
LAO SHE'S "BLACK LI AND WHITE LI" A Reading In Psychological Structure

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Psychology may not be the center of Lao She's story, "Hei-Bai Li" (Black Li and White Li), but it serves as a convenient point of departure for an attempt at uncovering its structural design and its meaning. It may also have a bearing on Lao She's intention when writing this story.

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On the superficial level, this is a story of two brothers, nicknamed Black Li and White Li, who look very much alike. At the same time, they are made to represent two contrasting character types. As the narrator comments at the beginning: "The brothers' characters were as different as their nicknames: Black Li was old-fashioned; White Li was very modern."² Thus the story is structured on the basis of a "doubling" design in characterization, to illustrate, presumably, the conflict between old and new styles of thought and behavior--one of the most common themes in modern Chinese literature especially of the May Fourth period. But the story certainly goes beyond this clichéish bifurcation. For Lao She puts it in a category of works that are carefully wrought and in which "there is first an idea before I construct character and incident"; according to him, characters so designed move in their clearly circumscribed orbits and do not "go astray."³ Such seriousness of purpose calls for an equally serious consideration of the author's intention as a valid factor for interpretation. Consequently, my concern in this essay is not only with Lao She's artistic design--how he portrays the interaction between the two central characters in the unfolding plot--but with his intellectual purpose, the story's alleged revolutionary message. Since the "message" is contained presumably in the author's preconceived "idea," a comparison between conception and execution is also in order. This strategy may provide a clue to the "mystery" of the story and its uniqueness in the corpus of Lao She's fictional works.

A psychological approach may well begin with the characterization of the two brothers. At the beginning of the story, we are told that "Black Li wasn't really black. He was called Black Li on account of a big black mole over his left eyebrow. His young brother had no such mark, so he became White Li". The symbolic implications of this "double" image are evident. One is reminded of the facial makeup in Beijing opera (a popular art form Lao She loved) in which black and white faces represent well-defined character traits--one generally positive, the other negative.⁴ On the basis of such a polarity, the moral equation would seem to favor Black Li and put White Li in a bad light. On the other hand, the black mole could also be seen as a stigma. Since Lao She is said to have once been converted to Christianity,⁵ hence certainly well acquainted with Biblical references, the mole on Black Li's face recalls the mark of Cain, the killer of his brother, whereas White Li may be the innocent one, without blemish, who is not accursed. Thus the double image of the two brothers contains deliberately confused symbols. If we apply these categories, derived from Chinese and Western sources, to the story itself, they do not exactly fit. Black Li is not quick-tempered or volatile, like the prototypical "black face" character in Beijing opera, but rather slow-witted and mild. Nor is White Li as conniving as a "white face" character. On the other hand, the Biblical Cain is wild and impetuous, who strikes down his gentle twin due to unbearable envy. In Lao She's story, the situation is almost the reverse: White Li is the more wild and tempestuous character, whereas Black Li, being so protective and yielding, eventually has himself killed on behalf of his brother. In the story's rather melodramatic ending, Black Li removes his mole in order to assume his brother's identity, thus changing into White Li, who survives and begins to look like his dead brother. This shifting identity underscores a basic unity of the polar opposites: one could almost imagine that the mole--and the curse had been

exchangeable between the two brothers. Herein lies the intriguing enigma of Lao She's "double" characterization.

The Western theoretical literature on the issue of the double is voluminous; the exchangeability between the two polar components of the double is one of the recurring hallmarks.⁶ Lao She, however, seems to have a penchant for externalized action and interaction.⁷ In my opinion, this story is not exclusively a psychological study of Black Li but is "set up" on an external plane so that the interactions between the two brothers are, so to speak, in full view of the narrator and the reader. Interestingly, Lao She depicts their interaction through two intermediaries—a woman (called merely "she") whom they both pursue and the first-person narrator.

