!

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8 玉露 (yulu): also translated as ‘early-morning autumn dew’. Metaphorically, in keeping with the mood of this canto, it indicates something transitory.
9 金阙 (jin que): another term for the imperial palace.
10 白马寺 (Baima Si): Lao She, on his way to visit the temple just outside the walls of the ancient capital, apparently glimpsed it from afar (see footnote 21 for further detail on the White Horse Temple).
11 玉笛 (yu di): referencing a phrase from Li Bai’s poem Chun ye Luo cheng wen di [Hearing a flute on a spring night in Luoyang] (玉笛 “Ciyuan,” p.1102).
12 宝马金龟 (baoma jingui): literally, fine horse and golden tortoise. Here Lao She, by condensing two metaphors 宝马香车 (baomaixiangche) and 金龟换酒 (jingui huan jiu), seems to suggest that the indulgences of a cultured life sowed the seeds of its downfall. 宝马香车 [fine horse and magnificent carriage] describes a wealthy family’s extravagant lifestyle; 金龟换酒 [golden tortoise traded for fine liquor] refers to the Golden Tortoise insignia worn by Tang Dynasty officials being exchanged for a drunken lifestyle, behaviour referred to in a poem by Li Bai (金龟 “Cihai,” p.3871).
13 翠袖: apparently an abbreviated form of the classical expression 翠袖红裙 (cui xiu hong qun) referring to a woman’s garments literally as blue-green sleeves and red skirts.
14 The monument on the outskirts of Luoyang associated with the system of ‘Imperial College’ founded in the Zhou dynasty (辟雍 “Ciyuan,” p.1653). In 1931 the monument’s location was discovered near the original site of the Western Jin Imperial College 太学 (Taixue) (太学 ibid., p.0382).
15 沧海桑田 (canghaisanshi): idiom.
“Imperial College, founded, thrice visited by the great Jin Emperor,” oh, perfect inscription, set on the stone’s smooth surface, in famed and precious script! Which conflict, catastrophe, first started the descent into history’s darkness, burying the brilliance of fifteen hundred years, beneath the dust; till now, as if following fate’s command, this silent bookless place making modern folk lament their shameful loss of history! With villagers leading, we form a small archaeological team, looking at those excavated places, to identify the Imperial College site; in green shade of sesame and maize, a few small graves heaped up, just opposite the remaining traces of ancient Luoyang, fragments of classics inscribed on stone, and the entire Jin monument, all in this field, where by chance, we meet the farmer. We want to cheer, the mountains and great rivers have granted us the knowledge, this is the southern suburb, this the Imperial College, ancient Luoyang’s treasure! If culture is like breathing, military power is the lungs, no matter what violent winds and rainstorms come, what blasts of sickness sweep the land, sturdy lungs will beat the peril! Today, our Suzhou and Hangzhou, those paradise-like cities, have just as this ancient unresisting city did, suffered devastation! The subtle fragrance of historic documents, graceful gardens, all blown to pieces overnight by enemy bombing! That city’s schools too, illuminating central China, the flower of youth, clean and elegant facilities, today they also hang their heads and cringe, in silent grief and shame beneath the devils’ feet! A fragile culture resembles the vivid beauty of tuberculosis,

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16 The full inscription commemorates the visit of Jin Emperor Wudi (reigned 265-290) and his Crown Prince (later Emperor Huidi 290-301).
17 隶书 (lishu): a form of calligraphy characterised by square plain style, and known as ‘Clerical script’ or ‘Official script’, which evolved during the Warring States and Qin Dynasty periods and was still used in the Jin Dynasty (Cihai, p.4636).
18 Referring to the expression 上有天堂下有苏杭 (shangyou tiantang, xiayou Su Hang) comparing the beauty of Suzhou and Hangzhou to paradise.
19 东海的狂风 (Dong Hai de kuangfeng): literally, by East China Sea gales.
20 华北 (Huabei): generic term for the northern provinces of Hebei, Shanxi and Inner Mongolia (华北 “Cihai,” p.280).
the feeble physique makes the mind dejected!
Even birds and bees know self-defence,
with wings, stings and beaks,

70 they fight the enemy, risking their lives to protect their nests!
The brilliance of China’s children in this generation,
will replace the nation’s wasteful decline with soldierly courage and resolve;
we must use war to conquer war,
our civilisation has to “beat” back barbarism!
Ah, ancient Luoyang, today’s Suzhou, Hangzhou and central China,
it is so shocking, so dreadful!
We must not only oppose the enemy, we must relish opposing them!
Believe me: for a culture to survive first there must be self-defence!
Regretfully, we turn back to the riverbank and retrace our steps,
borrow someone’s boat, and cross the waters of the Luo.
In the distance, an old pagoda’s high tower, shadows breaking over tranquil woods,
make us step out swiftly,
the long day’s hunger, thirst and tiredness are forgotten,
so eager we are to see where that bright light of Buddhism first shone upon the central plains,
oh, long may it last, this first Buddhist temple in China!
White Horse Temple still here on earth, long may it endure!21
Before the entrance, the Song Dynasty stone horses stand facing each other,
giving the temple its name and main monastery gate.
From fervent devotion to ancient history, or seeking forgiveness,
donations come from many regions, transforming fragile remnants to magnificence:
main gate and entrance hall clear and radiant,
each wooden beam, each stone, painted and embellished according to ancient design.
Stately yet vivid, filled with compassion,
those golden bodies are models of art,
in human form the Buddha’s true mystery is revealed,

21 According to legend the temple was built during the reign of the Eastern Han Emperor Ming 汉明帝 (28-75CE) to commemorate the return of two monks (symbolised by the two white horses) carrying Buddhist sutras from India. The monks – identified as Kasyapa-Matanga (Chinese name Jiaye-Moteng 迦叶摩腾 or She Moteng) and Dharmaratna (Chinese name Zhu Falan 竺法兰) then reportedly began working on the translations of these sutras: Demieville, “Philosophy and religion from Han to Sui,” pp. 823-824. Later the monk Dharmaraksa (Chinese name Zhu Fahu 竺法护) was based there from around 266CE while making the first translations of the sutras which became the foundation texts of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism: Ibid., p.837.
making us forget worldly problems, yet somehow enhancing insight!
Moteng, Zhu Falan, oh, what fragrance in those sacred Buddhist names,\textsuperscript{22}
gazing at Luoyang’s red dust and bewitching mist,
at Beimang’s ruined flowers and sinking moon,
on Qingliang’s ancient terrace,\textsuperscript{23} this world was given a sense of clarity:
the sacred texts of Buddha, through their wisdom,
enriched China’s culture and vocabulary,
teaching poetic emotion and ways of thought to explore the tranquil beauty of the soul,
cultivating the lotus-flower of paradise in the garden of Confucius and Mencius.
In the courtyard, two great masters’ tombs face each other,
at left and right, matching temple rooms for two great masters;\textsuperscript{24}
east of the courtyard, the pagoda of relics with Di Lianggong’s\textsuperscript{25} tomb,
behind, Qingliang Terrace bearing the profound imprint of history.
With reverence we gaze, we ponder over,
ancient temples and ancient cities, living or dying, flourishing or falling:
walking in the setting sun, we return to Luoyang – War of Resistance stronghold,
ah, new Luoyang must be the base, the bastion for our War of Resistance!

\textsuperscript{22} See preceding footnote. Lao She apparently misheard, misremembered, or miscopied these names, writing Moteng in the reversed form of Tengmo 腾摩 and Zhu Falan as Si Falan 丝法兰.
\textsuperscript{23} 清凉的古台: Qingliang Terrace, behind the main hall of the temple, is reputedly where the translation of the original sutras took place. The next phrase – ‘a sense of clarity’ (清凉滋味 qingliang ziwei) – is apparently a pun on the terrace’s name.
\textsuperscript{24} The statues of She Moteng and Zhu Falan are housed in halls of the Kunlu Pavilion on the Qingliang Terrace.
\textsuperscript{25} 狄梁公, more commonly known as Di Renjie 狄仁傑 (630–700), Tang Dynasty politician whose character inspired the anonymous 18\textsuperscript{th} century Chinese detective novel \textit{Di Gong An} 狄公案 [Judge Dee].
14  **Luoyang – Yexian**

Braving air raids, we cross the river;
at Longmen, facing those silent stone Buddhas,
we heard bombs falling in the distance;
gazing now at Luoyang, we are silent.
This bloodthirsty madness,
morning and evening, this way more than two years,
blood scattered everywhere has created hatred!
We believe, with your long and changing history,
Luoyang, with your composure,\(^1\)
armed with the bright sword of justice,\(^2\)
we can surely overcome and also purge this bloody crime!

By now, with noonday sun fiercely burning,
we go inside a small-town shop to escape the heat;
donkeys and horses with ox-carts crossing the road,
also pause to shelter in the shade;
sweating cart drivers, passengers with sunburnt faces,
pull up cooling straw mats, indifferent to hunger and thirst,
and find any handy place to take a nap.

Poverty brings despair, fatigue leads to silence,
even small boys selling melons don’t bother calling out their wares.
With two big melons, some hot steamed buns,
surrounded by flies we satisfy hunger and thirst.
A few narrow benches or small tables,
we lie down all over the place,\(^3\)
cursing the flies, soothed by nightmares.\(^4\)
As travellers and pack animals move off,
we too farewell the eternal calm of Longmen’s ancient Buddhas.
All the way, seeing flourishing fields of grain,
and the hard toil of all kinds of people,

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1. **从容不迫 (congrongbupo):** idiom meaning calm and unflustered.
2. **宝剑 (baojian):** literally, double-edged sword.
3. **横躺竖卧 (hengtangshuwo):** here translated literally, the idiom is also used to mean exhausted and in disarray.
4. Meaning, whatever sleep they snatched was restless and disturbed.
we sing our battle songs,
weariness and searing heat forgotten.
Distantly, we hear the rise and fall of bugle\(^5\) calls,
in Shilipu’s\(^6\) green shade soldiers have gathered;
from afar, they beckon, invite us to stop,
oh, the officers’ politeness, the welcoming soldiers,
make us rest a while in the village!
Soldiers’ hard work has cleaned up the foul sewers,
clean streets, tree shadows leaping;

40
in the shade huge mouth-watering melons, thin-skinned and full of juice,
and several pairs of white chickens pecking in the grass for worms.
Friendly handshakes, gripped and gripped again,
sincere laughter is the fuel of friendship;
cool melon, hot tea, for guests to quench their thirst,
beneath an ancient temple’s pine pavilion hosts and guests share seats;
youngsters in training request a speech,
barefoot and shaven-headed, well-behaved yet lively;
the officers’ need is for spiritual nourishment,
have we brought new books, new poetry?

50
All are excited, attending to guests and one another,
this moment when strangers meet by chance,\(^7\)
out of the hardships of this War of Resistance comes the joy of unity,
like old friends meeting in a foreign land, talking frankly and more affectionately.
Silently the sun’s lengthening shadows warn travellers on foot,
we must go on with our journey, though loath to leave.
Hurry to Linru,\(^8\) sun already down,
find shelter by the full moon’s brilliance,
a quiet and secluded bamboo grove, blurred\(^9\) shadows of people mingle.
Drop our luggage, feeling hungry,

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\(^5\) 号 (hao): given the military context this is read as an abbreviation for 号筒 (haotong) rather than 号角 (haojiao), a horn or trumpet.
\(^6\)十里铺: read as meaning Shilipuxiang, a village in central Henan.
\(^7\) 萍水相逢 (pingshuixiangfeng): a metaphor comparing the random meeting of people to duckweed’s haphazard drifting with the current.
\(^8\)临汝: a town approximately halfway between Luoyang and central Henan.
\(^9\) 花 (hua): read in the sense of tangled or dappled in appearance.
searching by moonlight for food and drink; on the street solid\(^{10}\) ancient trees, huge shadows but few people, searched everywhere for food-stalls, right out to the city wall, couldn’t find a single lantern burning; ah, still this old town is somewhere to rest at sundown, leave at sunrise, travellers arriving late must put up with hunger! Gazing at the bright moon, helpless,\(^{11}\) smiling wryly, we return to the hostel, facing moonlit \textit{wutong} trees, thus\(^{12}\) we sleep, smelling flower-nectar’s fragrance, dreaming of plump fish and warmed wine!

Forest birds up early catch the insects, we too rise as soon as possible to break our fast. We set out with the morning sun, so as to finish this day’s work: firstly to comfort wounded soldiers, then, if time allows, visit that Buddha pavilion among the pines, ancient Xiangji Temple’s\(^{13}\) clouded mountain scenery; then we must cross the Ruhe,\(^{14}\) we’re told the bridge was washed away by heavy rain. Those who rise early deal with many obstacles, through lingering mountain dew, we climb the pine-clad slopes.

Low hills and shallow streams, thousands of odd-shaped pines, pines on mountain peaks, pines leaning beside creeks, pines on banks by bridges, their old roots turned into bridge supports; sparse branches, twisted trunks, they seem to lean and bend, thousands of postures, filling hilltops, slopes and mountain streams all green; all kinds of shapes, yet green all over, green trees, blue sky, yellow earth, blending to please the eye. Their harmony gives a sense of distant clarity, like green waves rippling calmly in the air.

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\(^{10}\) 合抱 \textit{(hebao)}: literally, wide enough in girth to wrap the arms around. \\
^{11}\) 束手无策 \textit{(shushouwuce)}: literally, hands tied and unable to do anything about it (idiom). \\
^{12}\) 高卧 \textit{(gao wo)}: literally, to sleep high. Normally a metaphor that means living in seclusion having retired from official duties, it seems to be used ironically here. \\
^{13}\) 香积寺: not to be confused with the better-known Xiangji Si near Xi’an, this temple near Ruzhou is now known as Fengxue Temple. One of China’s earliest Buddhist temples, it probably dates from the Eastern Han period, and was enlarged and reconstructed by successive dynastic administrations up to the Qing. \\
^{14}\) 汝河: river flowing through Ruzhou.
Though hills are low, streams shallow, yet with these eerie pines,
poetic hearts are peaceful and at ease.

90 In the temple, Buddha’s purified hall, layers of courtyards,
the monument which prolongs life and protects, the bell that proclaims harmony,
though the pagoda is low, and its form old and simple.
Behind the courtyard, spring-water bubbles in a pond below the pavilion,
rinsing pine roots, keeping mosses moist and colourful,
flowing into creeks and making dragonflies and frogs all cheerful,
green scenery still in our minds, yet already before our eyes the Ruhe surges.

Barren sands on both shores, low bridge over wide water,
no shade, just a stretch of steaming heat.
Soldiers from the battlefront, at midnight gather on the banks,
still carrying their weapons, sitting on the sandy shores.

100 Weary people and hot horses are ferried over slowly,
the fierce current, the deep river, impossible to swim across.
Everyone quiet, burning with impatience,
watching that long bridge, ah, washed over by the breakers!
Only on a hard march is the army’s cheerful spirit seen,
see, these comrades enduring thirst and hunger,
their sweat like rainfall, sitting silent with their guns!
These strong soldiers, having gone through the fires of discipline,
have steel’s hardness, cotton’s gentleness.

If they have good rifles, boats and vehicles to hand,
they will be able to resist all attacks, will definitely win battles,
the best troops on earth are those in China!

110 Noon already, when we cross the river,
no big trees to be found, we make do with a few small date shrubs,
under small leaves casting tiny shadows, we’re forced to crouch half-squatting,
watching those tiny shining dates, like thousands of green beads.
Afterwards, we take our time to find the District Office,
then watermelons and hot steamed buns as well.

Afternoon, setting sun still high, already we spot Yexian’s town walls.

120 A black cloud, sudden gusts shake us violently,
will it rain? Be windy? Caution is the traveller’s best tactic.
We approached that quiet town gateway,
in a moment, sure enough thunder stunned us, rain splashed down.
Thus were we unexpected guests in Yexian.
Outside Nanyang, white water\(^1\) rinsing yellow sand,
in the city, quiet narrow streets;
water channels wind through the city, poplars and willows and croaking crows,
in the city’s alleys, peaceful households;
from dimly-lit small shops in narrow lanes, the rasp of jade-cutting,
jade cups and chopsticks, with flowery engraving;
why is half that street full of broken bricks and tiles?
What heartless calamity toppled houses?

How could this ancient city’s quiet elegance,
have been a sin, that had to be destroyed?
This hatred, what greater hatred could there be?
There was no reason for this ancient city to be bombed!
An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,
only killing, only fighting back,
only by these primitive ways,
can this hatred, this disgrace, be wiped away!
Seeing explosions in the city,
I love still more to hear the bugle’s thrilling call at dawn.

The green public square, multi-coloured morning clouds,
eighing war-horses between the clouds and grass;
gun carriages move softly, sergeants without fuss,
alone in intention, unvarying in pace,
stepping on the green grass, with big strides and swelled chests,
following the horses, soldiers working cannons, bursting with youthful patriotism!
See, that flag, fluttering grandly in the dawn wind,
it spearheads the War of Resistance, is the essence of our precious blood,
leading our invincible army, to thrash the enemy everywhere.
Already it flies high in southern gateways of towering ranges and wondrous cliffs,

\(^1\) 白水 (bai shui): probably a play on the name of the Baihe (白河) which flows through Nanyang before joining the Han River to the south.

\(^2\) 倭寇 (Wokou): another term for the Japanese, deriving from the 14\(^{th}\) to 16\(^{th}\) centuries when Japanese pirates raided China’s eastern seaboard (倭寇 “Cihai,” p.577).
beneath its dignity and brilliance,
there is no withdrawal, only charging ahead to slaughter enemy,
every man forgets himself,\(^3\)
this spirit, that dyed Nankou’s\(^4\) sandstorms blood-red.
Make the arrogant “Imperial Army”\(^5\) know fear;
even one person alone can strike,
and with a knife can kill,
just as blades break and guns are silenced,\(^6\)
Nankou’s mountains and rocks could crush the enemy cavalry!

40 This fearless flag, all year round,
flies above the battlefield, hoisted high with army spirits,
forever flowering with victory’s splendid red;
wearing the blood-red of Juyongguan and Nankou like rosy clouds,
and at Tai’erzhuang\(^7\) proclaimed its glory;
facing this flag, these troops,
ah, what thousand-foot high raging flames, clearly seen from faraway,
it makes me tremble, makes me weep.
What poetic words, the finest of speech,
to praise this spirit, this greatness!

