

Great Storytellers of Chinese Tales: She Lao, Pearl S. Buck, and Yutang Lin

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Qiaoyiology focuses on “spiritual metamorphosis” brought about by “Qiao.” As a special subject, modern writers are particularly eye-catching in their literary production or storytelling due to the “spiritual metamorphosis.” When we carefully observe the literary creations of She Lao, Pearl S. Buck, and Yutang Lin through Qiaoyiology, we find that these three modern writers who almost simultaneously entered the literary world have astonishing similarities. Lao’s residence in the UK facilitated his identification as a modern writer. Pearl S. Buck’s 40-year residence in China not only contributed to her “missionary identity being replaced by an artist identity,” but also allowed her novel creation to transcend the stereotypes of contemporary Western writers’ portrayal of China. Lin, who was proficient in both Chinese and English, had lived in the United States and Germany, which had contributed to the formation of his humorous poetics. It is under the control of this literary concept that his “communicating Chinese culture to foreigners” career has achieved remarkable success. The success of Lao, Pearl S. Buck, and Lin’s respective literary careers highlights the huge charm of “Qiaoyi” and shows the extraordinary theoretical insight and literary interpretation power of Qiaoyiology.

Keywords: Qiaoyiology, She Lao, Pearl S. Buck, Yutang Lin

In *Fighting Angel*, Pearl S. Buck’s depiction of her father Andrew as a missionary in small towns of the southern China is impressive. She said Andrew could draw a crowd with his great height, big nose and blue bright eyes within a quarter of an hour by sitting in a street teahouse. People looked carefully at this “foreign devil” from a foreign land, wondering where he came from and what he came to do. The villagers hoped that Andrew could tell his own stories and hoped to learn about the situation in a foreign country through Andrew, which was exactly what Andrew wanted to tell everyone. After listening to his story, the villagers savored it and most of them dispersed, but there were always one or two people left to continue listening (Buck, 1936, p. 90). At that time, there were many missionaries like Andrew who came to China to preach, serving as ambassadors of Western culture. On the one hand, they “tell the Chinese about Jesus” (Peter, 1996), and on the other hand, they experienced the local customs and traditions, historical culture, and immersed themselves in it. They turned into “fans” of Chinese culture, and after returning from China, they actually started spreading Chinese culture, becoming

Chinese storytellers and sinologists. They introduced information from afar and also took away the story from here, becoming ambassadors of cultural exchange, bringing fresh breath to Chinese and foreign cultures and civilizations. This is the charm of “Qiaoyi.”

She Lao: From Chinese Teacher to New Literary Writer

She Lao lived abroad twice in his life. Once in the 1920s, he immigrated to the UK and taught Chinese at the Oriental College at the University of London; on another occasion, after the end of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, he was invited by the State Department of the United States for academic visits, and after the visit he resided in New York, writing and translating his novels. The experience of living in the UK changed the direction of Lao’s life. Lao was born in a poor Manchu family. After graduating from a normal school, he taught briefly in higher primary schools. He also served as the principal and a student advisor at the Beijing Academic Affairs Bureau. Later, he resigned to teach Chinese at Nankai Middle School in Tianjin, and soon returned to Beijing to teach Chinese at Beijing No.1 Middle

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School. During this period, he went to Yenching University to audit English classes and converted to Christianity. Due to his frequent visits to the Church in Gangwashi, Lao met modern writer Dishan Xu and Robert Kenneth Evans, a missionary from the London Society. Seeing that Lao was well cultivated in Chinese and had been engaged in Chinese education cause, Evans recommended him to his father-in-law, the Welsh missionary and linguist W. Hopkyn Rees, who was currently looking for a Chinese teacher. After five or six years of Chinese education in primary and secondary schools in China, Lao was offered a five-year teaching position at Oriental College, University of London.