The formulaic device of a triangular relationship is not unique to this story. It has been tried before in Lao She's fiction and in modern Chinese literature. The only distinction that marks the "modernity" of Lao She's stories of triangular relationship (and he has done several variations of the same formula)⁸ from such semi-traditional works as Su Manshu's "Suizan ji" (The broken hairpin) is that the typical roles of a male protagonist torn between two females in the "talent-meets-beauty" (caizi jiarren) tradition are reversed in May Fourth fiction, in which more often than not two men compete for the amorous favors of one woman.⁹ Lao She and others have used this modern triangular formula to buttress a comic design or to serve as foil for gentle satire. "Black Li and White Li," however, has little of Lao She's humor, which can be found in several other stories by him with similar constructs. Part of the reason may be due to Lao She's stated claim that this work marked his first serious attempt at crafting fiction after an earlier period of writing novels in a humorous vein and "playing with" short stories for fun.¹⁰ Thus it is not supposed to contain such levity. Yet, at the same time, Lao She, through the narrator, introduces an intriguing disclaimer: "Though love was not the central theme of the misunderstanding that arose between the two brothers, I must begin my discussion there". What follows in the first half of the story is a narrative, as recounted through the brothers' individual dialogues with the narrator, of their respective encounters with the woman.

The attitudes of both brothers in this regard are rather strange when viewed against the standard struggle for the possession of the love object in most triangular love stories. The comic or farcical quality of such works is derived from the fact that the object often stands beyond reach. The competition becomes, from the reader's point of view, a game of folly sometimes masterminded by the object of desire, who can be the subject of dramatic action. Such is the case of Lao She's lightweight story "Tongmeng" (Alliance). In the present "competition" is conducted as mutually yielding (hence, strictly speaking, no competition at all), whereas the woman seems more emotionally involved. Black Li's decision to yield her to his brother triggers first a strong reaction from the woman, who feels that he has intentionally "insulted" her, that he does not understand a woman's psychology (p. 123). But her feelings are clearly misunderstood by Black Li, who surmises that she wants herself pursued "by the whole world." Such an attitude would have been more fitting for the heroine in a triangular comedy or farce. Does Black Li really like her, and does she want to reciprocate his love? Could she easily transfer her love to his brother?

In comparison, the woman's relationship with White Li is even less articulated. On his part, White Li's attitude toward her is quite "male-chauvinistic": "The only reason I got involved with her at all was to cause trouble for Number Two [Black Li]; otherwise, why would I want to waste my time with her? Aren't all relations between men and women based purely on animal desire?". White Li's pronouncement may be mere rhetorical facade to veil his more serious intentions. But the plot does not unveil further his true sentiments toward her. (Rather, the narrator states that on one occasion when he inquires about White Li at her house she purposefully chooses to talk about Black Li.)

White Li's belittling of the woman's significance can only be seen as a mocking gesture, an almost intentional putdown of the place of romantic love in the scheme of his life's pursuits and, one might infer, of the story's plot.

In a more realistic mode, the description would have focused on the emotional interactions between the brothers and the woman figure. Yet the reader of this story is left unfulfilled, because Lao She has left this part of the plot dangling; the tension generated by the woman's initially strong reaction is not resolved. Even worse, she is made to disappear altogether at the midpoint of the story and never mentioned again. Why does Lao She even bother to introduce such a romantic complication if love is not meant to be the central theme of the story? If it is not love, what is the matter with the story?

"When the 'nature' of the object inspiring the passion is not sufficient to account for the desire, one must turn to the impassioned subject." So begins the thesis by Rene Girard in an intricate book, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*. The "triangular desire" in Girard's and, on top of it, a certain model which Girard calls the "mediator" of desire. In the case of *Don Quixote*, the model is the Knight Amadis of Gaul in his imagination: Amadis stands as the "Other" in *Don Quixote's* pursuits of chivalric objects. If one attempts to position the woman as the object of Black Li's desire (leaving aside the Quixotish qualities in Black Li's personality), then the "mediator" model can be no other than White Li, who stands in the structure of the story as the "Other" and who mediates, if not chooses outright, the object of Black Li's desire by virtue of his doubling relationship with Black Li. Thus we might conceive of a somewhat different triangular relationship: the psychology of the impassioned subject (Black Li) has more to do with the "Other" than with the apparent object. Instead of the woman being the center of the triangle, it is White Li who still holds center stage. Hovering behind the foreground of the love story between Black Li and the woman remains the "other" presence of White Li. The love interest is, in other words, but another way to get back at the interlocking relationship between the two brothers.