50 What rare exotic plant worth dedicating,
to decorate each one of these steel helmets and weapons!
Flowers cannot be found, nor words,
only silent prayers, for this righteous flag to triumph in East Asia,
nourishing flowers of peace and justice with our blood!
We presented banners to the troops, chatted with people,
that evening, theatre, singing, an amusement hall,
young men and women, in high spirits,
using artistic performance to attack the cruel enemy.

Twelve-year old boys play country elders,

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\(^3\) 忘了身家 (wang le shen jia): literally, neglects body and family.
\(^4\) Here and in line 43 Lao She refers to the August 1937 Battle of the Great Wall. Nankou (南口 "Cihai," p.305), a town north-west of Beijing, was built in the early Ming period and acquired strategic importance along with the Great Wall’s Juyongguan Pass (居庸关 ibid., p.2456).
\(^5\) 皇军 (huangjun): in this context, the Japanese Army.
\(^6\) Meaning that weapons become useless.
\(^7\) 台儿庄: the 1938 battle at Tai’erzhuang, sometimes seen as part of the Battle of Xuzhou.
smoking homemade cigarettes, grey hair draping their shoulders, every word and movement meticulous and polished. This holy war, like spring rain that hastens blossom, brings intelligence, talent and strength through common inspiration; giving the weak courage to fight, making timid people fearless, enabling the mute to speak their thoughts through actors’ lines and song! These twelve-year old children, along with China’s daring War of Resistance, and our new-born art, will grow up at the same time! Oh, our new nation, will then be lovely as fresh flowers, with dances, songs, paintings, it will have power and culture, strength and refinement; such is true only of upright nations, peaceful yet great, whose code of ethics brings everyone happiness, makes everything more beautiful, each person’s dignity like a priceless treasure! To view Han dynasty stone carvings, we visit an old temple, Xuanmiao’s meditation hall also had been bombed. Multi-storeyed temple, massive courtyard, pine shadow barely screens grape trellises, beneath the shade Daoist disciples offer tea; behind is a garden planted half in fragrant flowers half in melons, a reed pavilion for visitors to chat in; Han dynasty mythical creatures crouch in clear light, silently watching pine branches where trumpet vine blooms hang upside-down, blue sky and greenery, huge golden flowers,
what could surpass the beauty of this natural picture?
Flowers’ fragrance in calm air, clouds motionless over the elegant temple,
it rather makes one want to change into priestly garments!\textsuperscript{14}

But wheels move again, the sooner we set off the better,

ah, we must regard this rushing from place to place as being monks on pilgrimage!

Below Wolonggang\textsuperscript{15} vast tracts of mulberry and hemp,\textsuperscript{16}
above are forests bright as paintings,
the day still young, we snatch a hurried visit,
finally at Nanyang yet possibly not to revere that Longzhong Plan.\textsuperscript{17}
In the ancestral shrine, tall cypresses hold the shadow, bringing coolness,
tea pavilions and groves of gravestones lined up below two porches.
Marquis Wu’s gilded form seems tasteless,
blankly watching bamboo tags\textsuperscript{18} and holy candles before the shrine.

Behind the hall, a small thatched cottage half-collapsed,
daubed here and there with vulgar inscriptions.
At the back of the hall, paintings displayed on a table, maps hanging,
exploiting the ancient shrine’s elevated culture,
Guan Yu and Zhang Fei\textsuperscript{19} nearby, representing the ruler and his ministers in conference;
mediocre statues really not worth praising,
their dress recognisably human though they are superior to illusory Buddhist idols.
The chancellor himself founding Nanyang here,\textsuperscript{20} is the tale true or false?
I fear that devotion outdoes historical fact.
The reputation of Hubei’s Longzhong is greater,

\textsuperscript{14}袈裟 (jiashā): from the Sanskrit kasaya, the outer robe worn by monks or priests.
\textsuperscript{15} 卧龙岗: site of a memorial hall to Zhuge Liang (see canto 2 footnote 7) who was nicknamed Wolong [Crouching Dragon] (卧龙岗 “Cihai,” p.4192).
\textsuperscript{16} 桑麻 (sāng mā): it was not unusual to find these two crops growing together as they were traditionally involved in silkworm farming. However the expression can also be used in the general sense of farming tasks or matters, as featuring in the poem Guo guren zhuang [Visit ing an old friend’s farm] by Tang Dynasty poet Meng Haoran (689-740) (桑麻 ibid., p.1135).
\textsuperscript{17} 隆中对话 (Longzhong duihua): refers to the meeting at which Zhuge Liang and Liu Bei devised their strategy for establishing political stability during the Three Kingdoms period (隆中 “Ciyuan,” p.1791). In this line and later in line 107 Lao She expresses doubts about this site being where the meeting actually took place, then in line 109 speculates that Longzhong near Xiangyang in Hubei is more likely to be the true site.
\textsuperscript{18} 签筒 (qian tong): inscribed slips of bamboo used in divination.
\textsuperscript{19} 关张 (Guan Zhang): read as abbreviation for Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, who were blood-brothers of Liu Bei (see canto 9 footnote 16).
\textsuperscript{20} 聒耕 (gong geng): literally, the ploughing done by Zhuge Liang himself, referring to the legend in which he tilled the land to found Nanyang (躬 “Cihai,” p.4521).
if heroes’ souls are known, everywhere becomes their home, the spirit of striving to the utmost\textsuperscript{21} spreads and flourishes throughout the world.

\textsuperscript{21}鞠躬尽瘁 (jugongjin cui): literally, bending to the task and sparing no effort (idiom).
16 Laohekou

Fields both sides of the town,1 wall,
a strip of maize, a strip of indigo,2
the peaceful town wall,
divides green landscape in two;
inside the town, still it feels like a rural area,
why don’t I see the crowded signs of human habitation?
Suddenly, a belt of willows in a grove,
noise of gongs and drumming,
teahouses quick walks3 apart,
outdoor theatres too,
Henan zhuizi4 paired with droning strings,
Handiao tunes5 in Beijing dialect6 contending with the clapper-board,7
sweat streams like rain,
cloaked in clouds of tobacco smoke,
crowds of people watch Shandong circus:
under the willows’ shade, along the avenue,
jam-packed with a variety of stalls,
a mix of smuggled goods and local produce,
melons and dates with sweet chilled soup,8
regional accents calling out their wares,
food and clothing from all of China;9
rows of thatched huts, restaurants on all sides,
a symphony of pots and spoons, delicious smells of wine, spices, fish,

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1 Laohekou, in north-western Hubei, is on the eastern bank of the Han River.
2 蓝靛 (landian): what Lao She observed here may have been a system of crop rotation to improve the soil.
Indigo was also used in the silk industry as an original source of indigo dye.
3 三步…五步 (san bu…wu bu): literally, three steps, five steps. Translation of these two lines is suggested by
the idiom 三步两脚 (san bu liang jiao) indicating a rapid walking pace.
4 坠子: a sung ballad form accompanied by a two-stringed bowed instrument.
5 汉调: a regional form of Chinese opera, better known as Hanju.
6 京腔 (Jingqiang) is an old term for Beijing dialect associated with, or deriving from its use in another ancient
form of Chinese opera known by the same name (京腔 "Cihai," p.802).
7 鼓板 (guban): the combination of drum and board also known as clapper-board.
8 冰莲 (bing lian): soup made from the sautéed seeds or buds of lotus flowers.
9 九州四海 (jiuzhou sihai): literally, China’s nine ancient states and four oceans. The nine states division
originated in the Spring and Autumn/Warring States period (九州 "Cihai," p.144). The four oceans became part
of the expression used to mean the whole of China (四海 ibid., p.1735).
at the same time, in small riverbank pavilions,
and sports grounds amid the woods,
young recruits drill,
men and women stroll,
happily laughing children play on swings and seesaws;

30 striking posters hang outside the woods,
wall bulletins in plain speech with characters big as fists,
sparing no effort to advertise cultural entertainment,
which day for swimming, which for boat-racing,
football games and horse-races, written at the entrance gate;
children sing and leap about, common folk have fun,
crowds circulate with army officers inside,
享受ing themselves, chatting together,
everyone equally happy and respected,
an open-air stage, free for all to see,

40 when night comes, lit as bright as day, willow shadows slowly sway,
young and old, men and women, stand quietly in a ring,
children sing, and also put on a show,
both singing and dancing, a harmony of voice and step,
little leaders of just twelve or thirteen years;
modern drama\textsuperscript{10} in Beijing accents promotes the War of Resistance,
below the stage a burst of excitement, a spell of grief;
see, Japanese prisoners also take part in the show,
one sings loudly of the resistance war,
one does double somersaults,\textsuperscript{11}

50 constant cheering, deafening applause,\textsuperscript{12}
so long as they surrender, they are treated sincerely,
a great and gracious nation bears no grudges!
This is Laohekou’s public park,
this is wartime Laohekou’s\textsuperscript{13} scenic frontline.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{话剧 (huaju).}
\footnote{金斗连翻 (jindou lian fan): Lao She’s use of 金斗 is supported by both “Cihai,” p.3870 (giving it as an alternative form of 劲斗) and “Ciyuan,” p.1716 (as an alternative form of 筋斗).}
\footnote{掌声震天 (zhangsheng zhen tian): literally, applause that shakes the skies.}
\end{footnotes}
Shady willows beyond, in front of the park entrance,  
the town centre with shops nearby;  
narrow streets and crossroads, high walls and deep courtyards,  
big shops whose doors stay open;  
60 inn's a few steps away  
restaurants too,\(^\text{14}\)  
war like a wind, tosses weeds from place to place,  
in wartime’s booming economy, prosperity brings inns.\(^\text{15}\)  
Thread through the small streets, the riverbank right under our noses,  
wooden boats large and small,  
masts both short and tall,  
men and women of riverboat families call,  
smoke from boat chimneys drifts listlessly in the river breeze.  
From Henan and Shaanxi in the north, down to Xiangfan,\(^\text{16}\)  
road and river traffic meet at this single point,  
70 such lively parks,  
so many inns,  
this ‘young Hankou’s’ revival shows Hankou’s fall!\(^\text{17}\)  
This shallow and unstable prosperity hides the tragedy,  
several thousand girls forced to sell themselves!\(^\text{18}\)  
Plenty of windborne weeds!\(^\text{19}\)  
Plenty of destitute and homeless, trading their shame for tea and rice,  
ah, the people’s innocence, can only be cleared\(^\text{20}\) by the War of Resistance!  
Yet within all this illusory clamour of prosperity,  
a small clear natural spring sounds,

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\(^{13}\) Laohekou, in these two lines and in line 96, is referred to as 河口 (hekou).

\(^{14}\) 三步… 五步: see footnote 3.

\(^{15}\) That is, the arrival of displaced people (those blown about like ‘wind-tossed weeds’) boosts the demand for accommodation.

\(^{16}\) Xiangfan, now known by its ancient name of Xiangyang, is a city in Hubei on the Han river upstream from where it joins the Yangtze. It originally comprised the two historic cities of Fancheng and Xiangyang on the north and south banks of the Han River respectively.

\(^{17}\) Laohekou, in its new prosperity, is likened here to a ‘young’ Hankou. One of three cities forming Wuhan, Hankou was developed by colonial powers as a Treaty port in the 1860s. It was briefly the Republican government capital after the fall of Nanjing until Japanese advance forced the government’s evacuation to Chongqing (see canto 7 footnote 2).

\(^{18}\) 肉身作资本 (roushen zuo ziben): literally, using their bodies as capital.

\(^{19}\) See footnote 15.

\(^{20}\) 清算 (qingsuan): in the sense of a debt discharged, an account settled or an obligation fulfilled.
flowing to Tongbai, to Xiangfan,
to mighty mountains of Dahong and Dabie ranges,²¹
great channels of blood merging, flowing through mountain gorges,
the vast and mighty bloodstream becomes a long river;
with the spring’s clarity, the blood’s fierce splashing,
calm as a mountain, speeding like an arrow,
it turns the cruel enemy’s insane pride to shame;
with this clear spring for companion,
poets pluck idly at their lute-strings,²²
how much superhuman courage,
how many miraculous tales of human heroes,
in front of the Tongbai mountains, on both banks of the river Xiang,²³
each tale a sad but lovely epic.
This clear spring water stirs up that long river of blood,
attack tonight, next morning face attack,
the latest target is to retake Wuhan!
The scene at Laohekou only shows one aspect of this clear spring:
its unhurried poise, its quiet contentment,
not shrill excitement but a spirit of optimism;²⁴
if political aspects are well-founded,²⁵
or new ones can be founded promptly,
letting soldiers and civilians fight together, army and government aligned,
as two creeks of clear water merge to form a green river,
between those Xiang and Han riverbanks and the mountains and marshes,
how many more battles there will be to destroy the enemy,
following the great river eastwards to reclaim our lost territory!

²¹ These four locations are associated with the Sui-Zao battle of April-May 1939 in which Chinese forces repulsed Japanese attacks on Suizhou and Zaoyang in Hubei. Tongbai here and in line 91 apparently refers to the mountain range running from northeast of Xiangfan, as a westward extension of the Dabie and Dahong mountains between the North China Plain and the lower reaches of the Yangtze River.
²² 琴弦 (qinxian): the qin is the seven-stringed Chinese lute or guitar.
²³ 襄河 (Xianghe): another name for the Han River where it flows through Xiangfan (襄河 "Cihai," p.826).
²⁴ 明远 (ming yuan): literally, clearly understanding that which is distant; indicating a belief that the distant future will be happier.
²⁵ This vague reference to contemporary politics could be read in several ways. While hinting at the sagely advice offered to past emperors, it also suggests Lao She’s awareness of the need to display his neutrality as ACRAWA president.
17 Xiangfan

In this ancient country, truly, even weather will do battle:
Suiyuan’s sandstorms terrify the dwarf slaves,¹
the central plains’ pelting rains bog down their cavalry;
under cover of wind and rain’s noise and darkness,
we launch a raid, our weapons lightning;
a wretched fate for enemy soldiers killed,
dreaming perhaps of cherry blossom in islands beneath the full moon,
perhaps of gorgeous women and riches;
10 a knife takes out the sentry, he never even yells,
briskly we climb over the wall,
in the sound of falling rain, the knife quick as lightning,
ends sentimental dreams and nightmares!
We took the big tame horses, moved guns and ammunition,
unlike fighting battles, more like reaping fields of grain;
every warrior praises it with a smile:
Splendid, splendid rain! It drenches our foot-soldiers’ clothes,
and thoroughly soaks our fertile land,
ha, and also the enemy camp’s abandoned bombs!²
20 Just as we’re about to head for Xiangfan,
heavy rain from relentless dark clouds closes the road,
enemy horses and gun-carriages are stuck in the mudflats,
while we calmly board wooden boats.
Southern weather, northern countryside,
millet and maize, green on both banks,
green all the way to distant villages, far-off hills:
we watch the clouds, arriving and dispersing,
we watch the hills, their brightness and depth;
clouds come, green fields darken,
30 clouds open, leave behind a line of green hills;
myriad cloud light changes, unceasing river sounds,

¹ See canto 5 footnote 6.
² Thus disabling the explosives; this interpretation, as another instance of the weather acting as a weapon in the War of Resistance, takes its cue from the opening line of the canto.
the splash of paddles in the water sometimes rapid sometimes slow,
ashore cicadas sing on north-south breezes.
Oh, these primitive wooden boats,
in an age of science send people back to nature,
we could all be like Yuanming\(^3\) in his leisure,
writing a few plain phrases like running water with lovely tones!
The sun about to set, crows hurry as the boat moves slowly,
with nightfall, the faster the water noise the slower sounds the paddle!

40 Guessing helps vision,
looking out for Xiangfan in the twilight!
Xiangfan, so ancient!
And yet, so clear and fresh!
How can so much history be just yesterday?
So many generations’ heroes and their battles,
so many ages’ poetic sights and scenery,
from history’s springtime, our own infancy,
already so lofty and splendid, filled with fragrance at heart,
now, on these misty shores,
it stands before my eyes!

50 Forever fine Fancheng, reflecting ripples of tiny quivering light,
ancient elegant Xiangyang, even the lights have gone,
what sad poems do they hide,
what present bitterness?\(^4\)
We left the wooden boats, leaping onto a slightly wet bank,
within Marquis Fan’s shrine,\(^5\) as if in a mist-like dream,
the distant city is barely heard, dark willows calmly sway,
Xiangyang’s memorial hall\(^6\) a short distance on,

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\(^3\) The poet Tao Yuanming (see canto 10 footnote 12).
\(^4\) These two lines suggest that the twin cities, as reflected in the river, one with minimal illumination and the other in complete darkness, stand as metaphor for both past and present tragedies. Both cities (see canto 16 footnote 16) are renowned as sites of famous battles during the Three Kingdoms period, as well as sieges during the Mongol invasion. Xiangyang was the residence of Tang Dynasty poet Meng Haoran (see canto 15 footnote 16).
\(^5\)樊侯祠 (Fanhouci): referring to the memorial hall for Fan Kuai, also known as Marquis of Wuyang 舞陽武侯, a military general who helped founded the early Han Dynasty.
\(^6\)米襄阳的祠堂 (Mi Xiangyang de citang): read as meaning Migong Shrine 米公祠, in the southwest of Xiangfan, that commemorates the Northern Song calligrapher Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107): (米芾 “Cihai,” p.4415).
serenely they keep us company on the way.

Early morning, we present brave and loyal soldiers with bright banners, at night, watch Guangxi girls perform local opera,
Fancheng clearly seen, long retaining dikes,
clean roads and long streets, hotels and businesses neatly lined both sides;
in peaceful times, sails of boats moored at the dikes gave shade,
onshore was the marketplace where singing and dancing went on;
now, given Xiangfan’s location, military matters come first,
business has suffered and thus strengthened hatred of Japan.
We cross the river to see that ancient serenity of Xiangyang,
always a quiet place originally, now even more wretched in its torpor!