Lao was the only Chinese teacher in Oriental College at that time. Although the number of students in his class was small, the teaching task was not easy. Besides sightseeing, he began to read English novels in order to learn English in his spare time. After the novelty of being in England wore off, a sense of loneliness began to invade the heart of the 27-year-old young man who had left his home country. Homesickness grew stronger and stronger in his mind and often interfered with the pleasure he gained in reading English novels. He “misses everything back home. Those things were all in the past, and when I think of them, they are like pictures.... While reading novels, these pictures often flashed back and forth in my mind, causing me to forget what I was reading and to recall my past in a daze” (Lao, 2018). Finally, one day, when good luck came, his mind became intelligent. “Writing a novel is about depicting pictures, and there are also some pictures in memory. Why not use words to draw the pictures in one’s memory? I want to get a pen now” (Lao, 2018). During his five years in London, Lao thoroughly read novels by Dickens, Conrad, Joyce, Lawrence, and others. He assisted Clement Egerton, the British educator and anthropologist in translating *The Golden Lotus*. He studied the love stories depicted in Tang Dynasty Legends and explored the influence of Tang Dynasty Legends on the style of Western modernist literature (Witchard, 2012). He personally experienced the misunderstanding, fear and hostility of the British towards Chinese people at that time, caused by the Boxer Rebellion and the popularity of the novel series of Manchu Fu at that time. He criticized the conservatism and confusion towards the Chinese people, as well as the arrogance and narrowness of the British. He learned the writing techniques of novels from British modernist writers. He transformed his homesickness into words, and reflected the disgust of the British towards Chinese people and his own experiences in Britain in his literary creations. In Britain, Lao completed three novels *Lao*

Zhang’s Philosophy, *Thus Spoke Master Zhao* and *Two Mr. Ma*, and all of them were published in the *Novel Monthly*. By the time Lao left for China in 1929, he had already become a well-known new literary writer.

Living and teaching in the UK for five years, the most distinctive change in Lao was his self-identification. “When Lao returned to China, he often talked to his friends about his unwillingness to become a teacher again. He planned to focus on literary creation from now on and became a professional writer” (Guan, 1998). However, almost no one agreed with his idea. Everyone felt that it was difficult to maintain the normal life of the family only by writing at that time. Lao had no choice but to compromise and accepted the invitation of Cheeloo University to serve as the literary director of the Institute of Chinese Studies and professor in the College of Literature, responsible for teaching courses such as *Introduction to Literature*, *Literary Criticism* and *Literary Trends*. At this time, although Lao failed to achieve his wish, he did not deviate from his literary aspirations by teaching literature courses in the university, compiling lecture notes on literature introductions, and founding a new literary publication called *Cheeloo University Monthly*. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression period, Lao might be said to have truly realized his career ideal of being a professional writer. At that time, Lao went into exile to Wuhan and Chongqing, where he served as the actual leader of the Chinese National Association of Literature and Art Circles for Resisting the Enemy. He held high the banner of “articles to the countryside” and “articles to join the army,” believing that “writing can save the country” (Lao, 1937). He actively created relevant literature, experimented with popular literature, and told the story of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression to the world. As a result, he earned the respect of the literary and social circles, casting a monument for himself as a great writer during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression era.

Jun Ye, the founder of the Qiaoyiology, proposed that “material displacement led to spiritual metamorphosis” (Ye, 2014, p. 21). Scholar Mingdong Gu insisted that changing “material” to “subject,” namely “the displacement of subject led to spiritual metamorphosis,” could better highlight the originality of Qiaoyiology and was more in line with the concept of “Qiaoyiology” itself, because “living abroad” more often refers to the “subject” (Gu, 2023). On this issue, the author tends to support Gu’s view. Since the core concern of Qiaoyiology is the literary and cultural phenomenon of Yi caused by Qiao, and it is to examine the spiritual