Lao She once commented on the writing of his novel *Er Ma (The two Mas)*, which may be seen as a precedent to the story of the two Lis, that he tended to relegate love interests to a subsidiary position in his fiction and "put other things on the forefront." According to him, the clear advantage of such a device is that he could rescue himself from the convention of triangular or tetra-angular romance; yet the demerit also remains: "It makes me unable to confront boldly this greatest problem in life-the problem of the sexes."¹² If we follow his line of thinking, we have reason to argue that there indeed exists in this story an unfulfilled emotional "subtext"-a potential story of love and romantic sacrifice on the model of Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*. It may not even be too far-fetched to locate, furthermore, a possible source of inspiration for the Black Li character in Dickens's *Sydney Carton*, who likewise willingly assumes a mistaken identity in order to sacrifice his life as an ultimate act of noble sentiment for his love object. That Lao She has chosen not to pursue this emotional confrontation of his characters may have something to do with his habitual inability to treat the subject in a serious vein. He may also have wanted to avoid the prevalent formula of "love versus revolutionary duty" in the leftist fiction of the 1930s.¹³ Accordingly, the woman figure functions in the text merely as something of a "bait," perhaps vaguely comparable to the position of Ophelia vis-à-vis Hamlet in Shakespeare's play.¹⁴ Black Li's action to terminate their relationship can therefore be seen as a way to "exteriorize" the woman, to dissolve her as a love object in order to move on to a new and henceforth difficult identification. Yet these possible psychological implications remain speculations because, unlike Shakespeare, Lao She does not develop the intricacies of this connection. Why, then, does he bother to set up initially a pseudo-love story?

On balance, White Li occupies less space than Black Li in the story. There is only one sustained dialogue between White Li and the narrator, whereas Black Li is engaged in conversation with the narrator no less than five times. Obviously, the older brother is on more familiar terms with the narrator, who states at the very outset: "Black Li and I were good friends". This relative difference in the scale of the narrator's distance with the two brothers does not, however, diminish White Li's significance. If we measure the degree of a character's significance in a narrative structure by his influence on the outcome of the plot,¹⁵ there is no doubt that it is White Li who, with his "twenty-year plan" and his hidden plot, triggers the events that follow. In other words, White Li serves as a catalyst who "emplots" the story and provides the central source of "mystery," against which Black Li's characterization is to be measured. Black Li's efforts to find out about his younger brother's real intentions-his quest for the mystery of the "Other"-thus assume a depth of tragic meaning. We might speak of his characterization as more rounded and "developmental" in the sense in which "the character's personal traits are attenuated so as to clarify his progress along a plot line which has an ethical basis."¹⁶

How are Black Li's personality traits "attenuated" so as to move along a plot line whose "ethical basis" is dictated by White Li's revolutionary purpose? It is noteworthy that in the first part of the story, in which he is entangled with the woman, Black Li is viewed by the narrator more or less in a sympathetic light. As the plot progresses, however, and the love interest is dropped, he begins to receive mildly negative comments from the narrator, who now sees him as slowwitted, slow-moving, and concerned only with small things. His erstwhile generosity toward his brother and the woman, which seems to endear him to the narrator, is now considered to be a sign of mediocrity: "Thus he accepted new things quite readily, but without understanding them very thoroughly. It wasn't that he lacked the desire to understand things but when he should have used his brain, he used his emotions". His mental anguish and deliberation arc seen as peculiar habits-fortune-telling and church-going. His religious conversion, exemplified by his praying and singing of hymns, does not elicit any sympathy from the narrator, who seems to adopt the stance of a nonbeliever reminiscent of the intellectual narrator in Lu Xun's famous story, "Zhufu" (Benediction). In the light of May Fourth scientific rationalism, these habits could be seen as superstitious and negative. Yet it is through his reading of the Christian Gospels that he learns of the genuine meaning of sacrifice. But the true dimension of his martyrdom is not understood. Strange as it may seem, the progress of Black Li's character development is depicted as a process of growing peculiarities, reaching almost a point of insanity. He looks so bizarre only against a value system to which he clearly does not belong and which, alas, provides the "ethical" basis of the story's plot. A sensible reader would consider this jarring juxtaposition of characterization and plot unsettling. It renders Black Li pathetic and foolish, yet neither funny nor pitiable. It betrays certain contradictions that may lie beyond the "psychology" of the characters themselves.