High ornately patterned walls, deep courtyards,
lovely houses with rolled eaves and long roof-ridges above;
alleys and long streets, shuttered doors,
a few shell-damaged stores with broken tiles and crumbling walls;
the Sui-Zao battle disturbed Xiangfan,
with tears the quiet old city evacuated;
Sui-Zao’s victory saved Xiangfan,
and the common people returned with songs of triumph;
in the city as in the countryside,
with the troops the common people move,
then following the troops return,
our army’s courage, the enemy’s savagery,
make them understand this is no civil war,
not afraid to move, unworried by difficulty,
they want to journey and return together with the National Army!
Reports of fresh victories posted up on walls, with some drawings added,
old folk and children study them over and over, look and read again,
convinced the National Army can defend the country,

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7 地势 (dishi): normally read as topography or terrain, here it apparently refers specifically to Xiangfan’s strategic geographical position.
8 See canto 16 footnote 21.
9 国军 (guojun): meaning China’s National Revolutionary Army (NRA). While this formally included Communist forces, these (mainly the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army) were based in China’s north, visited by Lao She later in his journey.
glance at their own families, nod and sigh slightly!
There’s nothing splendid about shops in the street,
yet old-time government offices are still mysterious and forbidding,
layer upon layer of courtyards, hidden away like bamboo and wood,
the power of feudal officials not entirely ended.
From Zhaomingtai\(^{10}\) we head for Guanxiang,\(^{11}\)
the river that guards the city flows with softly rippling sound,
scattered green willows, tranquil white lotus,
the city gate tower high and narrow, tree shadows leaning slightly,
the poets’ ancient city, oh truly here in this picture!
Inside Iron Buddha Temple,\(^{12}\) damaged halls and ruined monuments,
solitary iron Buddha with swift horse to keep him company,
a few surviving stone tablets commemorating Zuochi and Dao An.\(^{13}\)
We left Guanxiang, following paths through fields,
found Tanxi,\(^{14}\) but the creek long gone,
lakes and ponds of antiquity have become today’s fertile farmland,
those giant stones against the mountain, the very ones with small holes chiselled,
regarded as horse’s hoof prints where the creek was crossed, are just historic fakes!
Xianshou\(^{15}\) is not high, yet circled by mountains and rivers,
distant mountains hazy, a river curving round,
the gaiety and romance of olden days, after the river moved course south,
gone with ruined blossoms and scattered people;
in the past, the river ran in front of the mountain, with boats forever passing,
between mountain and river, verse and wine and blushing beauties mingled,
now, time moved on with the distant river, green pastures disappeared in battle-smoke!

Before the Falling Tears monument,\(^{16}\) gazing north to Xiangfan,
rushing torrents of the river, pressed between both city banks,
the grand and wonderful scene can compare with Wuhan!

Historic sites line the roadside like stars spread across the sky,
poets’ tombstones, ancestral halls of the famous and worthy,
giving the country glorious memories everywhere!

But time brings great changes.\(^ {17}\)

Even so, the night is too painfully short for candlelight tours!\(^ {18}\)
Braving drizzle we hurry back to the ferry,
surrounded by thick river fog we look round uncertainly,
we must get back early, get to sleep early,
for tomorrow, with loyal officers and soldiers we will commemorate,
remembering that national revolution day of August 13.\(^ {19}\)

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17 桑田沧海 (*sangtian changhai*): another form of the idiom 沧海桑田 (see canto 13 footnote 15).
18 Here Lao She alludes ironically to the ancient expression ‘昼短苦夜长，何不秉烛游’ (*zhou duan ku ye chang, hebu bingzhu you*) [The day is painfully short, and the night long – why not enjoy it with a candlelight tour] i.e. *carpe diem*, a sentiment voiced by Li Bai in his poem *Chun ye yan cong di tao huayuan xu* 春夜宴从弟桃花源序 [Spring night banquet in Peach Orchard]: 秉烛夜游 *“Cihai,”* p.3987.
19 See canto 4 footnote 9.
18  Xixiakou

In Mian County and Nanyang, we paid our respects to Marquis Wu, but when finally in Xiangyang had no chance to gaze reverently at Longzhong.\(^1\)

Heavy rain seems to reflect our doubtful mood, whenever we want to set off, clouds gather and thunder starts; forced to return to Laohekou, we prepare to go north silently resolved to revisit Zhuge Liang in a future time\(^2\) of peace and security!

Leaving Laohekou, the truck bogs down in thick mud, pleading with some local people, we ask to borrow their oxen, loudly shouting orders, working as one to heave the truck free, Hubei’s bad roads force us to get out and push.

After several steps we stop, a few more steps we’re done, we can imagine the enemy artillery and baggage wagons, how they manage to advance, what cunning, is in these July-August rains!\(^4\)

Crawled to Dengxian, noonday sun already high, found food and drink then carried on to Neixiang. Oh, look at this road, green willows and bright sand, the truck moves as if flying, road flat as mirror, like small birds calling as they fly, we lift our voices in song.

A brief stop at Neixiang, then head for Xixiakou’s bright landscape.\(^5\)

Low hills, short green trees, here, forestation programs are widely implemented. The river water clear and shallow, but flowing fast and noisily, willows layer after layer, planted for flood protection, form straight lines, their shade shielding dike paths, like slanted wings, swallows flying with wings spread-out across the river.\(^6\)

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\(^1\) Referring firstly, to the section of the journey through western Shaanxi’s Mian county (canto 4 lines 12-16); secondly, to the visit to Wolonggang (canto 15 lines 92-93); thirdly to the supposedly true site of the meeting between Zhuge Liang and Liu Bei where the Longzhong Plan was formulated (canto 15 footnote 17).

\(^2\) 相期 (xiangqi): a classical expression.

\(^3\) 太平 (taiping): in this context meaning when the War of Resistance is over.

\(^4\) 灵动 (lingdong): reading this as another example of China’s ‘patriotic’ weather aiding the anti-Japan resistance (see canto 17 line 1).

\(^5\) 西峡口: on the Danshui riverbank in south-western Henan.
On the riverbanks, once stone and bright sand mixed,
30 rains and wind have scattered the sand,
now there are green lotus leaves,
big landholdings of fragrant rice,
persistent scouring heaped up the sand, making springs flow in all directions,
increasing the harvests, altering the landscape,
blood and sweat with determination changed desert to productive land.
All the way the clear bright scenery of the north,
the tranquil beauty of the south,
every village meticulously clean and ordered,
armed recruits standing at the village entrance;
40 this cleanliness, this hard work,
whereby each home town has its own militia,\(^7\)
proves that here it is the people organising.
The nation renews\(^8\) itself by organising the people,
awakening the masses’ power and popular feeling at the same time,
their spirits lift, they become their own masters,\(^9\) and thus show the vigour of youth!
See, these untamed rivers and barren hills transformed to lovely scenery,
in this self-fulfilling place of joy,\(^10\)
everyone shares the triumph of work they did;
everyone heeds the needs of the community,
when a road is said to need repairs, all pick up baskets and ropes,
when the call is for forestation, at once they shoulder a bucket;
their orders are their hearts, hands and feet go to work,
each district and county is but one big family;
when there is danger and misfortune, everyone is a soldier,
if there were robbers, everyone would catch them and hand them over to court,
to take care of that great family,
having swept their own front door, they then sweep clean the village street!\(^11\)

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\(^6\) 斜着成翼，燕翅展在河中 (xie zhe cheng yi, yan chizhan zai he zhong): read as a metaphor for the shape of the shadow cast by the willow trees.
\(^7\) 子弟兵 (zidibing): literally, people’s own army.
\(^8\) 返老还童 (fanlaohuantong): idiom, literally to recover one’s youthful vigour.
\(^9\) 负起责任 (fu qi zeren): literally, take on responsibility.
\(^10\) 乐土与佳境 (letu yu jiajing): literally, land of happiness and most enjoyable stage.
Such organisation makes everyone listen to the needs of others, everyone watches out for the community’s welfare, listening out for spies’ talk, putting an end to traitors’ operations, till finally the community can defend itself with its own power. These village organisations, already with their own roads, level and passable, day and night constantly move surprise-attack troops round, backing up the National Army in the decisive Sui-Zao battle, with raids that seemed to drop from the sky, making the enemy shake with fear! When the order was received to go and help, it passed from town to town, camp to camp, the rear-guard rushed in, the vanguard set off, like relay teams of post-horses, like river breakers pushing on, news strictly controlled, troops briskly mobilized, beneath a dark star-filled sky, 3,000 ‘People’s Army’ soldiers came swiftly in one night! Keeping contact with the army, scouting for news of enemy movements, guarding mountain tops, exploiting local terrain, armed common people, have routed enemy forces!

A system’s victory, common people’s triumph, every household sings of victory! In Xixia we present banner tributes, militia from surrounding villages and towns have all arrived; their leaders, their commanders, straightforward staunch common people, in their Henan accents, recounting how the war goes,

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11 网罢门前，再把村街扫净 (sao ba le menqian, zai ba cun jie sao jing): Lao She appears to have adapted the saying 自扫门前雪 (zi sao mengqian xue) [mind your own business and don’t meddle in the affairs of others] in order to draw a contrast between a ‘new’ societal attitude which views the needs of the wider community as important, and traditional cultural practices that emphasised the priority of keeping one’s own home clean, orderly, and thus harmonious.

12 外面的风声 (waimian de fengsheng): literally, the sound of the wind outside. While fengsheng can be read as ‘rumour’, ‘spies’ talk’ is more appropriate in the context of the following line.

13 See canto 17 footnote 9.

14 See canto 16 footnote 21.

15 从天而降 (congtianer jiang): idiom used to indicate an unexpected appearance.

16 献旗 (xian qi): the presentation of a brightly embroidered or inscribed flag or banner (traditionally made of cloth, paper or silk) to a team or individual to show respect or gratitude.
raising cups of home-brewed red wine, clear both in fragrance and colour, to congratulate the invincible\textsuperscript{17} National Army!

This uplifted spirit with successful resistance to the enemy, is not because people are wealthy, having bumper crops every year; in fact, this is a poor and humble area, where barely a dozen hectares\textsuperscript{18} of farmland would be seen as wealth; its struggle to take part in the campaign is by rallying and uniting the common people, and by putting this new knowledge to work; unity brings strength, action conquers poverty; the same approach is taken to fighting battles and doing manual labour, no sooner said than done, told to attack they straightaway attack; there is no complete set of official duties, or trivial rules; it is a simple agreement,\textsuperscript{19} explained in person, everything must be tested, success would be met through testing; and thus, this once bandit-haunted area, now is pleasant countryside,\textsuperscript{20} where already the Japanese pirates have felt our bullets and blades!

See, these tiny towns also have electric light, using hydraulic engineering, mustering some manpower, without great expenditure they produced light;\textsuperscript{21} see, schools with their students moved here from Hebei, after several days work, school buildings are built; the common people set about a task, many hands make light work, sun-dried brick and rice-straw, for wartime engineering projects, once the schoolroom’s there, classes start,\textsuperscript{22} and again the bright and lovely landscape nurtures patriotic fervour!

\textsuperscript{17}战无不胜 (zhanwubusheng): literally, victorious in every battle (idiom).
\textsuperscript{18}一两顷田地 (yi liang qing tiandi): literally, a couple of qing.
\textsuperscript{19}约法三章 (yuefasanzhang): literally, agreeing on three laws, an ancient idiom referring to a new government’s contract with the people.
\textsuperscript{20}水绿山青 (shuilüshanqing): reading this as a yun-driven variation on the idiomatic expression 青山绿水 (see canto 2 footnote 2).
\textsuperscript{21}Presumably through some simple kind of hydraulic-powered generator, rather than any large-scale hydroelectric construction.
\textsuperscript{22}书声 (shu sheng): literally: the sound of books being recited.
From what’s seen here we understand:

have confidence in the people, use their participation,
and this old China will surely become powerful, strong and young!
19 Longjuzhai – Xi’an

Leaving Neixiang,\(^1\)
on edge at every step:
mountain creeks rise,
dashing at bridges;
so many streams are fiendish barriers\(^2\) on the way,
tormenting our truck all the time!
Rushing waves wedged between perilous slopes,
the truck skids and slides down, then jerks and bumps uphill,
like the horse leaping Tanxi,\(^3\) or boats in the Three Gorges,
the truck travels ten \(li\), a hair-raising journey!\(^4\)
Too worried to appreciate scenery,
to lift our voices in song or even quietly chant,
our heads just bob about with the truck’s lurching motion,
like a childhood dream, suddenly down then up!
Delicate engine parts, hollows of hillocks,
cannot go together thus chaos results:
now the engine noise stops, now it wildly starts up,\(^5\)
next moment mountain streams splash into the engine,
silent green hills, wild birds circling,
passengers and vehicles have no way of coping!
Already we’ve little hope of reaching Shangxian by dinnertime,
truck wheels cannot beat the setting sun!
Shangnan is poor, simple board and lodgings hard to come by,
our worn-out truck and hungry people take a chance and head for Longjuzhai.\(^6\)
The classroom serves as lodgings, blackboards as beds,
after one hurried dream? it’s dawn already;

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\(^1\) Apparently referring to Neixiang county; indicating that they had crossed the border from that county in southwestern Henan into Shaanxi.

\(^2\) 魔障 (mozhang): literally, barriers set by the devil. The expression is also used to mean an evil influence.

\(^3\) Referring to the episode in Sanguozhi in which Liu Bei’s horse leapt across the river (see canto 17 footnote 14).

\(^4\) 发立三千丈 (fa li sanqian zhang): literally, hair stands up 3,000 zhang, a poetic exaggeration conveniently fitting the \(yun\).

\(^5\) Apparently describing the explosive jerking forward of a vehicle when its engine ‘pinks’.

\(^6\) Shangnan was a small town in eastern Shaanxi just over the border from Henan; Longjuzhai, an older name for the town also known as Danfeng, was the next stop on the road to Shangxian, the main town in Shangluo prefecture.
little children enter the classroom,
hosts and visitors who met by chance have to sing war songs together;
singing loudly, up we get,
then the children are relieved to have their classroom back.

Outside the door, fine weather with lovely sunshine,
illuminating the crowded bustling marketplace,
this road into Shaanxi, lines of pack animals; groceries and mixed grains, whips crack and small bells ring,
children selling grapes come and go;
scalding hot deep-fried breadsticks, the sweet scorched smell of sugar cakes,
buyers and vendors all busily mingling.
Bought a few grapes, drank a bowl of noodle soup,
then following the mule-trains, again we sway along the mountain road;
still no bridges anywhere, repeatedly we climb over hills and ford streams,
although mountain colours gradually deepen, and the wind is refreshingly cool,
it is still hard to shake off dizziness and swollen eyes;
right on noon, we cannot help being elated,
at finally seeing Shangxian’s outskirts and city wall!
Shangxian, green hills all around, Dan river nearby,
in the Qinling area’s large county, the town where Four Scholars hid themselves away;
mountain valleys rise and fall, trade caravans come and go,
through Wuguan and Languan passes connecting Shaanxi, Hubei and Nanyang;
standing in solid ancient city walls,
with distant views of Xiong’er ranges,\textsuperscript{17} overlooking lotus ponds, 
mountain breezes faintly blowing views of willow\textsuperscript{18} and fragrances of lotus. 
We go to pay respects to soldiers and their commanders fighting the enemy, 
and ask about the health of people in the city; 
that same evening, to show appreciation\textsuperscript{19} for those who give such service, 
a stage is built on the sports ground, 
a tall pole to support stage-lighting, 
the sun not yet set, gongs and drums still to sound, 
old and young, men and women have already hurried there; 
maybe they’re sitting or standing, or climbing low walls, 
longing for the show to start, happy yet well-behaved,\textsuperscript{20} 
soldiers rush about, oozing sweat; 
especially happy, for today their friends are on stage: 
perhaps the staff officer plays drum, the company commander is dressed up as a girl, 
how interesting, these men who fight the War of Resistance are adept at everything, 
they can fight battles, 
and also perform with such variety, 
isn’t it so, lofty entertainment 
lifts morale even higher!

Then gongs and drums echo, smiling faces look up all together, 
battle-hardened warriors have indeed become dressed-up women! 
Gowns are too short, the face-paint doesn’t gleam; 
who cares, ah listen, the music isn’t bad, there’s tone and melody! 
An old play’s final gong dies away, a modern drama takes its place, 
step by step a tale about the War of Resistance gets people keyed-up; 
simple stories, simple make-up, 
relying on actors’ sincerity, with the silvery moon for lighting, 
spreading fervour for war effort and hopes for victory, 
around the green Qinling mountains!

\textsuperscript{17}熊耳山: a mountain range in Henan, near Sanmenxia. 
\textsuperscript{18}柳色 (liu se): here reading se as meaning scenery rather than colour, with the entire line suggesting another form of synaesthesia i.e. the specific association of sight and smell (see canto 11 footnote 1). 
\textsuperscript{19} That is, by providing entertainment. 
\textsuperscript{20}高兴而紧强 (gaoxing er jin qiang): reading this as contrasting the audience’s cheerful mood with its controlled energy.
However, with a shortage of actors, and of scripts, here, just like at the front where the bloody fight goes on, these are barriers that hinder the spreading of the message, harming the delicate blooms and pastures of performing arts. Lifeless old play scripts still circulate everywhere, with yesterday’s terrors, pirates’ bullying, or clichéd stories – resembling *Qinqiang* and *Erhuang* – wanting to motivate the people, instead they have increased panic, and by using history to draw parallels with today, have masked the revolution’s brilliance; fear makes people despair, only by being constructive can we increase confidence, to last one more day of fighting and hope to fight again, it is from the battles, that we see the nation’s worth, it is only enlightened minds, liberated spirits, not panic, or foolish blind loyalty, that allow the people’s intelligence and strength to be encouraged and fully used. Ah, like a baby being born, we build a new nation out of blood, in suffering we grow, through nightfall’s darkness we see clear light; our art is the heart of the battle, it arouses, and makes the people take a stand, it grows, just as in military affairs the more they fight the stronger they become. Oh, this shortage of play scripts is a spiritual hunger, with our painstaking efforts, our ideas, to break this dark silence, and relieve this hunger, we build hearts and minds, emitting bright rays of wisdom, creating noble passions, boundless brilliance! To visit and comfort wounded soldiers, we go out to the countryside,

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21 That is, by lowering the standard of entertainment for soldiers and civilians they threaten its success as a vehicle for the resistance message.
22 秦腔: a popular opera form of north-western China, generally known as Shaanxi Opera due to its having evolved out of folk songs in Shaanxi and Gansu. *Qinqiang* is also referred to as *bangzi* from its use of wooden clappers as accompaniment.
23 二黄: a type of aria melody in Beijing opera.
24 Because the old stories are not radical enough.
along the way conveniently calling at the Four Scholars Temple,25
sweet smelling fields,
fresh coolness of ancient trees,
the tiny temple concealed in green shade;
statues of the Four Scholars, graceful and benevolent,
with slightly knowing smiles on their faces.
We left the Four Scholars, to enter Qinling’s pine-shadowed mountain light,
passed through Lantian, Xi’an in sight;
oh, Huaqing’s hot springs26 are ahead, on Zhongnanshan,
should we rest, or rush on?
We know only that this mighty country inspires lofty thoughts.