metamorphosis of subjects caused by Qiao. So it is natural to focus on the subjects, or more specifically, on human beings. Otherwise, how can we talk about “spiritual metamorphosis”? After five years of living in England, the biggest change in spirit and thought was that Lao wanted to “abandon teaching and follow literature.” In the lonely life in a foreign country, writing provided him with great spiritual comfort. The different cultural environments around him and the fear and disgust of the British people towards the Chinese people also gave him great stimulation. Perhaps at that time, Lao had already realized that the most effective way to change Western culture’s rejection of Chinese culture and Western people’s misunderstanding of Chinese people was to write with a pen, exposing and satirizing the ills of society and people’s hearts, seeking ways to transform national character and create new culture, and disseminating and explaining with the help of the power of the media which has already produced great effects in Western society, thus achieving the transformation of Chinese spirit and Western thoughts.

When Lao lived in the United States, he was a guest of Pearl S. Buck and visited her farm many times. Pearl S. Buck recalled in her book *My Several Worlds* that Lao once went to the farm to spend a weekend with them. At that time, in addition to the children adopted by her, there were some soldiers from the nearby hospital who had been wounded in World War II. These soldiers were covered with bruises and scars, and the hospital was repairing their faces. Pearl S. Buck said she was worried that the children would make the party awkward because they were afraid of the soldiers’ scary faces, but surprisingly the atmosphere was very good and they got along well with each other. Pearl S. Buck attributed this harmonious atmosphere to Lao. She said that Lao stood humbly in front of everyone and talked about Tai Chi in a deep and soft voice. When talking about the charming and emotional parts, he unconsciously gestured, as graceful as a dance, stunning the hearts of everyone present and taking them into a novel world. Pearl S. Buck also mentioned that although Lao did not want to appear in public, his appearance would definitely bring wonderful speeches to everyone and enthrall the audience with his touching narration of Chinese culture (Buck, 1955, p. 422). Lao came at the invitation of the US government, and he himself had a special mission. The Chinese National Association of Literature and Art Circles for Resisting the Enemy held a farewell banquet, where they expressed their hope that Lao would tell the American government and people about modern Chinese literature and the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. Lao

fulfilled his mission. During his tour in the United States, he addressed the American public on Chinese modern novels and war literature of China. During his residence in New York, he completed the creation and English translation of the third part of *Four Generations Under One Roof*, namely *Famine*, *The Drum Singers*, and *The Spear That Demolishes Five Tigers at Once*, which had a wide impact.

Pearl S. Buck: From Spreading the Gospel to Telling the Story of China

Pearl S. Buck spent the first half of her life in China, where the surging Yangtze River nurtured her body, the long-standing Chinese civilization nurtured her spirit, and the cultural ecology that blended Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism shaped her soul. Pearl S. Buck had a strong Chinese complex, and she regarded China as her second hometown. She said, the life of the Chinese people has been my life for many years, and indeed, their life has always been a part of my life. Pearl S. Buck’s parents were missionaries in China, and she had been living in Zhenjiang with her parents since childhood. After graduating from university in the United States, Pearl S. Buck returned to China as a missionary like her parents. After marrying her husband, John Lossing Buck, she followed him to engage in agricultural research and missionary work in Suzhou, northern Anhui Province. Later, she transferred to Nanjing to teach English courses at University of Nanking, Southeast University, and Central University. Pearl S. Buck’s ambition was not to preach. She couldn’t bear the arrogance and indifference of missionaries towards the Chinese people. She deeply doubted the necessity of American overseas missionary work. In her opinion, the missionaries did not attempt to understand or interact with Chinese civilization, “I have seen missionaries ... so lacking in sympathy for the people they were supposed to be saving, so scornful of any civilization but their own” (Spurling, 2010, p. 228). Pearl S. Buck said, “We simply cannot express the Gospel with any force if we have hidden within us a sense of racial superiority ... We are no better than anyone else, any of us” (Spurling, 2010, p. 227). Pearl S. Buck had a deep interest in literary creation, and she enjoyed reading novels, particularly the works of British author Charles Dickens. Additionally, She also enjoyed reading Chinese stories, and later translated *All Men Are Brothers* into English for publication. The reading of Dickens’ literary works gave her eyes to the lives of the lower class. Pearl S. Buck said, “He opened my eyes to people,

he taught me to love all sorts of people, high and low, rich and poor, the old and little children” (Buck, 2000). And the extensive reading of traditional Chinese novels gave Pearl S. Buck the Chinese technique of storytelling. “But it is the Chinese and not the American novel which has shaped my own efforts in writing. My earliest knowledge of story, of how to tell and write stories, came to me in China” (Buck, 1938).