In Lao She's other stories in which the device of contrasting characterization is employed, the treatment of the older and more traditional character is different. For instance, the story "Dabei si wai" (Outside the Temple of Great Compassion) likewise portrays the conflict between a politically active student and his kind, generous, but strict dormitory master, who eventually dies of an accident resulting from the student agitation.¹⁷ Most Lao She scholars would agree that it is the mild-mannered, more traditional type of characters who are closer to Lao She's own sensibility, whereas he has nothing but distaste for the young and rash political agitators. One could even argue that the characterization of White Li is villainous: he typifies the single-minded revolutionary reminiscent of the Russian nihilists who harbor few human emotions,

treat sex lightly, and demand sacrifices from others.¹⁸ In the context of this story, however, White Li remains, as demonstrated earlier, the twin image-the "double" or "second self"-of Black Li: the close relationship he enjoys with his brother also entitles him to perform the function of something of an outside consciencereminding Black Li of what is historically inevitable and what he (Black Li) should strive to become. In other words, on the basis of the story's structural design, I am prepared to argue that the portrait of the revolutionary in "Black Li and White Li" together with its "revolutionary" message, is more positive than in Lao She's other works written around the same time (such as the novel *Maocheng ji* [City of cats]).

The clue to this disconcerting portraiture lies with the first-person narrator, through whose eyes the story is unfolded. In a way, we can see his position vis-i-vis the two brothers as something of a counterpart to the woman's. Like her, he must react to the two brothers' differing personalities by making his own deliberations. Whereas the woman's views are barely articulated, the narrator's are placed clearly in the foreground. The obvious question that troubles him seems to be the same as that the woman faces: which of the two brothers does he prefer? But his reactions are more complex. As mentioned earlier, the narrator has seen more of Black Li and claims to be his close friend. On the other hand, he is curiously insensitive to the emotional turmoil of his friend. Rather, he chooses to see it as a manifestation of Black Li's old-fashioned personality. We could even venture the conjecture that the narrator, while on familiar terms with Black Li emotionally (though he does not fully express his feelings because of his passivity), has seen fit not to side with his friend. On the other hand, the narrator seems also psychologically removed from White Li. Their contacts are limited; we find the narrator scarcely involved in White Li's affairs. In his only sustained dialogue with White Li in the story, the narrator voices the following impressions:

I listened carefully to what he had to say and paid even closer attention to his facial expression. Black Li and White Li's faces were similar in every respect, except for the fact that Black Li's demeanor was so totally different from his brother's. For this reason, one moment I felt I was talking to a very close friend, and the next as if I were sitting across from a complete stranger. This was quite discomfiting; the face before me was familiar, but I was unable to find its familiar expression.

This is one of the most revealing passages in the whole story. The narrator has clearly established the double identity of the two brothers; at the same time, he also confesses to his own discomfort. Yet in spite of it he becomes rather convinced by White Li's need to break away from Black Li. (In contrast, he is not convinced by Black Li's interpretation of his brother's intention.) It seems as if the narrator wanted to be impressed. As the story progresses, he becomes more and more manipulative, by withholding or giving out information to the reader concerning the two brothers- He continues to view White Li as more clever, more determined, and dedicated to a higher purpose. Albeit from a respectful distance, we are nevertheless given the impression that time is on his side. And as if this were not enough to convince us, we are provided with more information in a final episode-a long dialogue between the narrator and an added character, Wang Wu (Wang the Fifth), a rickshaw puller.