25 四皓的庙堂 (Si hao de miaotang): see footnote 13 above.
26 The hot springs in Lintong (see canto 8 footnote 31).
20 Viewing Chang’an drama

The war, the War of Resistance, the entire nation’s fervour surges in a tide!
It is earthquake, landslide, tsunami, 
everything swaying, 
a mighty swaying!
Everything is changing too,
rejoice, compatriots!
Blood won’t bring swift and easy success, 
so rumour has it!

10 That can’t be true: now we have machine-guns replacing broadswords, 
bombs replacing painted halberds and lances!
Even our battle-songs, even the wind’s dreary whistling over Yi River,¹ 
have replaced the endlessly romantic,² the slushy tunes!
Yes indeed,³ holding freedom’s banner high, 
we can have songs, laughter, 
artistic passion furnishing our firepower!
Rejoice, art acclaims with wild shouting, 
art finds its true path in blood; 
anything with snowy moons and windblown blossom, cut it with one brushstroke,⁴ 
flowers of blood, crimson moons, only these will set our tone and mood, 
arousing righteous rage, enemy soldiers’ brutality, 
these only are our topics, our reports; 
this battle, its emerging art, use the spirit of our past, 
the passions⁵ of our ancient state, 
all that was aged and decrepit changed to fervent youth!
Why bother touching up trivial paintings, 
drawing a few dainty plants and tiny insects;

¹ 易水萧萧 (yi shui xiaoxiao): referring to lines from Yi shui ge [Yi River song] recited by would-be assassin Jing Ke 荆轲 (?-227 BCE) before his attempt on the life of the Qin King. The story was first recorded in the Zhanguoce 战国策 [Strategies of the Warring States] (Cihai, p.3183).
² 儿女情长 (erniuqingchang): literally, immersed in love.
³ 是呦 (shi you): sometimes used as an exclamation of amazement, this derives from 呦呦, onomatopoeic representation of a deer’s bleating.
⁴ 一笔勾销 (yibigouxiao): idiom, meaning to annul with a stroke of the pen.
⁵ 喜怒悲笑 (xinubeixiao): here Lao She apparently modifies the idiom 喜怒哀乐 (xinu’ailie) referring to the four types of human emotions.
why toy further with those plaintive lyrics and lovely melodies, for Xiao Hong’s soft voice to accompany my flute;\(^6\)

we are fighting, we burn with indignation, we must sing, like heroes in those epic poems, fates entrusted to the battlefield, sounds to shake the universe,\(^7\) we must paint, show the army’s strength and pride, in the plain, in the desert, in the Great Bend of the Yellow River,\(^8\) troops swift as arrows, an army like a tide rushing forth; we must write, with blood for our ink, the blade our pen, of heroes’ deeds, our faith in victory, engrave these on the heart of history, so future generations will forever honour them!

It is because of this need, for such warfare to be in harmony with art, that I care about reform of drama.

Only in gardens of the north-west front,\(^9\) can modern drama sprout its tender shoots, from Shaanxi and Gansu to the Great Bend of the Yellow River, the moving and tragic Qinjiang\(^10\) is universally enjoyed; and, just as Beijing-Tianjin is the centre for Jingju melodies, so Chang’an is centre and guiding force for Qinjiang. Today, Kaifeng and Taiyuan suffer all the wanton violence of war, one after another actors and actresses fled west, and Qinjiang sisters\(^11\) bang their gongs and drums in Chang’an.

I had not seen Qinjiang, nor heard its Henan accents, so how could I pass up this chance to learn, I go to listen, watch, compare, alas with no time to learn more from experts, I do not know the syllables, or techniques, my critique is guided only by impressions.

Melancholy is the main key of Qinjiang,

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\(^6\) Directly quoting from Song dynasty poet Jiang Kui’s *Guo chui hong* [Hanging Rainbow].

\(^7\) 九霄: here read as a contraction of 九重霄 (jiuchongxiao), meaning the Ninth, or Highest Heaven.

\(^8\) 河套 (Hetao): the section of the Yellow River looping from Gansu through Inner Mongolia to Shaanxi.

\(^9\) 西北的园地 (Xibei de yuandi): read as meaning the frontline’s ‘fertile’ environment in this region.

\(^10\) See canto 19 footnote 22.

\(^11\) 姊妹 (zimei): Qinjiang has both male and female roles, but generally in traditional Chinese opera there were no women performing until the 1930s – an innovation Lao She may be remarking on here.
like water in a canyon, rapid yet not violent,
the sounds of water in mountain echoes, a stretch of stormy waves,
solemn, stirring and profoundly heroic, not restlessly playful like Beijing bangzi,\textsuperscript{12}
but the movements are too clumsy,
gongs and drums clash in noisy confusion;
tunes are sung forcefully, yet movements are frivolous,
gongs and drums that miss the beat make movements meaningless!
And then the rushed delivery of lines, crude facial makeup,
turn the air of infinite simplicity and vigour to that of a rowdy rustic village!
In Chang’an, two factions of Qinjiang exist, one old-fashioned and one modern:
the old school won’t change the ancient tunes and modes one bit;
the new school puts new content into original forms.\textsuperscript{13}
Old-style troupes take turns performing, Wu Dianpo\textsuperscript{14} for three days, Ku Zu Miao\textsuperscript{15} for five,
passed on by oral tradition, a system only rebels would dare to change.
For modern troupes, the ultimate goal is pragmatism,
boldly they dress their anti-Japan resistance heroes in traditional costume.\textsuperscript{16}
The fervour with which they promote this message is effective,
and people’s outrage is not at all turned into laughter,
just because of green face-masks and scarlet gowns.\textsuperscript{17}
However, lyrics are too literary, lines get spoken hurriedly,
fresh plots, not overly emotional, that’s what draws a crowd,
if popular sentiment is further reinforced,
literary skill is shown in the most colloquial language;
if by improving old forms as well as creating new,
we even more boldly discard old-style tales like Zhang Fei’s night-time duel with Ma Chao,\textsuperscript{18}
and because the people need teaching about the War of Resistance,

\begin{footnotesize}
\bibitem{bangzi}京梆子 (Jing bangzi): a branch of Hebei bangzi opera, sung in Beijing dialect.
\bibitem{quantao}原来的圈套 (yuánlái de quántào): literally the original trap or snare. Lao She’s use here of a term implying a device to entrap an audience could also favour a literal reading, given his description of the ‘new’ school’s tactics in lines 71–72.
\bibitem{wujiapo}《武典坡》: better known as 《五典坡》, a popular Shaanxi Opera, also known as Wu Jiapo 《五家坡》.
\bibitem{bei}《哭祖庙》[Crying at the Ancestral Memorial]: an opera aria from the Shaoxing historical drama Bei di wang 《北帝王》 [King of the North], itself based on an incident from Sanguo Yanyi.
\bibitem{chuanxue}穿靴扎靠 (chuān xuē za kào): literally, wearing the boots and armour of traditional military drama.
\bibitem{liulian}绿脸红袍 (lǜ lián hóng pào): referring to traditional Chinese opera costumes, in which roles and specific characters are identified by the different colours of costume and facial makeup.
\bibitem{liuchao}Referring to a fictional episode from Sanguo Yanyi in which Zhang Fei and Ma Chao (see canto 9 footnote 16) fought duels before the latter was persuaded to join the forces of Liu Bei.
\end{footnotesize}
make use of folk tales, including ballads, that perhaps are closer to people’s hearts, more realistic in effect, then through the War of Resistance Qinqiang would find new paths. Comparing Puzhou bangzi and Qinqiang,
I don’t know which is older, but do know that Hebei opera, was modified after arriving from Puzhou; these still unchanged tunes and modes, do not have Qinqiang’s powerful depth, nor Beijing bangzi’s fierce excitement, more praiseworthy is that ‘painted face’ roles still are quite important, as old drama has evolved, whether bangzi or erhuang with Handiao tunes, the more prized the Shengdan role, the more the ‘painted face’ was undermined, in Beijing bangzi troupes, it has unfortunately become a third-class supporting role! Whereas in Puzhou troupes, it still acts as a symbol of independence, that deep and powerful tone, actions tasteful and profoundly skilled, send me into raptures, as if seeing a cherished asset!
If we teach ‘painted face’, with his bold attitude and tone, to play the role of nation’s brave hero, he could certainly publicize the War of Resistance most effectively.

At the same time, I worry on his account, ah, society’s preference for vulgarity, the tedium of city life, will praise to the skies heavily made-up female roles, but coldly reject and underrate the ancient sounds.

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19 蒲州梆子: an ancient form of Bangzi opera from Puzhou in south-western Shanxi.
20 梆子腔 (bangziqiang): a general term for the music of local operas in Shanxi, Henan, Hebei and Shandong.
21 That is, of Puzhou opera
22 大面 (damian): a male role in traditional Chinese opera.
23 See canto 19 footnote 23.
24 See canto 16 footnote 5.
26 愁锁眉梢 (chou suo meishao): literally, my brow is furrowed with worry.
27 油头粉面的小旦 (you tou fen mian de xiaodan): literally, with sleek hair and creamy face. Here Lao She seems to criticise the focus on the coquettish and dandified appearance of glamorous female characters (xiaodan) traditionally played by males.
Henan bangzi,\(^{29}\) I cannot praise,
to me its characters are all buffoons!
If this is indeed what people like now,
then drama should immediately be reformed,
in Southeast Asia’s lush green islands,
I saw Malay drama with song and dance,\(^{30}\)
every act had to have the clown poking fun and creating loud mayhem,
it’s said that primitive drama began as jests!\(^{31}\)
For the nation’s mental health, and to rally enthusiasm for the War of Resistance,
I hope Henan bangzi really does not share the aims of Malay drama!

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\(^{28}\)黄种大吕 (huangzhong dalü): referring to traditional Chinese music’s 12-tone mode, which is characterised by solemnity, ingenuity and harmony, and also known as ‘Yellow Bell’.

\(^{29}\)河南梆子: also known as Yuja 豫剧 or Henan opera. Originating during the 18\(^{th}\) century and most closely associated with Kaifeng, it was revived and gained wider popularity in the 1920s and 1930s. See Zhang Peng 张鹏, "Yuju 豫剧," in Zhongguo dabaike quanshu - xiqu quyi, ed. Encyclopedia of China Editorial Committee (Beijing; Shanghai: Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, 1983), pp. 553-554. Exactly why Lao She objected to this particular opera form is not clear, but may relate to his general rejection of humour and comic relief in his own writing at the time.

\(^{30}\) Presumably during his 6 months in Singapore over 1929-1930.

\(^{31}\)开玩笑 (kaiwanxiao): Lao She’s use of this expression suggests he was not thinking of comedy (喜剧 xiju), the modern form of drama, but of comic performances by jesters for court entertainment, a tradition generally viewed as originating in the Zhou dynasty; William Dolby, "Early Chinese plays and theater," in Chinese theater: from its origins to the present day, ed. Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), p.8.
Lintong – Zhongnanshan

Thanks to an invitation from *Xibei lun heng* society friends, everyone carrying pomegranates, melons, dates, juicy peaches, and chatting, happily laughing all the way, we go to see Lintong, Lishan, and Huaqing’s wooded hot springs, pavilions, pools.

Lintong, so diminished, so quiet, the clear bright autumn day, lighting up a few drab and silent streets, that ambush set at Hongmen Feast, the brutal burying of scholars, those amazing tales and heroes of legend, now seem less potent as time passes, all that remains is an empty sadness.

Outside the town, weeping willows, ruined Lotus Pool, where warm currents coiled around, Huaqing’s autumn scenery is also bleak.

Only imagination, created from remembered histories and poems, can give weeping willows now around the bridges, history’s liveliness and brilliance.

Yang Guifei’s bathing pool, on which so many generations of poets wasted flowery phrases, now a silent tank of clear water.

That once-eventful Lishan, now so dull, unattractive rubble, scruffy tufts of weeds, crowding the paths where shepherd boys pass by, coldly facing the Qin Emperor’s neglected tomb all overrun by grass.

Ah, only history’s regeneration, can free our country of its gloom; we need new powers, like violent winds and rainstorms, to scrub away disgrace, sweep out tired old ways, using all our strength to fight the enemy’s foul harassment,
majestic,⁸ unyielding,⁹
are our weapons,¹⁰
striking at selfish corruption and tyranny!¹¹
30 See, bloodstains on Lishan’s paths and trails,
thorns that pierced heroes’ bare feet;
see, gigantic rocks like blocking tigers, land and humans alike in endless cloud,
they point to the nation’s revival,
signs of history’s rebirth!
Descending Lishan, I admire those cherished hot springs;
it’s said, a great warrior of the northern border,¹² riding hard his saddled horse,
galloped through barren desert, slept in ditches of grassy plains with his spear for pillow,
fell sick with fever, an illness treated only by costly drugs,
yet was healed by bathing in these hot springs!
40 Oh, praise warriors’ power and painstaking effort beyond the call of duty,
praise China’s mother earth, its treasure everywhere:
this so-called Precious Jade emerging from her bath, this golden house for a concubine,¹³
the Emperor’s rash romance brought grief to ordinary people;
we bless these hot springs for their magic healing powers in the War of Resistance,
bless these hidden treasures for their part in the War of Resistance!
××××××
Thanks to a friendly invitation from Wangqu’s editor,¹⁴
we arrive at Zhongnanshan to look around the school:
spacious¹⁵ fields of fragrant rice, a mountain in the glow of setting sun,
to the north is scenery like Jiangnan’s with streams and rivers winding.

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⁸ 浩浩荡荡 (haohaodangdang) idiom.
⁹ 不屈不挠 (buqubunao): idiom.
¹⁰ 宝剑与钢刀 (baojian yu gangdao): literally, double-edged swords and steel knives.
¹¹ 私邪与淫暴 (si xie yu yin bao): perhaps referring not only to the enemy, but also to widespread wartime racketeering practiced by some Chinese, a continuation of the depraved ‘tired old ways’ referred to earlier in line 25.
¹² Medical and therapeutic benefits have long been claimed for the mineral waters of Lishan’s hot springs, but the “warrior” in this reference has not been identified.
¹³ 金屋藏娇 (jinwucangjiao): idiom meaning to keep a mistress in a luxurious love-nest, here referring to the story of Yang Guifei and Emperor Xuanzong.
¹⁴ 王曲: apparently an invitation from the editor of the weekly magazine produced by Wangqu School, one of several military training schools for KMT officers established during the War of Resistance by NRA General Hu Zongnan (胡宗南 “Cihai,” p.3446).
¹⁵ 十里 (shi li): literally, ten li, an idiom meaning wide open places.
At the mountain’s foot, and halfway up,
in thatched cottages, and ancient temples,
singing voices everywhere accompany the sound of streams and birdcalls.
A bugle on the west wind sounds,
at once instructors race about, young recruits dash off swiftly,
travelling some way, to lectures or drills,
putting down their books to practise with firearms.
Young people, high spirited, barefoot,
on plain food and coarse tea, through cold weather and rainstorms,
60 with their books, guns and knives,
bodies toughened up, hearts and minds enriched,
changing China’s decay to youthfulness.
No shortcuts at all on Zhongnan, this they know,
the key to success is hard work and sweat,
look, a little bit\(^{16}\) of levelling and filling, a little bit of digging,
and they’ve built smooth roads in front of the mountain;
in the nation’s road to liberation, they must also
spill their blood and sweat on every inch of land!
Having seen the school,
70 we walk in bright moonlight, smelling fragrant mountain grasses,
like pious pilgrims journeying by night to worship at a mountain temple,
through distant river and dense cloud, to appreciate Zhongnan’s wonderful scenery.
Soft evening breezes, tree leaves gently quiver,
black-and-white colours cross, spilling down the mountain’s patchy shadow;
stone steps wind in and out of tree shadows,
coming near the sound of trickling springs, we left the creek path,
although we could not hear the spring, we heard a few birds calling.
Drawing near the summit, steep rocks in dark shadow,
leaving the summit, dense moonlit woods,
80 green branches overhead, fragrant grass alongside,
brushed head to foot by autumn dew, clothes and shoes are slightly wet;
at every step climbed, step by step we take it lighter,

\(^{16}\) 一寸寸 (yì cùn cùn): literally a couple of inches, but here used to indicate a very small amount. In line 68 the expression is translated exactly.
as if afraid to trample those elegant black-white patterns.

Nunneries and temples close together,\(^{17}\)
no sound of voices, no chanting of the Buddha’s name,
all so desolate,
so stooped and small,
some temple doors are missing, green weeds grow in the stove,
as if all has been abandoned to the moonlight’s care.

90 Climbing a small peak to gaze north,
lights distant and dim, shrouded in mist,
Chang’an, like an enormous boat,
in grey ocean faintly floating.
Oh, “grey” and “floating”,
I hope my description is not an omen!
Chang’an, while this nation’s grievance still cries out for vengeance,\(^{18}\)
our disaster not yet banished,
you are so crowded and busy,
so carefree,

100 with music, song and happy laughter everywhere,
maybe also — oh, the conscience knows!
Chang’an, with your glorious and proudly honoured history,
like ten thousand torches burning all at once,
shine your brightness everywhere,
when our troubled nation’s sea of blood advances boldly like the tide!
Finally at the great terrace, the mountain dwarfs the moon,
moonlight and river sounds, the ancient temple indistinct,
like in a dream, vaguely happy smiles,
delicately coil before my eyes, and in my thoughts.