Pearl S. Buck is a master storyteller. Her novel *The Good Earth*, which tells the rural areas and farmers’ life in China, won the Pulitzer Prize (1932) and the Nobel Prize in Literature (1938), marking Pearl S. Buck’s successful transformation from a missionary to an artist. Pearl S. Buck’s trilogy *The Good Earth* had typical significance in telling Chinese stories and shaping the image of farmers at that time. The Manchu Fu series of novels that emerged in the UK were also popular in the United States, and the “Yellow Peril” that had influenced British people’s impression of China also had a market in the United States. Even the well-known American writer Jack London firmly believed in this and created a series of novels about Chinese overseas immigrants to slander the Chinese people. As a response to the perception of viewing Chinese people as evil, Charlie Chan detective novel series began to become popular in the United States. Compared to Fu’s negative image as aging, evil and physically aggressive, Charlie Chan became an embodiment of gentleness, goodness, and wisdom. This was just like Chi-Chen Wang, a Chinese-American translator and the professor in the East Asian Department at Columbia University, once described the American understanding of China in the 1930s and 1940s: “For most Americans, their knowledge of China is mainly through movies and detective novels. China means Charlie Chen, Manchu Fu, and other vague but familiar figures, as well as Chinese stir-fries and the meaningless hieroglyphics printed on storefronts in Chinatown” (Liu, 2021). As a result, American society began to form a polarized view of China. Some scholars had pointed out that this polarized view was actually “framed by a set of binary opposing discourse,” which presented as “a binary opposing structure that was either this or that, lacked intermediate and daily states” (Chang, 2017). However, Pearl S. Buck’s works precisely broke this binary opposition structure. What she describes is the scene of daily life in the Chinese countryside, which is “no hint of mystery or exoticism,” “replacing the ‘inscrutable Oriental’ and the ‘heathen Chinese’ with a hardworking, ordinary farming family,” “rendering Chinese life as recognizably human and even ordinary” (Peter, 1996). She incorporated the unfamiliar theme of “Chinese countryside” into the common theme of

American popular novels—the land, inadvertently creating a dazzling hybrid, thus making *The Good Earth* popular and successful in the United States.

Pearl S. Buck once told an interesting story about her childhood in *Fighting Angel*. She said that whenever her father traveled, she and her mother felt relieved. Once when her father went out to preach, she slipped into the garden and “played all day there was no God” (Buck, 1936, p. 82). At dusk, her mother said, “We’ll skip prayers tonight and take a walk instead” (Buck, 1936, p. 82). Pearl S. Buck couldn’t help but exclaiming, “God! There hadn’t been any God all day” (Buck, 1936, p. 82). She worried about it all night. When the next day arrived, Pearl S. Buck was delighted to find herself “perfectly safe, the peaceful summer sunshine streaming in my window.” God did nothing to her, and she was no longer afraid of her father! Pearl S. Buck marveled at her father’s religious fervor, but she did not grow up in a religious fanatic environment like her parents. She grew up in China “where there was no God at all” (Buck, 1936, p. 81). The “retirement” of God brought profound changes to Pearl S. Buck’s growth, from the above discussion that she questioned missionary work to her identification of herself as an artist, all of which can be traced back here. More importantly, it also enabled her to abandon the influence of binary thinking and generate a multicultural concept in the context of the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, as well as the blending of elegance and vulgarity in China. Pearl S. Buck mentioned Mr. Kong, her childhood private school teacher more than once: “I had learned from childhood to recognize the peoples of the earth as members of one family, known or unknown, and had realized the practical meaning of this Chinese view of the globe, first instilled into me by Mr. Kung” (Buck, 1955, p. 381). “The world of peoples, I had learned from Mr. Kung, was indeed one family under heaven. If average Americans could see themselves as part of the human race, they might be stimulated to curiosity and thus to interest and thus to understanding” (Buck, 1955, p. 428). It was precisely this multicultural perspective that enabled Pearl S. Buck to surpass the rigidity of contemporary Americans in describing China and portraying Chinese characters in *The Good Earth*, and to some extent, to avoid the mainstream dominant discourse in the United States. As Ye (1999) said, “the novel was the only time that a foreign novelist did not indulge in his own fantasies, but described the bottom of our dim real society deeply.” In fact, it was precisely this multicultural perspective that laid the ideological foundation for Pearl S. Buck to lead the American feminist movement, support the human rights