Technically, this last episode reads like a rehearsal for a forthcoming novel by Lao She, *Luotuo Xiangzi* (Camel Xiangzi), a story about another rickshaw puller. Those familiar with this novel can surely find an embryonic Mr. Cao in Black Li as described by Wang Wu: that he is a decent and generous man, a "good master," but, Wang Wu hastens to add, "no matter how good a master he is, he's still a master. There's no way we can treat each other as brothers". White Li, expectedly, is taken by Wang Wu

as his true brother. (White Li is called "Fourth Brother," leading easily to Wang the Fifth.) This claim of brotherly solidarity is evidently in line with proletarian ideology, as Wang Wu further states: "He's [White Li] talking about how unfair things are for us-I mean all the rickshaw pullers in the world". White Li is a collectivist, whereas Black Li remains a heartbleeding individualist. On a realistic plane, Wang Wu's comment seems too neat to be authentic. Yet it certainly adds symbolic weight and political endorsement to White Li's character.

The other function of this episode is, of course, to reveal the plot of the rickshaw puller's riot, which in turn leads to Black Li's execution on behalf of the real instigator, White Li. Leaving aside the question whether this is, in fact, an utterly foolish act on Black Li's part, one is nevertheless struck by its symbolic significance: Black Li has not only assumed his brother's identity (by removing his mole) but also, so to speak, completed his action. It is noteworthy that at the end of the story, in the baffled eyes of the narrator, the surviving White Li begins to look like Black Li, in a sense taking on his identity. The roles are now reversed. White Li's final comment is couched in his brother's Christian language: "Number Two must have gone to heaven; that's a perfect place for him. But I'm still here smashing the gates of hell".

How does the narrator react to Wang Wu's revelation of the plot and with the final outcome? He seems to be more understanding with White Li than with Black Li and begins to deliberate from White Li's point of view:

White Li was involved in something dangerous. Beyond wrecking trolley cars, he probably had something even more formidable in mind. Thus his desire to move away from his brother was to avoid implicating him. White Li was not afraid of sacrificing his own life, or the lives of others, but he was unwilling to sacrifice his brother unless there were a good reason for it.

What is to be done? As if to lengthen the suspense, the narrator procrastinates in his deliberations. Finally he decides to warn Black Li—alas, too late, for Black Li, already informed by Wang Wu, has made preparations for self-sacrifice. The intriguing point about their last encounter is that although the narrator is clear about White Li's plans, he is still not fully aware of Black Li's proposed action: he is surprised by the latter's cold reception and thinks that his friend wants to avoid him on purpose. At this final moment, the reader may well be impatient and even infuriated by the narrator's subjugation of sensitivity and intelligence. Why is he so slow in grasping the truth and the true meaning of Black Li's action? Even at the very end, as the narrator encounters White Li several months after the death of Black Li, despite his empathy for the dead brother he still seems to evince no apparent hatred toward White Li, who, after all, is the primary cause for his friend's death. What is the reason for his one-sidedness? What is the purpose behind this device of an inconsistent narrator?

The constant presence of the first-person narrator suggests that he in fact occupies a fulcrum position: he provides the focal consciousness from which the story unfolds. The plot is a projection of his vision. In other words, this is as much a story about the two brothers as about the narrator. Yet, as analyzed earlier, the narrator seems to be of two minds, his perspective shifting from Black Li to White Li. The source of this inconsistency may be traced to Lao She's own statements concerning the production of this text.

In his preface to a collection of his selected works published in 1951, after the establishment of the People's Republic, Lao She had the following apologetic remarks about the story:

Upon returning to China, [I found that] the discussion of literature had progressed from literary revolution to revolutionary literature. Together with theory, there was the rise of proletarian literature in creative writing. I normally did not talk about theory, so I continued with creative writing and did not participating in the However with regard to the merits and demerits of proletarian literature, I had a certain judgment. I thought that it was moving in the right direction but neither its content nor its technique was entirely satisfactory. By and by, I began to write pieces like "Black Li and White Li." That I have chosen this story for inclusion is not because it's better written but because I use it to indicate how I was influenced by theories of revolutionary literature.