110 Ah, that peacefulness, refreshing coolness, those clear steep slopes,
wearing their all-covering mantle of moonlight, sleeping until daybreak!
Perching between shutters, birds that rise early,
call out merrily to travellers with all kinds of song;
get up, see, we are at the mountain-top, hills below are small;

\(^{17}\) 五步……十步 (wu bu… shi bu): see canto 16 footnote 3.

\(^{18}\) 国仇未报 (guo chou weibao): the phrase quotes directly from Lu You’s Chang ge xing 长歌行 [Long song].
look, peaks like a chain of islands in a gently shifting sea of clouds;
lower down the mountain, forests and gardens lightly float among the rosy clouds,
shadowed woods, yet some escaping light shows winding creeks and pathways;
now, hilltop clouds, clouds halfway up the mountain,
in all kinds of circling orbits, swiftly move and slowly coil,
one wisp of white cloud gives infinite elegance to dark green peaks.
Into cloud we walked, and with white clouds entered the ancient temple;
tiny temple on lonely peak, clouds part and sun shines,
see, jade-green Huashan before us bright as moss;\(^\text{19}\)
green peaks concealing green peaks, pines sheltering green grass,
between the dark green, faintly yellow trails;
only a line of white cloud twines around the mountain-top.
From mountain’s foot, clouds all the way to sky, to its lofty lonely summit,
gazing towards jade-green Huashan, looking through the tiny isolated temple,
surprised to feel wild ecstasy, we want to shout, call out with joy;
\(^{130}\) ah, these most powerful and unusual colours, the beauty of mountain forests,
capture people’s compassion, as romantic love is won by good looks,
and bind it firmly to our country’s territory;
sublime beauty,
is what persuades our love of country,
when fine farmland and countryside suffer wanton violence,
no-one could willingly sit by and watch without picking up a weapon.
I hope every young person is taught, not only in classrooms;
taught to go out, to view our broad rivers and tall mountains,
to see China’s precious natural treasures,
then nurtured by this beauty,
flames of affection are ignited,
making righteous indignation and love,\(^\text{20}\) the sound of poems and the tiger’s snarl,
join to form a surging tide of patriotic feeling,
with lofty zeal making the country safe and sound.

\(^{19}\) 藻 (zao): literally, algae or aquatic grasses, here read as ‘moss’ to better convey the jade-green (翠华绿 cui hua lü) of the mountain.
\(^{20}\) 行云 (xingyun): literally, flowing clouds, a classical metaphor for feelings of love and longing.
22  Xi’an – Central Shaanxi

Early autumn in the northwest, perhaps surpassing spring in Jiangnan!
Light winds and heavy dews, ah, typical autumn with golden gourds and scarlet dates!
Sorghum drooping red-faced as if drunk,
tiny yellow ears of corn, snow-white cotton,
red stubble of harvested buckwheat,
white clouds covering the sky!

We descended Zhongnan,
left Chang’an,
and looking at this coloured tapestry of autumn fields,
head for Yichuan.¹

Passed through Jingyang, Sanyuan,
hurrying on with reverent hearts,
unable to go sight-seeing;
tiny Yaoxian,
has a Beiping restaurant nonetheless,
whose boss speaks ‘officialese’,²
selling refined wine and food
he calls cultural promotion!

After dinner, darkness gradually falls, the road gets harder,
a dusty path along a mountain ridge, strips of sandy fields,
autumn harvest’s not yet begun, but there’s a feeling of neglect!
Clay ridges, upright as if blade-sharpened, dead flat as if sliced across,
aha, this is the northwest plateau;
mountain ridges seen at distance, are really cultivated fields;
layer after layer, merging with distant mist and cloud,
everywhere is level ground, and yet clay hills too,
from every mountain ridge a view of broad flat lands.

Sometimes between two places,

divided by a thousand-foot deep clay gorge,

¹ 宜川: in north-eastern Shaanxi.
² 官话 (guanhua): this reading (rather than ‘Mandarin-speaking’) attempts to convey Lao She’s apparent scepticism about the restaurant owner’s ‘pretensions’ which included adopting the speech of government officials.
people on both sides of the ravine,
can chat across the gap,
but if they want to shake hands, take a half-day trip by cart.
Sometimes, there are fields above, fields below,
very small villages between,
a few cave dwellings, barking dogs and squawking chickens,
steeply rising loess cliffs for natural fences;
green fields perching overhead, green fields underfoot,
smoke from kitchen chimneys drifting down and up across the fields.

Oh, this fascinating plateau,
the vertical regarded as mountain ridge, the horizontal as farmland,
I don’t know how high, or how far,
measureless distances, layer after layer,
green-yellow waves of earth flow towards the southeast.
Oh, this harsh plateau,
a vast sparsely populated place, no rivers to be seen,
even though there are many canals filled with water,
the problem is forcing the water uphill,\(^3\)
pumping it onto to dusty ridges, to irrigate hill terraces;

truly relying on nature to make a living,
all depends on well-timed spells of rain for rescue from the drought;
but forests are scarce,
one day the earth dries out,
precious water flows rapidly away in all directions,
and countless waterfalls pour down to the plain;
also desert sandstorms blow southeast,
another lot of yellow sand, then more drought and famine;
sometimes, the wild wind cracks the earth, swirling rains sweep down mountainsides,
the clay ridges collapse,

washing away vast areas of fertile farmland!

Oh, this unstable plateau,
if plants no longer grow,

\(^3\) 飞泉 (fei quan): literally, springs that fly upwards.
then destructive sandstorm, drought and famine,
will turn this cradle of Chinese culture,
into a belt of drifting sand!
In just such drought-prone countryside,
we saw Mengjiangnü’s\(^4\) Spring of Tears:
a pond of dirty water on a dusty slope, higher up
a tiny shrine with just one room,
the unfortunate couple’s statues sit upright and silent!
The Spring of Tears, symbolising the land’s drought and famine,
and its water problems;
ah, the Great Wall cannot resist relentless sandstorms blowing south,
it is not a Great Wall we need, but fertile earth and fine rivers;
only when the desert’s\(^5\) advance is beaten back,
will the northwest’s security be assured!
Only moist soil, dark green mountains,
can avert the northwest’s danger!
It’s getting late already,
bewitched by rosy clouds and carefree breezes,
faintly we see
thousands of pine trees, set between scarlet clouds and yellow hills:
what fantastical fairyland mountain is this?
What Peach Blossom Spring\(^6\) in the desert?
The hot sands and toxic winds of such an autumn evening,
have brought a blue-green mountain before the traveller’s eyes?
See, a small town too, set serenely halfway up the mountain;
below, a creek of running water, city walls beside green cypresses.
It is no mirage,
no mansion of celestial beings;
this is Shaanxi’s very centre!\(^7\) A small county, isolated yet bright and clear;

\(^4\) 孟姜女: Heroine of a Qin dynasty folk tale whose husband, forced to work on the Great Wall’s construction, died of hunger, cold and exhaustion. When he failed to return Mengjiangnü began searching for him along the Great Wall, weeping as she went until her tears broke down a section of the Great Wall to reveal his body (孟姜女 "Cihai," p.2572).

\(^5\) 旱海 (hanhai): literally, dry sea, deriving from a Song dynasty expression for the arid northern areas of Gansu and Ningxia (旱海 ibid., p.3166).

\(^6\) 桃源 (taoyuan): see canto 4 footnote 13.
that single pine, aha, it is the mausoleum of the Yellow Emperor!  
This time, with a glimpse of moon through thin cloud,  
we enter the town by climbing uphill,  
narrow alleys, specks of light,  
one or two hundred households making up a county!  
Slightly strange, a bit derelict, in pure pale moonlight,  
is this after all a dream, or still the human world?  
The boundary between poetry and reality has gone! 

Several cottages dotted about, a few kang in each one,  
around the heights of town, the tiny moon and chill wind;  
solemn autumn thoughts, majestic mausoleum,  
unceasing sound of insects, mist comes and goes,  
what mysterious messages are passed between evergreen pine and cypress;  
oh, this mystery, this lovely seclusion, this tranquillity,  
we sleep securely, like babies in their cradles! 
Early morning, all over the town’s mountain scenery, smoke from kitchen chimney hangs,  
light breeze and clear sky, the start of a typical northwest sunny day.  
We follow the riverbank,  
past hillsides covered with verse inscriptions,  
sweet-scented dew, dots of yellow flowers,  
and with half a dozen birds go to the mausoleum yearning to pay our respects. 

The old pine’s seven limbs, holding green welcome up to heaven,  
in its shade a tile broken off the crumbling wall,  
Descendants of the Yellow Emperor, should be so ashamed,  
the Yellow Emperor’s temple, left only as some chunks of ruined brick!  
That mighty tomb, encircled by water and mountains,  
has become a solitary ridge, a millennium’s growth of green cypress,  
a platform from where immortals view China’s military plans,
ranges of hills roll on, surging southeast,
like ten thousand horses galloping ahead,\textsuperscript{10} glittering in clear light;
I imagine the nation’s spring-tide, like clouds flying and flags unfurling,
like the Yellow River’s urgent waves, breaking through the plateau,
majestic, it carries the yellow symbol of our culture right out to the coast!
Shaded grass, plain candle burning high,
three glasses of spirit,\textsuperscript{11} sprinkled before the tomb,
solemnly paying tribute, the small birds silent;
a part of history surges like a tide within the heart,
ah, continuance of this history, is decided now!

\textsuperscript{10} 万马奔腾 (wanmabenteng): metaphor commonly used to describe the boundless momentum and energy of a mass movement.

\textsuperscript{11} 白酒 (baijiu): alcohol generally distilled from sorghum or maize.
Having paid our respects at the imperial tomb,\(^1\)
we carried on northwards;
hurrying through Luochuan’s date groves without a stop;
Yijun’s friendly folk had invited us to stop and eat, but we had declined their hospitality,\(^2\)
at Niuwuzhen we took a few steamed buns and left without delay.
This whole journey is rushed,
because the truck is hurrying to pass Huanglong’s hazards;
for the past twenty years, bandits ran amok in Huanglong’s mountains,
their “Huanglong University”, set deep in the forest,
where they studied robbery and plunder;
in today’s War of Resistance, the bandit dens have emptied,
but the old roads remain potholed and uneven.
It is not to dodge cold arrows\(^3\) and clashing gongs that we scurry along.
Those warlords of the wilderness became heroes defending their country;
while we, in these deserted mountains,
with their tight bends and rickety bridges, dangers and obstacles one after another,
we must keep ahead in case a blocked-up tunnel needs clearing,
to offset this, perhaps we’ll get through the mountains before sunset’s red gleam disappears!
As feared, not far into the mountains, the truck tips on a broken bridge;
passengers suddenly tossed about as if inside a shuddering ship;
luckily, trees grow thickly round the shallow ditch, leaning trunks and branches stop our fall,
the truck doesn’t roll nor do its passengers vanish in thin air.
Luckily, a road-works crew is not far off,
carrying planks, shovels and thick hemp ropes,
a voice shouts out, mountain echoes answer all around,
men’s hot sweat moved the bumbling broken-down machine!
If not for this strong good-hearted road-works crew,
we would probably have been left in the cold wind and moonlight,
to spend the night on Huanglong’s woods and pathways!

\(^{1}\) The Yellow Emperor’s mausoleum (see canto 22 footnote 8).
\(^{2}\) Referring to the section of the journey between Yaoxian and Qiaoshan covered in canto 22.
\(^{3}\) 冷箭 (lengjian): expression for a surprise attack by hidden snipers (冷箭 "Cihai," p.840).
we slowly make our way:
dark mountains, lush trees, sudden slopes and unexpected gusts,
no sounds of flowing water, no tinkling of ancient temple bells,
a hundred miles and more, no villages or sound of people;
in wild grassland, someone has scattered seeds of grain,
a few sparse plants with drooping leaves have sprouted;
hares sprint away, bright-coloured pheasants⁵ fly up calling,
small creatures speed off in alarm,
making us imagine the fear felt at every step in olden days!
Yet, in this uninhabited place,
we suddenly heard voices singing of the war;
look, a few small stores, thatched huts with pine-log pillars,
fruit spread out, sesame-seed cakes baking in a pan,
the range of food is small, but displayed in tidy fashion,
freshly pasted posters, bright coloured paper;
directly opposite, cave dwellings set in the clay hillside,
hollowed out to make a flat floor,
no foreign-style multi-storeyed buildings,
yet there are lecture-halls and sports grounds surrounded by pines;
halfway up the mountainside, on grassy footpaths,
young students come and go in crowds,
working as they sing,
deep in these remote mountains,
this school’s name is national revolution!
To get through the mountains, we dare not stop awhile,
yet really want to see the cave dwellings,
and cheer up those barefoot young comrades!
After sunset, through the darkness,
only then we spot the lights of Yichuan’s little town,
below is the rushing stream,
high above are lit-up cave dwellings,
oh, light reflected on water,

⁴ 翻山越岭 (fanshanyueling): here read literally, this idiom is commonly used to indicate a journey’s hardships.
⁵ 雉 (zhì): the ring-necked pheasant native to China and East Asia.
dogs barking, people’s voices,
though it is so small a town
it makes us forget the Huanglong mountains’ frightening silence!
The body’s weariness is forgotten, busily looking round the streets,
narrow roads, small shops with oil lamps hanging,
in the lamplight, grapes are dark green, sweet dates scarlet,
posters and displays for Mid-Autumn Festival mooncakes everywhere,
the town completely decorated in autumn colours.
Mutton buns piping hot from steamer baskets,
fiery liquor, with mutton and stir-fried scallions, the restaurant, though small, is brightly-lit and ringing with the sound of stirring ladles, making southerners block their noses, while northern folk survey the scene feeling homesick!
Having bought melons and dates, I headed back, then in street corner shadows, quite by accident, found a tiny bathhouse with steam revolving round a lonely lamp.
Worn out for several days, travelling long distances, what if the water isn’t fresh, who cares whether clean or dirty, I want it to dissolve the aching in my back and legs; besides, the water here is hot and tea brewed strong, long pillows on a large kang too, melon seeds and peanuts, the business, though small, equipped and run the northern way. I had a hot bath, then a shave to neaten up, the unskilled barber’s blade was blunt, but he kept apologising, northern politeness makes for thriving trade, I didn’t want to scold him for the painful shaving cuts, and on leaving, rolled his small fee plus my loose change into an enormous bamboo tube.
At daybreak next morning, packs of mules and horses outside the door,

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6 中秋月饼 (Zhongqiu yuebing): traditionally eaten at the Chinese moon-viewing festival on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month.
7 羊肉爆葱 (yangrou bao cong): 羊肉 can mean sheep- or goat-meat, but is assumed here to mean ‘mutton’ (a cheaper meat whose stronger smell is not appreciated by people from southern China, as Lao She observes two lines below).
8 北方的侉子 (beifang de kuazi): literally, northerners speaking with foreign accents.
9 伤情 (shang qing): literally, with wounded feelings.
10 生意兴隆 (shengyixinglong): idiom describing a flourishing and prosperous business or trade.
waiting to take us to the Qiulin commander.

Yichuan to Qiulin, a distance of thirty li, to avoid humiliation,\textsuperscript{11} I’d rather walk, but winding mountain creeks, and lack of passable bridges, mean I can’t avoid going on horseback!

Dithering over the choice, I finally took an old yellow horse, and bribed the stable-lad as well, to lead it on a rope!

My young companions step to the stirrup with whips in hand, shouting joyfully all the way, scampering like the wind; while I, lurching and swaying, plod slowly on, like a northern village woman riding a mule\textsuperscript{12} on her homeward journey; yet my unhurried pace and relaxed mind have a marvellous effect, serenely, I look at the scenery, and serenely, pick the reddest dates from trees.

All along the way, mountain streams alongside dusty ridges, between ridge and stream, the rugged terrain;
layer by layer planted in sorghum\textsuperscript{13} and millet, from creek bank to hilltop;

small quiet villages in valleys,
a few stores selling tea beneath awnings of thatched straw.

Qiulin, before the roar of China’s War of Resistance, was only half a dozen households, several dusty ridges, quiet throughout the year, as if nothing lived there; now, all-powerful human hands, have already dug out three hundred cave dwellings, in these caves people are trained, work on official business, till nightfall, when on the hillsides, tier by tier, points of light appear, rather like seeing Hong Kong from afar, its buildings soaring to the sky!

Clay hills arranged in facing rows, streams filled in to make flat ground, a splendid adobe assembly hall set in the middle;

\textsuperscript{11} In this passage and in the following canto it becomes clear that Lao She, unlike his travelling companions and despite his Manchu heritage, was not an experienced horseman.

\textsuperscript{12} 牲口 (shengkou): a general term for beasts of burden such as oxen and mules.

\textsuperscript{13} 高粮 (gaoliang): read as authorial error for 高粱 (gaoliang). Lao She uses the correct term in line 167.
this cave dwelling culture, its loess engineering, 
roofs of thatched rushes and bricks of clay, yet good as an imperial palace!
This gathering of people, with wartime operations, 
also fosters thriving trade, 
small town prosperity, 
bookstores, restaurants, emerging at an opportune time, 
this wild place of the northwest, 
has streets and markets springing up like bamboo shoots after one night’s rain!