struggle of African Americans, and devote herself to cultural understanding and exchange between Asia and the West after her returning to the United States.

Pearl S. Buck lived in China for forty years, received dual education from China and the United States. In the bumpy journey of life, she has shaped her unique thoughts and personality. The American education she received made her sympathize with the New Culture Movement initiated by Duxiu Chen and Shi Hu, but the Chinese education she received also made her deeply passionate about traditional Chinese culture. She admired the tradition of Chinese classical novels, from which she found “China in the Mirror of her Fiction” (Buck, 1930) or folk China. This China was different from the China described in the classics or by scholar-officials. For her, folk China was the real China. She questioned the authenticity of China portrayed by modern Chinese writers, insisting that modern Chinese writers represented by Xun Lu and Lao did not truly understand the rural areas and farmers of China. Due to her long-term life in small towns of southern China and rural areas in North China, as well as her perspective on cultural comparison between China and the United States and her detached and emotional observer identity, she clearly had a better understanding of the real China than they did. Living in China gave Pearl S. Buck a pair of keen eyes. The exchange and collision of Chinese and Western cultures made her abandon the dual thinking of Western thought and generate a multi-cultural view. Pearl S. Buck believed in the multicultural perspective throughout her life, and with the support of this concept, she created some immortal works such as *East Wind: West Wind*, the trilogy of *The Good Earth* and *Dragon Seed*, which told the story of China. She gained the reputation of “a human bridge between Eastern and Western civilizations” praised by Richard Milhous Nixon.

Yutang Lin: A Pioneer in Communicating Traditional Chinese Culture to the West

In the latter half of his life, Yutang Lin almost all lived abroad, and it was precisely these 40 years that “was the harvest period of his creation” (Gong, 2018). Pearl S. Buck spent almost her entire life telling Chinese stories and communicating between Chinese and Western civilizations. It was valuable that she not only did it herself, but also constantly sought out and helped like-minded people. Lao was naturally one of them, and more importantly, she

discovered and nurtured another character—Lin. The first meeting between Pearl S. Buck and Lin was in 1933 when Pearl S. Buck returned to Shanghai from the United States at a family banquet hosted by her friends. Before this meeting, the two had already gained a considerable understanding of each other. After Pearl S. Buck publishing *The Good Earth*, there was quite a lot of criticism in the Chinese academic circle. For example, in a letter to a friend, Xun Lu said that this was just “the position of an American female missionary who grew up in China” (Lu, 2005, p. 496). And Kanghu Jiang wrote in the *New York Times* that Pearl S. Buck’s reading and understanding of China relied too much on the “coolies and maids” who worked in her home. In his opinion, “a Westerner, although born or permanently residing in China, as long as she cannot read the original Chinese works herself and relies on Chinese coolies and maids as the source of introduction and original translation, it is difficult to truly understand and explain China” (Jiang, 1999, p. 12). The criticism was sharp. Amidst this controversy, Lin applauded for Pearl S. Buck, “Mrs. Buck has become the most powerful propagandist of China in the United States Her great achievements in propaganda have enabled Americans to break away from their traditional prejudices towards Chinese people and begin to understand that Chinese people are the same kind that can be understood and sympathized with” (Lin, 1933). Pearl S. Buck’s understanding of Lin was derived from her attention to the “The Little Review” column in *China Review Weekly*, an English magazine published in Shanghai, where Lin was the main writer. In the following contact, Lin told Pearl S. Buck that he was going to write a book about China in English. She was excited to learn of Lin’s idea. She was on a mission to find writers who could write about China in English for Richard J. Walsh, who had just taken over as the editor of *Asia* magazine, the owner of the John Day Company and later became Pearl S. Buck’s second husband. Pearl S. Buck quickly recommended Lin to Walsh, and it was precisely because of this that Lin, with the help of Pearl S. Buck and Walsh, later published *My Country and My People* and achieved great success, moved to the United States to tell the story and wisdom of China to Westerners.