From today's point of view, "Black Li and White Li" is a ludicrous, even absurd, piece. But at that time it was sufficient proof that I had undergone some changes in my thinking. To be sure, in its content, I did not dare to describe how White Li joined the [Communist] organization. Rather, I used the mode of a romantic story to describe the death of Black Li. However, at least I perceived clearly that Black Li had to die, and that death was the best deal for him.... Besides, literary censorship at that time made me reluctant to describe it too revealingly. As I did not join the revolution, I did not want to wear a "red hat." ¹⁹

This latter-day explanation from a postrevolutionary vantage should, of course, be qualified. Should we, then, repudiate entirely this statement of "revolutionary" intention as mere rationalization (if not outright lie), or should we consider it as containing a grain of truth? My analysis of the story's text has convinced me that it can be read as a piece of "revolutionary literature"-but in Lao She's own fashion. As a conscientious craftsman of fiction, he had, indeed, intended to write a carefully conceptualized work to point toward the need for social change and the inevitability of revolution. To this extent he was very sincere. Was Lao She, however, so politically committed to the Communist cause himself? The eminent Lao She scholar Zbigniew Sluski provides a generally negative answer, with which I agree: "The political statements to be found in his works from the twenties to the forties were not the main point of his communication, but merely the byproduct of his moralizing." ²⁰ As a moralizer, Lao She tended to be rather conservative: for instance, he ridiculed modem-style marriage and courtship. There is no doubt that Lao She harbored a moral distaste for radicals like White Li. Thus we sense an effort to hide this distaste and to overcome a certain sentimental attachment to the Black Li character-chiefly via the stance of the narrator. That the narrator is portrayed in such a passive and inconsistent way may be due to a deliberate attempt to withhold emotional identification not only between the narrator and Black Li but also between the narrator and the author. Insofar as the real author-Lao She-and the implied author can be theoretically distinguished from each other, the difference is also an indicator of Lao She's own "divided consciousness": whereas the real Lao She was a moralist, the implied author may be more political. ²¹ In other words, through a preconceived fictional design, Lao She may have wished to defeat purposefully the reader's expectation to have the narrator sympathize with the Black Li character, who is the embodiment of Lao She's moral choice. On the other hand, he has made a veiled effort to make the reader understand the revolutionary viewpoint as represented by White Li, although as a human character White Li fails to come alive. In sum, I think the dissonant elements in the story's structure and their disconcerting effect on the

reader are intentional. It serves to distance the reader from siding too easily with Lao She's personal morality. We can look at the artistic devices as ways to measure the distance between Lao She's moral choice, on the one hand, and his acknowledgment of the possibility of political action, on the other.

Does Lao She succeed in realizing his "idea"? Although recent critical theories allow no room for the real "historical" readership, I think the story's success or failure cannot be assessed without an attempt to reconstruct the possible receptions by Chinese readers of that historical period. Perhaps we may envisage a division of opinion. The more committed "revolutionary" audience would be dissatisfied because, as Lao She later acknowledged, the undercurrent of the story's revolutionary meaning is not brought to the forefront. On the other hand, the nonrevolutionary audience, their reading tastes nurtured by works of the realistic mode in which vividly human characterization was almost the sine qua non of fiction, would also be dissatisfied because they would like to know more about the personal relationships between the two brothers and between them and the woman. Both sides, however, would be unlikely to set apart Lao She the real author from the implied author of the story, or even from its "I" narrator. They would consider Lao She (not his narrator) to be rather passive. Ironically, this unsophisticated reader's response may be more on target: Lao She was not a revolutionary writer, and sometimes he "camouflaged" his disinterest with his "art." He may have conceived this story on the basis of an abstract "idea" of revolutionary literature.

But his intention and design, however lofty, are in my judgement not fully realized by his technique-nor, for that matter, fully comprehended by his readers. We may criticize the dissonance and the distancing effect as the result of a certain discrepancy in the fictional text between intention and representation: "the implied author's attitudes towards the experience that he represents, conveyed through a variety of rhetorical devices, are not always appropriate to the novel's total body of represented life," because he is "inconsistent in his interpretations of experience that he dramatizes."²² In view of Lao She's innate talent as a "humorist" and an unassuming "story-teller,"²³ I think he would have written a better story had he given himself more freedom, without having a preconceived idea.