In clay-coloured assembly hall, we present bright banners to the commander, 
in clay-coloured cave dwellings, we hear about the military situation: 
in Shanxi’s mountainous region, east of the Yellow River, 
in recent hard battles, 
our casualties diminish daily, thanks to divide and conquer tactics, 
surrounded everywhere, jammed tight, 
like snakes stuck in a tangle, the enemy can hardly move an inch.
This unit’s campaign, 
aided by a motivated people, 
with soldiers and civilians working together, has won them every battle, 

while in those layers of cave dwellings, they train and guide local government.
Warm in winter and cool in summer, oh, these fascinating cave dwellings: 
big clay kang, clay windowsills, clay ceilings, 
more than half formed naturally, the rest from human labour, 
economic and also practical; 
hills of all sizes, with caves in the middle, 
both liveable and good anti-aircraft defence, 
the northwest’s loess supports the war effort too!
In these cave dwellings, we also hear of cultural work, 
there is paper, and printing tools,

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14 应运而生 (yingyun’ersheng): see canto 6 footnote 1. Here the idiom refers to the recent development of Qiulin, which before the War of Resistance was apparently a small village.
15 晋省 (Jin sheng): an abbreviation for Shanxi province. The mountainous region probably means the Taihang Mountains, setting for a minor victory against Japanese forces in 1937 (see canto 11 footnote 3).
16 化整为零 (huazhengweiling): literally, breaking the whole up into parts. The expression is usually attributed to Mao Zedong.
17 Assuming that what Lao She describes here was the situation in a CCP-held area, the equipment was probably hand-operated machinery: Christopher A Reed, “Advancing the (Gutenberg) revolution: the origins and
every cultural centre, whether by the river or among the mountains, has a small newspaper, covering the political situation and war news; in the Huanglong mountains, and Yichuan’s small town, periodicals and books support literary and artistic activities; but writer friends are embarrassed by their inexperience, modesty holds them back and makes their writing less courageous, they truly hope that the constant flow of spiritual sustenance provided, will help suffering and exhausted soldiers on the frontline!

But poetry and literature from behind the frontline is often used in a formulaic way, even if the language is exquisite, empty words discourage us!

To overcome this challenge, writers must put themselves where soldiers are, those behind the frontline changing place, gaining total understanding, making their experiences useful, giving their writing substance, then these writing troops will be capable of serving in the war, with crystal-clear language, stirring up enthusiasm for battle.

Now is harvest season, mornings and evenings are cold, but midday’s hot sun still helps ripen the red sorghum; to avoid the heat of noon we sleep in cave dwellings, without air-conditioning yet naturally cool;

at nightfall, rustling west wind and cricket sounds, inside the assembly hall drums echo and gongs ring, as the army drama troupe plays young, old, male, female roles in army dress, performing as marvellous heroic patriots from ancient times; when the gong had died away, I went to meet these skilled performers, some had not yet removed their make-up, some had just loosened the girdles of their gowns, with courteous salutes we greeted one another,

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18 That is, writers engaged in these cultural activities from behind the frontline.
19 言空 (yan kong): that is, words without inspiration.
20 枣核的天气 (zao he de tianqi): literally, date-stone weather. The origin of this expression, possibly a local term for autumn, has not been identified.
21 生旦净末丑 (sheng dan jing mo chou): four of the five classes of actor in Beijing Opera. See canto 20 footnote 23 on the main male and female role categories. Lao She has apparently shortened and inverted the traditional expression 生旦净末丑 (sheng dan jing mo chou) to fit the yun.
in all sincerity they invited the guest from far away to criticize.

We shook hands and parted, each returning to his cave,
a hill of lights, ten thousand stars in the autumn night.
Returning from Qiulin to Yichuan, of course, more streams to ford and hills to climb. This time, the bony mules and horses,\(^1\) fitted with wooden saddles, enter the water like boats!

Autumn rains just over, we slip and slide through saturated mud, two creeks crossed, luckily without mishap; though the third is wide and flowing fiercely, relying on experience, I actually take it calmly.\(^2\)

But, with mules already in the water, before I can turn round, suddenly the mountain torrent rises, raging waves toss rocks about, in the blink of an eye, like rapid spasms dashing, water surges up the chest of the boy who leads my horse! Hurriedly he flees, the pack animals quake in fear, water cascades over with a roar!

The flood peaks, like a wind-filled sail, like a startled snake wildly slithering away, creek-water quickly crests and whirls; water piles up, spray on both banks hangs like mist, waves of grey and yellow, hills of water layer after layer, layer after layer tumbling, spray throws itself at sandy fields, a layer falls slightly behind, a layer follows close at hand, from far and near the water sounds; soon my horse is going under, soon spray has wet the saddle-blanket; suddenly lifted by the torrent all around us, then sinking together, we bob up and down!

The other animals crowd together, ears erect and muscles trembling, my horse, as if its legs obey the torrent, seems to drift and whirl with the waves, though we are both stationary, making no headway,

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\(^1\) See canto 23 lines 91-98.

\(^2\) 处之泰然 (chuzhi-tairan): idiom.
paralysed as if waiting to sink!
A friend who has already safely come ashore,
reins in his horse, turns round, yells wildly to me:
“Pull tight, pull the reins tight, mules’ legs are weak!”
But the wild breakers thunder, utterly drowning out his voice,
resigned to my fate, I sit calmly in the saddle.
Luckily, pack animals like being with the herd, those behind will hurry to catch up,
and following as a “fly on the horse’s tail”\(^3\) to my surprise I made it safely to the bank!

Once ashore I turn my head,\(^4\) now sweating and red-faced think instead,
if mules’ legs are so weak…
oh, Shanzhou’s bombs,\(^5\)
that fell all round us;
the Huanglong mountains’ broken bridges, the overturned truck,
even this incident of the horse in the creek,
in several dozen days we have faced three big dangers!
Ah, the hardships of soldiers who fight, you who toil all year long,
in deserts without food and water, or barren mountains’ cold rocks and deep snow,
danger is your everyday experience,

but you ignored danger, you overcame the hardships!
These great difficulties weigh your shoulders down,
soldiers, you did not hesitate for a second;
through gunfire and a hail of bullets, forward you go,
through treacherous rapids and barren mountains, forward you go,
for one year, two years, you go onwards,
onwards, onwards,
laying down your lives to redeem our territory!
Great lives, when encountering adversity,
like you, soldiers, ignore their own security!

Oh, we with this trifling toil and danger,

\(^3\) 骥尾 (ji wei): Lao She somewhat sardonically uses this ancient phrase to attribute his narrow escape to the herd instincts of an old horse. The expression, meaning to follow a great man in order to get on in the world, was first recorded in Sima Qian’s *Shiji* (Cihai, p.2621).

\(^4\) 上岸回头 (shang an huitou): possibly a modification of the idiom 回头是岸 (huitou shi an), meaning to repent and be saved.

\(^5\) See canto 10 lines 75-101.
that’s not worth mentioning, not worth counting,  
if I cannot help talking of it in passing,  
well then, it’s only in remembrance of my visit to you!  

Returned to Yichuan,  
autumn rains go on and on,  
once skies begin to clear,  
again we enter the hazardous Huanglong Mountains.  

Crossed the muddy yellow waters of the Luo, then we were in Fuxian,  
Tang dynasty strategic town, totally unlike its former appearance,  
70 desolate town and silent streets, small shops and idle people,  
ancient Tang bell announcing the time,⁶  
mournful moonlight, symbol of sorrow for a thousand years,  
venerable Du Fu’s sad thoughts, then and now we feel the same;  
jade-like arms shining bright, cloud-like hair coiled and fragrant with mist,  
heartless autumn moon, shining again on parting and upheaval!⁷  

Left Fuxian, hurried to Ganquan.  
Ganquan, this name⁸ so fresh and pure!  
But in the town, herds of oxen, horses and mules wander through the “shops”,  
a fine autumn day at noon, yet still desolate and dismal;  
80 very small town walls, low and shallow archways,  
the truck gets stuck, unable to go forward or back;  
the town gate is blocked, causing a traffic jam,  
a cacophony of oxen-bellowing and horse-neighing!  
We ask a sturdy man for help, he offers all kinds of ingenious plans:  
what about opening a gap in the town wall?  
what about cutting off the part around the truck?  
Everyone speaks at once, to tear apart the town wall and damage the truck is not a good idea;  
then someone thinks of a safer plan,  
okay, let’s dig out the truck from below.  

90 Human hands like bees swarming dig with spade and shovel,  

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⁶ 更点 (gēng diǎn): literally, hour and minute according to China’s ancient timekeeping system of night watch periods.  
⁷ Lines 72-75 are slightly re-arranged quotations from Du Fu’s poem Yue ye [Moonlight Night].  
⁸ 甘泉: literally, sweet spring.
hollowing out earth and shifting rocks so the truck will drop. 
After a couple of hours,  
and hot sweat of several dozen men,  
the truck roof is shifted from the town wall’s brickwork,  
only then the wheels start spinning freely;  
with drawn-out roars, oxen charge and horses dash away,  
we thank them over and over, having got through the crisis!  
Departed Ganquan, driving slowly,  
though it does not have the Huanglong Mountains’ nasty ridges and sharp bends,  
the road is potholed and shingly, still liable to be dangerous.  
Sun setting, we spotted Yan’an:  
mountain light and pagoda shadows, circling streams,  
Qingliang and Jialing,\(^9\) guarding the mighty pass between;  
we were expecting crowds of people, scenes of bustling activity,  
the lights of countless homes, warmth and clamour of voices.  
But in the dusk only sparsely scattered lights,  
broken roof-tiles and crumbled walls inside and outside town,  
quiet river, silent mountain,  
halfway up the mountain small streams and field-paths coil like mist.  
War in Europe has increased the power of bombardment.\(^{10}\)  
only bombs can speak for “justice” nowadays,  
this military madness, relying on weapons to decide,  
with mountains of corpses and seas of blood, calls death triumphant return;  
crazy Japanese invaders, looking at the flames of Western Europe’s war,  
cruel blood-sucking mouths drooling in gluttony,  
itching to, oh, like gulls that recklessly come ashore,  
shake their feathers, sharpen pointed claws,  
spread their hateful wings again, over boundless seas of blood,  
over skeletons piled high as hills, to plunder hard-earned property!  
But mighty China’s great War of Resistance,  
inside and outside the Great Wall, north and south of the Yangtze,  

\(^9\)清凉嘉岭: mountains on opposite sides of the Yanhe River overlooking Yan’an.  
\(^{10}\) Lao She clearly refers here to the Second World War which commenced while he was travelling. By the time he was back in Chongqing writing the poem’s last seven cantos (September-October 1940) the war in Western Europe, was well underway.
in two years of attack and invasion, has caused millions of casualties.\textsuperscript{11}

In the broad and level central plains, in wooded coastal hills,
every inch of country is measured in enemy blood,
the blood-stained Yellow River, scorched Wuhan,
ashes of the dead, numberless urns, thousands of boats,
the sound of weeping in Three Islands\textsuperscript{12} makes the cherry blossom lose its brilliance!
War in Europe, war-gods loudly shouting their wild cries,
the aggressor’s blood rages, hands quiver impatiently,

oh, war in Europe, the flag of the Rising Sun must shoot its bloody rays in all directions!

With cavalry and ships, northward and southward,
to burn, rob, conquer, and slaughter,
so the world knows the short-legged samurai’s prestige!

Oh, this iron chain of China, closely binding,
bit by bit cutting to the bone, struggle cannot break it, unceasingly it pulls,
to hold those swaggering troops\textsuperscript{13} tighter in the trap at every step!

With bombs, bombs, blasts that shatter,
blowing up this ruthless stranglehold,

Lanzhou, Xi’an, famous cities of the northwest, strongholds of the War of Resistance,
bombed, to blast China’s resistance utterly to bits;
even those neglected towns in tiny counties, like Ganquan and Yichuan,
must experience the brutality of invaders’ cruel flames,
just because of this insane idea,
bombs howled and hissed, Yan’an was destroyed!\textsuperscript{15}

Look, what’s that? Below the mountain, between the hills,
flickering lights, torches all around?

It is the people, and their shops,
after disaster they began afresh;

\textsuperscript{11} While not specifying these as Japanese casualties, the following passage (lines 123-127) implies that this is what Lao She means.
\textsuperscript{12} 三岛 (San Dao): meaning Japan, this phrase features in a poem by the early Chinese feminist and anti-Qing revolutionary Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875-1907).
\textsuperscript{13} 耀武扬威 (yaowuyangwei): idiom meaning those who show off their military might.
\textsuperscript{14} 地北天南 (dibeitiannan): idiom also expressed as 天南地北.
\textsuperscript{15} Although Yan’an was never occupied by Japanese forces, it was subject to aerial bombardment during 1938-1939 which destroyed much of the old walled city.
valleys become market-places, cave-dwellings pack the hillsides, all round the mountain, freshly terraced fields growing vegetables; oh, the invaders’ bombs, are they so powerful, so terrifying?

Listen, voices singing of the War of Resistance are not silenced, in freshly built caves, between hillside farm and mountain stream, heroic singing voices, the sound of the resistance, all along both banks of the Yellow River!

Here, long-haired intellectuals go barefoot all year round, writing, performing,

they spread among the people passion for the War of Resistance, laughing scornfully, they watch the enemy bombs!

Nervous pirates, how pathetic, bombardment is now so commonplace, it just arouses singing:
singing, as we quarry mountains,
singing, as we open up the fields,
singing, as we till them,
singing, as we fight our War of Resistance!

Hastily, we left Yan’an, took lunch in bleak Yongping.16

After our meal we journeyed on, coalfields all along the way: on small hillsides, quiet river banks, the precious black seams on rock surfaces everywhere, pile together a basketful, maybe collect enough to fill two buckets,17 it will keep a family warm for several days.

Small oil wells, also on the roadside, half a dozen workers, blackened brows and grimy faces. Crude oil separated into heavy and light, refined using old methods, as if done in play, only a few drops of oil produced each day!

Having passed the oil wells and coalfields,

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16 永平: read as authorial/typographical error for 永坪 永坪镇 (Yongpingzhen), north of Yan’an.
17 一担 (yī dàn): literally a picul or 100 catties, a traditional Asian unit of weight equivalent to 50 kg, carried in two buckets on a shoulder pole.
every step takes us nearer danger:
scraping against rocks, crossing over ravines,
one step a summit, one step a plummet,
step by step breaking out in a cold sweat!
Autumn sunset over mountains,
still we circle through the hills,
well-meaning village elders stop us:
don’t go on, the slope ahead is steep and high with broken bridges.
With a glance at starlight filling the sky,
we decide to hurry on to Qingjian,\textsuperscript{18}
in twilight, north and south cannot be told apart, height is hard to make out,
adjusting to the changes, dizzy and confused in darkness,
we overlooked safety, and ignored risk,
getting to Qingjian was a nightmare,
dogs snarling like leopards, the city gates already closed!

\textsuperscript{18} About halfway between Yan’an and Yulin.
Qingjian – Yulin

Barren sand to the north, barren hills to the south.
Miles of desolation, Qingjian in the middle.
This tidy little county town,
like someone sinewy and muscular, proud of its uncommon strength.\(^1\)
Braving northern sandstorm, drought and famine,
it stands tall and elegant, calm and silent.
Clean and tidy are those small streets with their small shops,
men and women inside quietly weaving thin silk fabric,
threads of white and yellow, fabric long and short,
glossy strips of cloth, fluttering in the shops.
Slate paving the street centres,\(^2\)
slate covering the roofs,
the convenience of slate,
gives the small town its air of ordered dignity.
Because slate is used,
roofs are flat and wide,
so houses halfway up mountains, set among farms and field-paths,
with their level roofs and rounded doorways, resemble arched sections of stone bridges.

Above Qingjian, sandy mountain ridges and wilderness,
in the mountains,\(^3\) dry wind and drought-struck fields,
dusty yellow, no sign of human habitation,
a small hilltop temple, fallen Buddha and broken buildings;
winding round the mountains, or scattered clay hills,
the truck breaks down midway through, but we find a mountain stream’s clear spring,
to wash our feet and chat while waiting,
a quiet creek and warm day, like being in Jiangnan.
On footpaths above the mountain streams, slow mule teams,
carrying rock alkali,\(^4\) sand and salt,
mules’ heads and tails adorned with bright red ribbons,

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\(^1\) 自命不凡 (ziming-bufan): idiom, more often used in a negative sense of having a high opinion of oneself.
\(^2\) 石板 (shiban): also translated as flagstone or slab.
\(^3\) 九里山内 (jiu li shan nei): literally, nine li into the mountains.
\(^4\) 石碱 (shi jian): a term generally used to indicate rock containing halide salts (see also canto 8 footnote 19).
like new brides decorated from top to toe.
An old mule-driver we ask,
says not far to Suide,
north of Suide are the salt-pans.\(^5\)
Steadily we travel uphill and down,
and sure enough, spot Suide while autumn sun’s still high.
Suide, this strategic frontier town of ancient times,\(^6\)
towering grandly on the Wuding riverbank.
Over the Wuding, a long bridge of round arches,
40 seventeen huge holes where stormy waves rush through.
Alongside the Wuding, large areas of stony fields,
planted in red sorghum, all red to the riverbanks.
North of the Wuding,\(^7\) the Dali and Xiaoli sections irrigate the southeast,
water on three sides, mountains surrounding,
high mountains and great rivers guard a powerful border pass.
North of the river, the old part of town where Meng Tian was imprisoned at Longwan,\(^8\)
in the new part, the mountain top where Crown Prince Fusu\(^9\) was buried.
Looking up from the riverside,
the town gate towers rise between the clouds;
50 looking down from the town,
continuous hills and rolling river, like a great expanse of cloud,
no wonder then, whenever the northern frontier was threatened,
past dynasties withdrew to defend Suide and delay defeat.

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\(^5\) 盐湾 (yan wan): literally, a bay or gulf of salt deposits. What Lao She saw was apparently a small-scale level of industry whereby salt was extracted from shallow depressions in the ground where water had evaporated.

\(^6\) 绥德: established in the Western Wei dynasty, Suide functioned as a frontier post during the Song dynasty (绥德 “Cihai,” p.2695).

\(^7\) 无定河: this river arises in Inner Mongolia and flows southwards before joining the Yellow River south of Suide. The Xiaoli (小理) rises west of Suide in the grassland transition zone between the Ordos region of Inner Mongolia and the loess plateau, flowing eastwards to the Dali (大理) wetlands which join the Wuding near Suide.

\(^8\) 蒙恬 (?-210 BCE): Qin dynasty general who oversaw the building of the Great Wall. Longwan apparently refers to Longwancun on the eastern riverbank of the Wuding. According to Sima Qian’s *Shiji* Meng Tian was imprisoned at a place identified by Nienhauser as Yangzhou north of Zichang county which approximates the Suide location noted by Lao She: William H. Jr Nienhauser, ed. *The grand scribe’s records: Ssu-ma Ch’ien 9vols.*, vol. 1 (Bloomington Indiana University Press, c1994-<c2002), n.102 p.188.