Lin graduated from St. John’s University in Shanghai in 1916 and was hired as an English teacher at Tsinghua University because of his excellent English. Upon arriving in Beijing, Lin, who received Western education since childhood, suffered a great reverse culture shock both physically and mentally, experiencing a “cultural contrast.” It turned out that Lin “not only knew nothing about Chinese philosophy, but

also had no knowledge of folk legends” (Lin, 1994, p. 26) at this time. He was ashamed that years of study in church schools had led to a great omission in the study of Chinese culture, and he worked even harder to make up for it. “He had no choice but to study hard, but since he didn’t have a teacher and felt embarrassed to ask others for help, he could only wander around the bookstores in the Liulichang. He would often hear from the employees of old bookstores about which types of books were famous and whose annotations on Fu Du’s poems was the best” (Lin, 1994, p. 26). “Living in Beijing is equivalent to being integrated with Chinese history,” Lin’s efforts to supplement his knowledge of Chinese have been extremely effective and have had a profound impact. When Lin was in Beijing, the New Culture Movement was in the ascendant, and he naturally supported it. His early knowledge of Western was in line with the spirit of the New Culture Movement, but his attitude towards traditional Chinese culture was different from that of Duxiu Chen, Shi Hu, and others. After arriving in Beijing, he felt a lack of Chinese cultural knowledge and diligently studied, his national consciousness was greatly enhanced, and he adopted a cross-cultural perspective to examine and sympathize with Chinese tradition, all of which made it difficult for him to identify with the radical anti-traditional atmosphere of the new culture. This attitude and practice of examining Chinese traditions from a cross-cultural perspective was extended after Lin’s studying abroad in 1919, which could be clearly seen from his choice of Modern Literature (Europe) major to study comparative literature for his master’s degree at Harvard University, as well as his behavior of studying under the renowned sinologist August Conrady and using Western linguistic research methods to delve deeply into ancient Chinese phonology and re-examining Chinese language traditions during his doctoral studies at the University of Leipzig in Germany.

Pearl S. Buck’s criteria for selecting Chinese contributors or storytellers for Walsh were quite demanding. In addition to excellent English and Chinese, profound knowledge, extraordinary wisdom and cross-cultural vision, she also mentioned a special criterion: the ability to be humorous. She said, “Happily there are a few others, a few spirits large enough not to be lost in the confusion of the times, humorous enough to see life as it is, with the fine old humour of generations of sophistication and learning, keen enough to understand their own civilization as well as others and wise enough to choose what is native to them and therefore truly their own” (Buck, 1935, p. 11). If we compare Pearl S. Buck’s above standards with her criticism of the indifference,