But then I am by no means a "revolutionary" or unbiased reader.²⁴

Notes

1. The topic and the approach of this essay were assigned to me. I am most grateful to the participants at the workshop for their comments and criticisms, which compelled me to rethink and recast my paper. During the revision process, I benefited greatly from the conversations with Professor Yu-shih Chen, who helped me to crystallize my ideas in the concluding section.

2. Lao She, "Hei-Bai Li" (Black Li and White Li), in his *Ganji* (Going to the market-fair). The story was written sometime between 1931 and 1934. Page references hereafter refer to the appended translation, which begins on p. 121. The passage cited is on p. 121. Subsequent page references are included parenthetically in the text. There is also a somewhat abridged English translation in *Contemporary Chinese Stories*, ed. Chi-then Wang (New York: Columbia UP, 1944), pp. 25-39. Unless otherwise indicated, I use my own translation.

3. Lao She, *Laoniu poche* (Old ox and broken cart) (Guangzhou: Renjian shuwu, 1937), p. 62. The problem with this neat design is that, as some critics of the story have pointed out, the characterization becomes somewhat "flat," lacking in liveliness and depth.

See, for instance, Ma Sen, "Lun Lao She de xiaoshuo" (On Lao She's fiction), *Mingbao yuekan* (Mingbao monthly) (Hong Kong) 6.9 (September 1971): 83.

4. A "black face" indicates a quick-tempered, volatile, yet innocent and gullible hero (the prototype is Zhang Fei of the famous Romance of the Three Kingdoms), whereas a "white face" connotes such negative qualities as cunningness and machination (as personified by Cao Cao from the same novel).

5. Ranbir Vohra, *Lao She and the Chinese Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 1974), pp. 12-13.

6. Self: Toward a Definition of Doppelganger," in *Fearful Eymmetry: Doubles and Doubling in Literature and Film*, ed. Eugene J. Cook (U. Press of Florida, 1981).

7. Huang Dongtao, *Lao She xiaoshi* (An understanding of Lao She) (Hong Kong: Shijie chubanshe, 1979), esp. this statement: "An important feature of Lao She's creative method of short story writing is depicting character through the complex relationships of two personalities and their attitudes. toward the same incident". In his own essay on characterization, Lao She attributes the psychological bent on modern Western fiction to the influence of modern science. This he deprecates, because giving too much psychological information and analysis is not tantamount to creating a vivid character.

8. At least two other variations can be found in the Ganji collection: "Tongmeng" (Alliance) and "Yeshi sanjiao" (Also a triangle)-one written before, and the other after, the present story.

9. Even a sophisticated savant like Qian Zhongshu cannot escape from this formulaic trap in his novel *Weicheng* (Fortress besieged).

10. Lao She, *Laoniu poche*, pp. 58-59.

11. Rene Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1965), p. 2.

12. Lao She, *Laoniu poche*, p. 22.

13. But Lao She does not entirely succeed in this case, for in artistic terms White Li's action resembles precisely such a formula.

14. Hamlet's change of attitude toward Ophelia is analyzed in this way by Jacques Lacan in an extremely intricate study, "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet," in *Literature and Psychoanalysis, the Question of Reading: Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 11-52. I was tempted to build a Lacanian case for Black Li but decided that it is not appropriate, as Lao She's story is very different from Shakespeare's play.

15. Critics of the structuralist persuasion tend to see characters as only a function of plot, "means rather than ends of the story," although a recent scholar influenced by the structuralist theories and French narratology has come to recognize and argue for a more open, afunctional notion of character. See Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 112-13.

16. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 169.

17. See Michael Duke, "A Social and Literary Analysis of the Short Stories of Lao She" (M.A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1969), pp. 71-72. Duke also considers "Black Li and White Li" to be Lao She's best story about intellectuals (pp. 73-75).

18. This is Professor Yue Daiyun's view as voiced at the workshop. I am grateful for her comments on my paper.

19. "Lao She xuanji zixu" (Preface to selections from Lao She), in *Lao She lun chuangzuo* (Lao She on creative writing), ed. Hu Jieqing [Mrs. Lao She] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980), p. 142.