\(^9\) 太子扶苏 (Taizi Fusu): eldest son of the Qin First Emperor, who along with Meng Tian was exiled to the northern border. After the First Emperor’s death both committed suicide in 210 BCE as a result of plotting by the powerful eunuch Zhao Gao (扶苏“Cihai,” p.1530).
In the town, stone roads and walls,
neat houses and wide streets;
pomegranates, pears and dates displaying autumn’s colours.
Nightfall, autumn rain cools it down,
quietly we take up lodgings in Han Qiwang¹⁰ Shrine.
Advancing north from Suide, we see the salt-pans:
earth white as snow, gathered and heated to extract its salt,
simple cooking stoves, spread out along the roadside,
Qingjian’s slate,
Suide’s sand and salt;
village elders pass on from generation to generation,
the legend of lovely gentle Diaochan¹¹ from Mizhi.
Outside Mizhi, local produce piled like hills,
within Mizhi’s walls, quiet courtyards,
high walls and large doors, standing out in grand style,
like a wealthy household in decline still trying to preserve appearances.
The birthplace of Li Chuang,¹² not far from town,
Fenyang’s¹³ great temple on the mountainside,
riches, rank and longevity, the Weaving Maid’s¹⁴ prediction,
in four characters large as wheels,¹⁵ stands proudly outside the temple in the mountains.
Above Mizhi, gradually we enter stony fields:
stunted mulberry trees and date shrubs sheltering the field margins;
flowing sands of the northern border, blown southwards by the wind,

¹⁰ 韩蕲王: better known as Han Shizhong 韩世忠 (1089-1151), Southern Song dynasty general.
¹¹ 貂蝉: popular heroine featuring in Sanguo Yanyi as a Shanxi village girl groomed and sent as concubine to bring about the defeat of a warlord during the breakup of the Eastern Han dynasty (貂蝉 "Cihai," p.4527).
¹² 李闯: more commonly known as Li Zicheng (1606 -1645) (李自成 ibid., p.2898). The leader of a peasant revolt in the late Ming dynasty, he led a victorious army through Henan, Shanxi and Shaanxi and successfully attacked the Ming capital at Beijing, then declaring himself Emperor of the short-lived ‘Shun’ dynasty. Despite its limited impact, Li Zicheng’s rebellion has been credited with hastening the fall of the Ming to the invading Manchu. Furthermore, his reputed advocacy of breaking up large landholdings and abolishing grain taxes led to him being seen by the early CCP as a symbol of the revolutionary fight against ‘feudalism’.
¹³ 汾阳: apparently a Daoist temple to the Tang general Guo Ziyi, whose formal name was Prince Zhongwu of Fenyang (郭子仪 ibid., p.1035).
¹⁴ 织女 (Zhinü): heroine of a classic Chinese folktale. Guo Ziyi was guarding the western frontier on the 7th night of the 7th lunar month, the only time in the year when Weaving Maid was allowed to meet her lover Herd Boy (牛郎 Niulang). Guo Ziyi recognised the Weaving Maid and prayed to her, and rewarded with her prophecy of prosperity and long life.
¹⁵ 富贵寿考 (fuguishoukao): the four words of the prophecy.
here a heap, there a strip,
a hollow, a hillock, hinting at drought and famine.
At Zhenchuan we stop for a snack:

80 bright spacious solid buildings, a wide main street,
oxen and horses mill around in clear autumn sunshine;
red ribbons, white horses, blue sky,
red dates, yellow earth, dark blue grapes;
the fragrance of baked yellow bread wafts everywhere;
the mixture of animal and fodder smells seems both pungent and sweet;
large and small shops, animal hides piled like hills,
typical northern style, perfect in every way.
Every northern border county, with countless flocks of sheep,
sends sheepskins and fleeces to the towns,
sales of wool in peaceful times,
number one or two million a year!16
After eating we set off, endless yellow sands,
unseen heights, and difficult-to-gauge depths,
sometimes on level ground the truck stops with wheels jammed.
Deep in the mountains, sand dunes appear:
their tops rounded, as if in rippling lines,
about to drift, spread softly everywhere,
a breeze gets up, blows sand off like smoke.
Both sides of the sand dunes, still the mountain farms,
a few ears of grain with curled-up leaves, roots covered in sand,
millet not green but half-yellow, withered and pathetic.
Viewed from the heights, sandy ridges and dunes seem both continuous and broken,
appearing yellow and white, with small insipid shadows,
sand glitters in clear bright autumn sun;
all seems about to flow, and yet remains unchanged,
as if waiting for some news, and only then would sand fly off and mountains sink.
Dreadful desolation, dreadful drought,
no trees, no rivers, no signs of human habitation,

16 It is not clear whether this refers to the volume of sales, the number of wool markets held, or the value of the sales.
one loud cough travels far into the distance.

Burning sand dunes, bleached blue sky,
glimmers of light quivering aimlessly in mid-air,
ever evaporating heat, dried-out desert,
yet it makes us tremble with fear!
The closer to the northern border, the nearer the sand hills,
so bare and cruel a place,
bulky hills with rounded tops, waves of sand joined end-to-end,
like giant camels in a train, a camel-caravan of many humps,
appearing to move yet motionless, tall and short tethered together,
seemingly still yet shifting, a flowing thread that floats in the air.

Surrounded by this drifting sand,
barren all year round,
yet outside Yulin’s walls a billowing river flows,
and forest greenery shades the riverbanks.
Oh, green trees on both sides!
Amid this glittering sand,
that parches mouths and minds,
a little bit of green refreshes people’s hearts,
reviving them, making them feel safe and tranquil,
so right away they forget their feelings of desolation;

this precious greenness, amid bleached sand and barren mountain ranges,
how intense it is, how clear and fresh,
like ancient Song and Yuan paintings on silk, a mottled bright green!
Yulin, controlling the Ordos, through its connections with Suiyuan,
protecting Yansui, Ningxia and Gansu;
in desert, yet with water from the river beyond and springs within the town,
inside and outside the town walls, green trees reach high to the sky;
oh, great China, mighty country,
thus, midst barren desert and untamed water, the old town remains formidable!

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17 Yimeng (Yìměng): abbreviation for Yi ke zhao meng (Yi ke zhao meng), the old term for the part of Inner Mongolia south of the great loop of the Yellow River and directly north of Shaanxi (伊克昭盟 "Cihai," pp.513-514).
18 延绥: the name of a Ming dynasty military garrison, originally set up in present-day Suide county, then moved to Yulin, thereafter becoming a generic term for Yulin (延绥 ibid., p.1139). See also 榆林 ibid., p.3017.
A flat town with long wide streets,

strong thick walls and spacious courtyards,

shops and family homes, all laid out like the Beiping way.

From a small hill to the east, the constant sound of student voices,

the vocational school, Yulin Middle School, and female teacher’s college,

built on the spacious town heights, school sites linked together.

School teachers, students, and journalists,

supporting cultural promotion\(^{19}\) on the northern border,

concerned about the Mongolian counties, and the War of Resistance,

in fervour they are united with the army,

discussing issues, publishing a monthly magazine,

striving sincerely to resurrect the culture from neglect and deprivation.

Outside the town there is coal, and salt,

with salt to exchange for food, staying well-fed and well-clad is no problem;

with wool and hides also produced in large quantities,

students and soldiers roll and twist wool yarn by hand,

for knitted socks and stockings to keep out the cold;

if large-scale production of knitted wool and animal hides could be set up,

supplying the military, exploiting the benefits of natural resources,

this commanding desert pass,

would, together with the Great Wall, be an even better barrier against economic harm\(^{20}\).

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\(^{19}\) 文化宣传 (wenhua xuanchuan): read here as meaning the dissemination of literacy and culture, rather than ‘cultural propaganda’ (see canto 5 footnote 3).

\(^{20}\) This passage clearly refers to the activities of the Red Army in the northern border areas controlled by the CCP, and to the CCP fostering of educational and cultural awareness programs which encouraged the organisation of mutual activities involving local people and the army.
Yulin – Xi’an

We planned to travel from Yulin through the Ordos region, riding camels, carrying tents, like Mongolia’s people, living rough off wind and moonlight, arriving at desert oases, paying homage to great lords; then crossing the Yellow River, galloping over grasslands, to Wuyuan and Shanba, to visit and pay respect to heroes of the anti-Japan resistance. But getting camel-drivers, food, water and tents, for our group of several dozen, was a huge challenge; so we changed plan, heading instead to Chang’an in time for Mid-Autumn Festival.

We rushed through Qingjian, stayed the night in Yongping, arrived at Yan’an, once more warmly welcomed in the valley cave-dwellings: young people, harmonious singing, Chinese and Western musical instruments, performing together, improvised songs, homemade music scores, from the nation’s heart, singing firmly of their fervour in the War of Resistance; to promote the resistance effort, both traditional and modern drama treat the subject seriously, using folk song and Qinjiang, to teach the masses about fighting the war.

After a lively night, we head south once again, Luochuan county entered, the road gets gradually flatter. Passed through Tongguan, coalfields outside the city have stepped up operations, Jiangsu-Gansu branch line opens up the north, connecting Xiyang and Tongguan; once coal-mines have opened, the railroad completed, this worthy little county will be ten times as prosperous.

Boat-shaped Yaoxian, still with its ancient ways,
imposing dwellings, with memorial plaques shining on gate and courtyard, a monument stands in the street, honouring upright and faithful women. A tiny Stele Forest, but with unique and mutually contrasting treasures, Yao Boduo, Zhang Anshi, all priceless.

Outside the town, hills of reddish-yellow earth, countless pines, Yaowang Temple, layer upon layer of pavilions and palace halls, in front of the hall, Ming dynasty steles, solid stone with characters clear and intact, Master Sun’s prescriptions are still handed on from stone rubbings. Outside the temple, Thousand Buddha Cliff with its images of exceptional delicacy, satin-smooth surfaces, solidified in stone, clothing folds and Buddha’s body, gleaming and meticulously arranged, unlike Longmen’s carved figures, smashed and scattered about, nor yet like Yan’an’s treasures, all vertical and horizontal lines, here, contours are subtle, images carefully clothed, necklaces of precious gems and celestial garments, all seem lightly floating. Robes that move, hidden bodies seemingly visible through clothing, gauze-like garments, faintly glittering and intermittently reflecting, benevolent and lovely Buddhism, appearing to change yet seeming stable, in motion it seems tranquil, in its beauty it expresses the divine, every line and fold, every image, all somehow like softly blended breezes, blowing a little fragrance to linger in the mountains.

seems to have been so struck by the town’s location at the prow-like convergence of two rivers that he refers to it again in line 52.

9 碑林 (beilin): located on Yaowang Shan.
10 姚伯多: calligrapher of the Northern Wei period.
11 张安世: high-ranking Western Han dynasty court official, also a well-known calligrapher (张安世 "Cihai," p.2488).
12 孙真人 (Sun Zhenren): referring to Sun Simiao, the Daoist sage, practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine from the early Tang period who lived for some time on Yaowang Shan, and compiled a compendium of herbal medicine 《千金要方》Qianjin Yao fang (孙思邈 ibid., p.2569).
13 See canto 12 lines 101-108.
14 Here Lao She possibly means Baota, Yan’an’s Tang dynasty Buddhist pagoda. While not identifying any specific carvings, he seems to feel that their adherence to vertical and horizontal lines makes them less aesthetically appealing than those of Yaowang Shan. What is perhaps more interesting is that although Yan’an is now more celebrated as the wartime base for Mao Zedong and the Red Army, Lao She chooses to focus on Yan’an’s ancient ‘treasures’.
15 流光掩映 (liuguang yanying): here translated literally to convey the appearance of the statues, this phrase could also be read as a metaphor for Buddhism’s elusive essence.
South of the mountain an ancient temple, dedicated to the Three Pure Ones,\(^{16}\)
Tang monuments and Song carvings, quietly facing deep green pines;
at the Gate of Filial Piety\(^ {17}\) we gaze upon the town,
shaped like a boat with the river winding round,
tall slender poplars, silver leaves trembling in the autumn wind.
An overnight stay in mountains, a quiet night’s refreshing wind,
the last few days’ weariness banished by a good night’s sleep.
Passing again through Sanyuan, we stop a little inside the town wall,
two towns face one another,\(^ {18}\) people swarming in the downtown parts,
dates sweet as honey, pears as big as bottles,
business booming everywhere, streets packed with people,
carrying bottles of wine and mooncakes,
bustling with the noise and excitement of Mid-Autumn Festival season,
song and dance celebrating peace in the midst of conflict.
Everywhere in town, ringing sounds of pots and ladles,
the fame of Sanyuan food has spread throughout the Guanzhong plain;
like those of Suzhou and Nanjing,
Chang’an people bring their cash to Sanyuan to enjoy themselves,
when money flows in, living is easy,
so naturally fine clothes and food are the focus of people’s lives.
We go to a small inn to taste their special flatbread,
genuine Guanzhong flavour, really something out of the ordinary.
While we idly walk the streets, an air-raid alarm sounds,
following schoolchildren, we scurry out of town,
everyone scatters to the woods, or hides in fields,
in a vegetable garden, I come across an old man.
I call to him “Village elder”, he addresses me as “Sir”,
sitting on the ground, we ask each other’s names.
With several dozen mu of drought-prone land, children already grown up,

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\(^{16}\) 三清 (San qing): the three highest gods in the Daoist pantheon, also known as the Three Divine Teachers (三清 "Cihai," p.36).

\(^{17}\) 文昌阎 (Wen chang yan): read as referring to a Daoist temple gate inscribed with lines from Wenchang Xiaojing 《文昌孝经》 [The Literary Canon of Filial Piety]. The temple described by Lao She has not been identified.

\(^{18}\) Sanyuan and Jingyang (see canto 22 line 12).
if he harvests eighty percent of his crop, they will celebrate peace and security; this hard-working plainspoken old farmer,

chatted of family affairs, but was also deeply troubled by the fighting:
he knew about the War of Resistance, he truly hated the enemy soldiers,
if the enemy comes, he said, thumping his chest,
he was ready himself to charge and break through their ranks! He does not fear hardship, nor does he despise poverty,
he would fearlessly sacrifice himself to overcome Japan,
he does not complain about tax increases, nor press-gangs, to beat the enemy, he would willingly give his life!
But after two years’ fighting, he doesn’t quite understand,
why have we still not regained important cities? Why have we still not recaptured a single province?
We also have artillery and elite troops, don’t we?
Can’t our planes fly high in the sky too?
All we hear of is the enemy’s ruthless brutality,
and the slaughter of our elders and comrades everywhere.
Ah, our publicity does not give the whole story,
it only reports the enemy’s excessive violence and vicious greed,
alarming common people with news of bloodshed, arson and slaughter,
yet neglecting the real war situation,
and how to sustain the War of Resistance in the longer term.

Our people, like this down-to-earth old man,
knowing the nation’s shame, are brave, sincere and loyal,
and, given the word, would readily fight with all their might,

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19 陷阵冲锋 (xian zhen chongfeng): Lao She’s re-arrangement of the common idiom 冲锋陷阵.
20 抽丁 (chou ding): the practice of forcibly enlisting men, especially young men, into army service. During the 2nd Sino-Japanese War the NRA relied heavily on such conscription, with most conscripts in the 18 – 45 age group coming from poor and/or rural backgrounds, and enduring conditions that resulted in an estimated mortality of over 1 million: Eastman, "Nationalist China during the Sino-Japanese War 1937-1945," pp.572-573. According to another source, the Red Army seldom resorted to this kind of forced conscription because of CCP policies to avoid alienating rural populations: Van Slyke, "The Chinese Communist movement during the Sino-Japanese War," p.624. Lao She’s conversation with the old man suggests that Sanyuan was under Nationalist control at that time.
21 名城 (mingcheng): literally, famous cities, but here read as meaning cities like Jinan, Nanjing, Wuhan, and Shanghai that had fallen to the Japanese advance in the period up to autumn 1939.
22 知耻有勇 (zhichi you yong): a version of 知耻近乎勇 (zhichi jinhu yong), given by Mathews as “a feeling of shame is near to courage”: 知耻近乎勇 Mathews, p.129.
speaking of the Japanese invaders, they burn with anger, but they only know that battles must be fought and won, thinking that a few punches and kicks will bring success at once; they had not anticipated, and of course don’t understand, what modern warfare is, and why it drags on doggedly, till the enemy is buried in a deep hole.23

Like fearless ants, working as one to attack a huge insect, 

biting without letting go, despite its violent twisting and thrashing, from early morning till afternoon, taking turns to harass it, till time spent fighting has exhausted the insect’s strength and power, in the war’s two years,24 we have captured mankind’s poisonous insect, so long as we keep fighting, without letting go no matter what,25 we can paralyse it, make it practically dead in our hands!

This requires strategies armed with courage, and conviction to sustain our fervour, time is the trap which we dig for the enemy, with tough locks and shackles that can catch and hold the poisonous insect.

Our publicity should not only focus on stirring up emotions, we should also ensure that the common people have clear minds and keen eyes,26 teaching them to judge accurately, to realise, that our victory lies in today’s steadfastness, in bearing tomorrow’s hardships, it is unflagging all the way, believing firmly in the sacrifice, right up to the final seconds!

I explained this argument to the old man, he stayed silent for quite a while, till on his face a slight smile appeared;

then the all-clear rang out, a distant sound of gongs, I took leave of the old man, rushed into town,

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23 Cf. Mao Zedong’s 1938 Yan’an lecture ‘On Protracted War’, describing strategies of “encirclement and counter-encirclement” so that “the fascist aggressors – will finally be buried underneath”, and of “luring the enemy in deep”: Mao Zedong, Selected military writings, pp.220-221, 246.

24 That is, at the end of 1939, counting 1937 as the official start of the War of Resistance against Japan.

25 死不放松 (si bu fangsong): literally, even in death not loosening our hold.