narrowness, and arrogance of missionaries in China, we will find that the two almost see eye-to-eye in the opposite sense. Lin, who founded the magazines: *The Lunyu*, *The Human World*, and *The Cosmic Wind* in Shanghai in the 1930s, and advocated humor and essay writing, undoubtedly met these criteria in Pearl S. Buck’s view. His advocacy of humor and admiration for essays could be traced back to his studies at Harvard University, where he took Irving Babbitt’s comparative literature course and studied J. E. Spingarn’s literary theory. When Lin was studying at Harvard, there was a serious literary controversy between Irving Babbitt, the supporter of the Classical School, and J. E. Spingarn, the supporter of the Romantic School (Gong, 2018). It was precisely because he believed in the expressionist literary criticism of J. E. Spingarn and his spiritual mentor Croce that he clashed with Irving Babbitt’s new humanist ideas in his Harvard class. After returning to China to teach at Peking University, although Lin was in the English department, he got closer and closer to a group of scholars in the Chinese department, such as Xun Lu, Zuoren Zhou, Xuantong Qian, and joined the Yusi Society. Lin highly praised Zhou’s perspective on prose, and through Zhou as an intermediary, he found China’s expressionist literary theory—Hongdao Yuan’s theory of “personality.” The discovery of Yuan was of decisive significance to Lin. Yuan was the introductory guide for Lin to enter the palace of Chinese literature (Chen, 1985). Through Yuan, Lin, a westernized intellectual, began to inherit the so-called “romantic” tradition of Chinese literature. Lin combined expressionist poetics with Yuan’s theory of “personality” to create the concept of “humor” and enrich it, forming his unique poetic theory of “humorous poetics.” It was under the guidance of humorous poetics that Lin created magazines, advocated modern essays, translated and introduced Chinese culture, and achieved remarkable achievements in Sino-American cultural exchanges.

Lin’s experience of living in Beijing and Harvard contributed to his talent and achievements of “two feet on Eastern and Western cultures and one heart on commenting on cosmic articles.” His efforts to make up for his deficiency in Chinese cultural knowledge in Beijing, as well as his experience in studying comparative literature and Chinese language and literature at Harvard University and Leipzig University, have given him a broad cross-cultural vision and profound Chinese and Western Cultural cultivation. And his experience of studying from Irving Babbitt and J. E. Spingarn in Harvard University, and from the Zhou brothers in Beijing, and continuing the Chinese literary tradition through Zhou,

made him integrate the Western expressionist poetics and the “personality” theory of traditional Chinese literary, and generate his unique humorous poetics. He advocated humor and highly praised essays, which ultimately made him stand out in Sino-American cultural exchanges, becoming one of the most successful Chinese storytellers at that time. Qiaoyiology, which focuses on the Yi brought by Qiao, exudes a unique and enduring charm in the process of Lin’s integrating Chinese and Western poetics and telling Chinese stories.

Humor: The Cross-Cultural Attitude Cultivated by Living Abroad

Qiaoyiology has brought us surprises. Through Qiaoyiology, we unexpectedly found the commonalities shared by three contemporary writers with different family backgrounds and diverse growth environments: the experience of living abroad led them to embark on the path of literary creation without prior agreement; the needs of the times made them unanimously tell Chinese stories to the American public. In fact, Qiaoyiology has brought us much more than that. By retracing their respective life paths and the resulting life beliefs from the common career of the three writers, we find that their life experiences seem to be destined by heaven.

In the 1930s, Lin first advocated humor in Shanghai, praised the essay style of “centering on oneself and taking leisure as the tone.” While being criticized by people like Xun Lu, he was supported by Lao, who was teaching in Shandong at the time. Lao successively taught at Cheeloo University and Shandong University. Around 1935, he wrote several articles discussing his early literary creation and humor, which were published in *The Cosmic Wind*. In 1936, he even sent the manuscript of *Rickshaw Boy* to *The Cosmic Wind* for serialization. Behind Lao’s appreciation and attention to Lin and his magazines is his recognition of Lin’s humorous poetics. Having lived in the UK, Lao was at the forefront of the collision of Chinese and Western cultures. Facing the arrogance of the British and the conservatism of the Chinese, he cultivated and shaped a humorous attitude and concept of walking between Chinese and Western cultures. This concept is not only reflected in the humor of his language in his literary creation but also in the mildness and tolerance when criticizing the inferior nature of the people, forming a sharp contrast with the radical attitude of Lu. It is precisely because of their overseas experiences that Lao and Lin formed their humorous attitude to deal with cultural differences and walk

between Chinese and Western cultures. This attitude also deeply influenced their calm, witty, and humble manner when telling Chinese stories to Americans.