26 心亮眼明 (xin liang yan ming): adaptation of the idiom 心明眼亮, meaning to be sharp-eyed and clear-headed.
hurried on to Chang’an, in the red clouds of sundown.
Huashan

Like Laoshan standing tall and solitary on East China’s seacoast, once we saw it, we had arrived at Huashan: a flat mountain ridge standing out, alone and proud among the clouds, like green jade bamboo shoots that pierce the sky, like a green lotus against the horizon, like the magical work of a heavenly painter, a sequence of peaks drawn in a few straight graceful strokes.

There are no needlessly chaotic broken lines, no smudging in search of perfection, every stroke succinct, not one could be added or removed, the lotus peak’s immortal palm now stands before us; unlike Bashan’s carelessly linked fine chain, unlike Taihang’s countless peaks and ridges, nor like Jianmen’s eerie ruggedness, it soars straight up to pierce the sky, clear at one glance; here, the rocks are not obvious, green trees are shaded by mist, visible yet subtle, graceful and not gaudy, everything now clearly arranged, everything also ethereally light and distant;

with southern scenery’s lovely colours, and clear northern sky,

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2 崂山: on Shandong peninsula.

3 青莲 (qing lian): Lao She alludes again to Huashan’s ‘lotus’ appearance in lines 11 and 168. However the name ‘Lotus Peak’ (莲峰 lianfeng or 莲花峰 lianhua feng) generally indicates Huashan’s West Peak (华山 "Cihai," p.280).

4 莲峰仙掌 (lianfeng xian zhang): here again Lao She clearly means the whole mountain. However, the term 仙掌 normally indicates a specific feature of Huashan’s East Peak known as ‘The Immortal’s Palm’ (Vervoorn, "Cultural Strata of Hua Shan," p.7) or ‘Fairy Palm Cliff’ (Hedda Morrison and Wolfram Eberhard, *Hua Shan: the Taoist sacred mountain in West China, its scenery, monasteries and monks* (Hong Kong: Vetch and Lee Ltd., 1974), pp.xi-xiii).

5 Dabashan mountains (see canto 6 footnote 4).

6 See canto 11 footnote 3.

7 See canto 3.
without the south’s soft charm, nor the north’s cold bleakness;
arriving in front of the mountain, with dawn’s red clouds not yet dispersed,
heavenly rouge has dyed deep red the petals of the lotus peak.
Almost without climbing, we reached the mountain’s foot and then a temple,
right on Mid-Autumn Festival, pilgrims constantly going back and forth below the
mountain,
the solid sound of bells, faint smells of burning incense,
on a creek-bank at the forest’s edge, an old reed temple hut,
even old women with bound feet can come to burn incense and redeem their vows,
green trousers and red jackets, lined with the mountain’s bright autumn colours.
Surging streams seem impatient to leave the mountain,
following the sounds of a spring, we found the Jade Spring Monastery: a
large temple hidden inside forest, the clear spring winding round,
gorgeous purple tree roots tremble gently in the water;
the reclining image of Sage Xiyi, sleeping peacefully in a cave,
outside the cave, carefree ancient trees, green shadows slowly swaying.
Carefree trees, carefree immortals,
a carefree world, alas, perhaps only in dreams!
Leaving the Monastery, we started climbing the mountain,
weeds and neglected vines, sounds of water and jumbled rocks,
the winding mountain road veers abruptly north and south,
now crossing streams, now climbing along the banks,
lovely scenery disappears, bamboo and trees vanish in cloud,
only tadpoles big as fingers darting round in water.
If we give up and return from here,
oh, that would not do Huashan justice!
See, above Xiyi Gorge, a rocky precipice overhangs,
halway up at several heights, cave entrances suspended in space,
steps cut out of stone, straight up without railings,
one step bungled, you’ll tumble to be smashed far below,

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8 玉泉道院 (Yu quan Daoyuan): monastery in the foothills of Huashan’s North Peak.
9 希夷: legendary Daoist sage better known as Chen Tuan 陈抟 (? – 989) whose last years were spent
  on Huashan: Vervoorn, “Cultural Strata of Hua Shan,” p.20. The statue, which is near the monastery,
  depicts Xiyi in his ‘sleep meditation’ mode: Poul Andersen, “A Visit to Hua-shan,” Cahiers d’Extrême-
  Asie 5 (1989). Xiyi Gorge (line 48) also records Chen Tuan’s connection with Huashan.
though not such lovely or impressive scenery, 
already it suggests the mountain’s profound and enigmatic thrill. 
Rocks in the gorge, like huge boats, 
sharp edges at all angles, or jumbled altogether in a mass, 
if you believe the traditional legend, 
it was here Chenxiang\textsuperscript{10} tested his axe, preparing to save his mother by splitting the stone. 
Above Shaluo plain\textsuperscript{11} is the Second Immortal Mountain Pass, 
beneath Shaluo’s trees, a tiny reed temple, 
Daoist priests offer spring water, lay out trays of fruit for their gods, 
Huangjing fruit\textsuperscript{12} and dates, collected from the mountain. 
Forging ahead again, the mountain road even harder, 
neglected rocks and creepers all the way up, 
outside the Maonü Cave,\textsuperscript{13} the stone famed from time immemorial, 
sweating as if freshly bathed, we can only sit and quietly watch the mountain. 
Only on reaching Qingkeping,\textsuperscript{14} does Huashan’s wondrous peak dimly appear: 
looking down the road just climbed, the rough disorder of the rocks is clearly seen, 
looking up we see the green summit, faintly visible; 
at Yuxian monastery,\textsuperscript{15} Daoist priests have lunch prepared, 
the clean quiet monastery hall busy as a hotel, 
Daoist priests calling to each other, hurrying us through the meal, 
Daoist priests adding up the bill, demanding money, 
Daoist priests with faces sometimes genial, sometimes chilly, 
lots of cash turns on spring warmth, less brings a sudden weather change, 
I doubt the Daoist priests here will meet immortals!

\textsuperscript{10}沉香: Liu Chenxiang 刘沉香, who according to Daoist legend fought his uncle and won the magical axe to free his mother San Shengmu 三圣母 from imprisonment on Huashan. 
\textsuperscript{11}莎萝坪: a small valley on the mountainside, also known as Dongtian Plain. The pass is referred to in Liscomb, \textit{Learning from Mount Hua}, p.22. 
\textsuperscript{12}黄精果: a perennial herb (also known as ‘King Solomon’s Seal’) used in Chinese traditional medicine. The fruit is a black berry (黄精 “Cihai,” p.4704). 
\textsuperscript{13}毛女洞: celebrating the legend of Yujiang 玉姜, a palace maid who escaped being entombed with the first Qin Emperor’s wives by fleeing to Huashan, where she became a hermit and grew hair all over her body (毛女 “Ciyuan,” p.0918). 
\textsuperscript{14}青柯坪: seen as the halfway point on Huashan’s ascent and a popular place to stop and admire the view: Liscomb, \textit{Learning from Mount Hua}, pp.23-24. 
\textsuperscript{15}遇仙观: literally, ‘Encountering Immortals Monastery’. Lao She’s description of the Daoist priests’ mercenary practices culminates in a sardonic comment on the monastery name (lines 68-73).
Climbing on from Qingkeping, only now it really counts as reaching Huashan, steps straight up steep slopes, iron chains on both sides, whether you stop or carry on, that’s your decision, the “Turn round” boulder warns of danger!

On Thousand-foot Precipice, at every step we quake in fear, at Hundred-foot Gorge suspended over steep sides, we grasp the iron cable firmly, check for footholds in the stones, the summit above us, dark mountain streams below, a single vertical ladder hangs, with cliffs surrounding.

We must be fearless, must stay calm, if suddenly we panic, hands and feet all muddled, we’d cower halfway up the mountain in a frightened bundle! If we stay bold, composed, the danger goes, just don’t look up at the clouds, or you’ll feel scared and breathless.

After treading this perilous path, before going on to climb the famous scenic mountain, the reed hut of a small temple happens to be here, a quiet main hall, clear water and warm incense, a Daoist priest who collects tea-money from passing travellers.

Crossed Longqiao twice, passed Qunxianguan, winding everywhere, challenging at every step, this track on a cleft in the mountain our only way through, stone steps on the cliff only two feet wide, using hands, feet and eyes, using all our strength to climb, without observing the scenery, without lingering, eyes closely fixed on feet, hearts fearfully thumping, only happy and relaxed when at last we reach the North Peak, hazy autumn scenery spread out before us.

See, three summits to the south, the wintry green of trees touching cold sky,
straight and elegant tapered peaks, faint traces of mist;
looking east, the Wei and Luo rivers join to meet up where the Yellow River turns,
the mighty Yellow River, the Wei curving in a loop,
the narrow Luo flowing in between;\textsuperscript{21}

110 golden sands and autumn colours, spread through three river valleys,
the faint line of the Jiangsu-Gansu railroad;
on the Yellow River’s far bank, range upon range of mountains undulating,
hills of pale yellow, unending mist and sand,
those are the precious blood-stained Zhongtiao mountains!
Eighteen miles away, there is Tongguan,
where mighty cannons crushed the enemy, the noise carrying to Huashan.
Broad and powerful is Huashan’s northern face,
having climbed it for the view, the battlefield is right in front of us,
the river winding round the mountain, the infinite clouds and mist,

120 make one want to wildly yell, to deeply sigh,
oh, men’s fervour makes them willing to shed blood for the War of Resistance,
and ready to shed it for these strangely majestic mountains and great rivers!
Nearby, White Cloud Peak\textsuperscript{22} stands silently,
like a loyal sentry guarding Huashan.
Behind Cloud Terrace Peak, an old pine on the cliff leans out,
beside the pine tree, Laozi’s Furrow\textsuperscript{23} hangs dangerously on the cliff.
Juxiantai\textsuperscript{24} is small, the suspension bridge only a foot wide,
at nightfall the bridge is pulled up, cutting off all traffic,
by quiet lamplight, the tiny temple,

130 seems to float and drift upon the rock, as tiny as a pebble.
Facing Juxiantai,

strange stones arranged at the summit,
eight scenic wonders\textsuperscript{25} scattered, like dogs and apes;

\begin{footnotes}
\item[21] This view from the North Peak sees the confluence of the Wei (flowing from the west) and the Luo (flowing from the north), then joining the Yellow River as it flows south just before turning in its great bend westwards at Tongguan.
\item[22] 白云一峰 (baiyun yi feng): variation on ‘Cloud Terrace Peak’ (yuntaい 云台), another name for North Peak which Lao She uses in line 126 (see also footnote 29).
\item[23] 老君的犁铧 (Laojun de lihua): a precipitous stairway wedged into the cliff up the North Peak. The legend refers to Laozi 老子 (c. 600–400 BCE), founder of Daoism, arriving at Huashan to study and preach and opening up this pathway with a plough.
\item[24] 聚仙台: a platform on the western edge of the North Peak.
\end{footnotes}
cliffs above the rushing river are shadowed, patched with green moss stains, 
imagination, along with sun and shadow and drifting mist, 
turns it into a drawing with people, pavilions and parks. 
The night spent at North Peak, cold stone and chilly mist, 
three rivers sharing moonlight, myriad reflections clasping the dark green lotus, 
make us both worried and joyful, overcome with emotion.

At daybreak next morning, in autumn’s glowing multi-coloured clouds, 
we break branches off for walking-sticks, singing as we climb to South Peak, 
Shengmu Palace and Sanyuan Caves, seen distantly in passing, 
like an ancient dragon warming itself beneath the autumn sun, 
rocks are its scales, moss its stripes, 
Blue Dragon’s fearsome ridge crouches between the peaks, 
a single hanging ridge across, to left and right the limitless abyss, 
peaks in a circle, baffling emptiness all around!

With Dragon Ridge crossed, green shadows fill the mountains, 
on Five Cloud Summit, ancient pines and huge cypresses fragrantly serene and bright; 
looking back, right opposite North Peak, 
a temple stands like an ancient dragon, with head extended and tail lifted, 
stretching out to drink from a mountain spring.

Past Jinsuoguan, between two south-east peaks, 
low-hanging Middle Peak holds the mountain’s smoke from burning incense. 
Not far from Middle Peak, 
a clear view across to South Peak,

25 八景 (ba jing): an ancient convention for describing or characterising a type of scenic landscape, used extensively in literature (八景 "Ciyuan," p.0162). The reference to ‘dogs’ and ‘apes’ suggests a somewhat chaotic and crowded scene, rather than a majestic one.
26 圣母宫: associated with San Shengmu (footnote 10), this Daoist temple on West Peak is also known as Cuiyun Palace (翠云宫): Vervoorn, "Cultural Strata of Hua Shan," p.21. Here Lao She describes the view looking across to West Peak.
27 三元洞: caves on West Peak.
28 苍龙岭 (Canglong ling): a narrow steep-sided ridge linking North Peak to the other peaks: Liscomb, Learning from Mount Hua, p.29. Andersen calls it “Green Dragon Ridge” (Andersen, "A Visit to Hua-shan", p.352); Morrison “Coiling Dragon Ridge” (Morrison and Eberhard, Hua Shan, p.vi.)
30 金锁关: literally, Gold Lock Pass, from the tradition that visitors buy a golden padlock and lock it onto the iron chains on either side of the pass.
31 中峰 (Zhong feng): also known as Jade Maiden Peak (玉女峰 Yunnü feng) (华山 "Cihai," p.280).
countless pines standing straight and elegant, maple leaves faintly red,
when Chongyang Festival\textsuperscript{32} comes, the mountain will glow vividly all over,
outside Bajing Palace,\textsuperscript{33} a tiny iron pavilion stands beside a rock,
to reach the pavilion, you must go backwards down a dangerous cliff,
do the “sparrow-hawk cartwheel”\textsuperscript{34}, pretend it’s thrilling,
this place is certainly not among Huashan’s wonders.
Sublime South Peak\textsuperscript{35} is Huashan’s most impressive sight,
outside Jintian Palace,\textsuperscript{36} in front of the pond,
towards the north, the Yellow River, Luo and Wei, three rivers rolling on,
southwards the Qinling mountains, Funiu mountains in the south-east,
winding rivers join around the mountain, a ribbon of cold mist,
dark green limitless summit, clasping the distant sky!
Looking down, the peaks are like a green chain of hands clasped in greeting,
freezing clouds gather, as if to surround and embrace that chain,
the immortal lotus palm,\textsuperscript{37} contrasting and complementing,
green peaks, green trees, green mist,
a tranquil jade-green circle facing the sky above!
Only these few mountains, yet such immeasurable green,
only a few colours of autumn, yet they brush a slight chill into the heart,
so bright, still, beautiful, cold,
a mountain of poetic feelings and colour, yet where poets stand still with nothing to
say!
Below South Heaven Gate,\textsuperscript{38} is Chaoyuan Cave\textsuperscript{39} where people worship star-gods,\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{32} 重阳 (Chongyang): the ‘Double Ninth’ or Yang Festival, held on the 9\textsuperscript{th} day of the 9\textsuperscript{th} lunar month.
\textsuperscript{33} 八景宫: also known as ‘Eight Conditions Temple’, on East Peak: Vervoorn, "Cultural Strata of Hua Shan," p.21. The pavilion referred to is probably Xiaqi Ting (下棋亭) [Chessboard Pavilion] south of East Peak, named after a legend that Chen Tuan (see footnote 9) played chess here with the first Song emperor to win possession of Huashan: Andersen, "A Visit to Hua-shan", p.351.
\textsuperscript{34} 鹞子翻身(Yaozi fanshen): a phrase originally used to describe a type of military manoeuvre (鹞子翻身 “Ciyuan,” p.1930). Here Lao She uses it to describe a descent that at times involves twisting or rolling the body around as a falcon or sparrow-hawk does in flight.
\textsuperscript{35} South Peak, at 2155 metres, is the highest of Huashan’s peaks.
\textsuperscript{36} 金天宫: on South Peak. Also known as Golden Heaven Temple, this was the largest and most important of Huashan’s monasteries: Vervoorn, "Cultural Strata of Hua Shan," p.21.
\textsuperscript{37} 莲花仙掌 (lianhua xian zhang): see footnotes 3 and 4.
\textsuperscript{38} 南天门 (Nantianmen): a name used for various mountain passes, but here indicating the path to South Peak that involved taking the arduous descent described in the following lines.
\textsuperscript{39} 朝元洞: a Daoist temple dedicated to the Jade Emperor: Andersen, "A Visit to Hua-shan", pp.351-352.
a lonely wooden plank hangs on the cliff,\textsuperscript{41} I grab the iron cable, and face the cliff, step by step sliding sideways to the cave entrance; further below is the Cave of the Immortals,\textsuperscript{42} its rope ladder dangling in the depths, feeling for each step, trembling at each step, with the body in mid-air, fate hangs by an iron chain! Finally, along the rocky reddish ridge, turning westwards, on Taiyishan’s lotus throne\textsuperscript{43} the autumn sun is already setting, we climb the terrace for a better view, North Peak clear and distant, solid Huashan till now empty and faraway,\textsuperscript{44} golden earth, far-off mountains undulating, clouds and fog that seem to float like gentle smoke, autumn wind and colours, a sloping line of wild geese\textsuperscript{45} flies across the sky.

\textsuperscript{40} 斗宿星天 (dou xiu xingtian): literally, the Big Dipper constellation and other stars.
\textsuperscript{41} The notorious 长空栈道 (Changkong zhandao): Vervoorn, "Cultural Strata of Hua Shan," p.23. For another description of this plank walk, verifying its existence in 1381 when Wang Lü visited Huashan see Liscomb, \textit{Learning from Mount Hua}, p.42.
\textsuperscript{42} 仙洞 (xian dong): possibly another name for the Chaoyuan Cave, otherwise a separate cave that has not been identified.
\textsuperscript{43} 太乙莲台 (Taiyi liantai): referring to the view of Zhongnanshan by its ancient name of Taiyishan (终南山 “Cihai,” p.2661).
\textsuperscript{44} 萧然疏散 (xiaoran shusan): read as meaning that where Huashan was previously remote and virtually ‘ unassembled’ in Lao She’s imagination, after the experience of climbing it he realises its solid (紧凑 jincou) presence.
\textsuperscript{45} A reference suggesting South Peak’s other name: Peak Where Wild Geese Descend (落雁峰 luoyanfeng): Liscomb, \textit{Learning from Mount Hua}, n.65 p.186.
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