When Pearl S. Buck met Lin, she had already gained fame for telling Chinese stories to Americans in English. Her representative work, *The Good Earth*, had been published in the United States and became the best-seller in 1931 and 1932. She also won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction with this novel. In 1933, Pearl S. Buck returned to China, hoping to find someone who could tell Chinese stories in English. She set many conditions for this selection, one of which was the crucial ability to have a humorous attitude and ability. At first glance, this condition may seem puzzling, especially when we consider humor as something amusing or funny. However, for Pearl S. Buck, Lin, and Lao, humor may include amusing or funny elements, but it is more about “seeing everyone as equal,” “having a broad heart,” and “showing sympathy through laughter.” Only with such a concept of dealing with people and cultural communication can one truly build a bridge for Sino-Western cultural exchanges and tell Chinese stories well. Undoubtedly, Pearl S. Buck possessed this ability, which was naturally cultivated through her residence in China. She disapproved of the arrogance and rudeness of missionaries to China when facing the Chinese people. She criticized them for their indifference to people, narrow-mindedness, and discrimination against other races, calling for tolerance to replace prejudice and humor to indifference. She advocated transcending the barriers of race and language, adopting a multicultural attitude, and understanding and respecting others and their cultures.

In 1946, when Lao was invited to the United States for a lecture tour, Pearl S. Buck had already returned to the United States for more than 10 years. Lao, who had no chance to meet Pearl S. Buck in China, became her guest in the United States. Pearl S. Buck was very enthusiastic about Lao, who lived in the United States. She promoted Lao in the American academic circles, helped Lao win the copyright lawsuit of the English version of *Rickshaw Boy* recommended English translators and publishing institutions for Lao’s works, and so on, which made people touched. In Buck’s eyes, “Lau Shaw is really a very old-fashioned Chinese. If he had his way, I am sure that he would like to have lived in China five hundred years ago. He is a sensitive man, over-sophisticated perhaps, instinctively avoiding anything painful, even in conversation” (Buck, 1955, p. 422). In Lao’s view, Buck is a fighter with a sense of justice and independent opinions. Her works such as *The Good Earth* depict China as true and serious, and they are

quite different from those written by foreigners with strong prejudice and arrogance towards China (Shu, 1992). The two with completely different personalities admired and cherished each other. Besides their common cause of telling Chinese stories, the humorous and optimistic attitude towards cultural differences brought by living abroad must have played a strong supporting role behind the scenes.

Conclusion

Lao, Pearl S. Buck, and Lin were very important historical existence both in the history of modern Chinese literature and the history of literary exchanges between China and foreign countries. From the perspective of the history of modern Chinese literature, they all created their own wonderful works, which were enough to make them unique at their time and admired by later generations. From the perspective of literary exchange between China and foreign countries, they were well-deserved Chinese storytellers, who were committed to communication and exchange between two cultures and peoples. Lao communicated the feelings of the two peoples by telling the achievements of modern Chinese literature and the story of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. By telling the stories of Chinese villages and peasants, Pearl S. Buck changed the western stereotype of China and achieved great success in literary career. Lin wrote about various themes, including the telling of modern Chinese historical stories represented by *Moment in Peking*, the dissemination of excellent Chinese culture represented by *My Country and My People*, and the translation and introduction of Chinese philosophy represented by *The Wisdom of Confucius*, which had a huge impact What is interesting is that, under the influence of Qiaoyiology, we have discovered astonishing similarities among the three of them—that is, the experience of living abroad has led to spiritual metamorphosis, which has led to their self-identity as writers. And the identity of writers has also contributed to their telling of Chinese stories. All of them have a good reputation in history for telling stories about China.

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