

## A Matter of Life and Death: The Translator Fou Lei

Mingyuan Hu. *Fou Lei: An Insistence on Truth*. Leiden: Brill, 2017. x, 251 pp. Hardcover \$165.00, ISBN 978-90-04-34391-7.

Fou Lei 傅雷 (1908–1966)<sup>1</sup> was the celebrated translator who brought to Chinese readers numerous masterpieces of French literature, including works by Romain Rolland, Balzac, Voltaire and Hippolyte Taine. He spent three and a half years as an idealistic and adventurous young man in France, Switzerland and Italy, from 1928 to 1931, before returning to Shanghai and launching himself into a prolific career as a cultural critic and translator, becoming one of China's leading public men of letters. After 1949, like so many Chinese intellectuals and creative artists of his generation, he was courted by the new regime (a courting made easier by his own wishful thinking), and during the early 1950s he made ever more strenuous efforts to be accepted by the new cultural commissars. He sincerely hoped that he might be allowed to play a genuine role in the New China, provided he could appear to believe in its underlying ideology (even partially), and could be seen to help to promote it. After a few years of this fruitless self-abasement he was, like thousands of others, rejected and ultimately destroyed in the double holocaust of the Anti-Rightist Purge of 1957 and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Early in September 1966, after three days of relentless verbal and physical abuse from the Red Guards of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, he and his wife Zhu Meifu 朱梅馥 committed suicide in their Shanghai home. His poignant life-story mirrors the destiny of countless Chinese intellectuals caught in the meshes of the ruthless party-state.

Fou is most widely known today in the Chinese-speaking world for the posthumous best-selling volume *Letters to Fou Ts'ong* (*Fulei Jiashu* 傅雷家書), consisting of letters he and his wife wrote to their talented older son Fou Ts'ong 傅聰, who after a period studying the piano in Warsaw (having won third prize in the 1955 Chopin Competition) sought refuge in London in late 1958. Fou Ts'ong went on to become one of the leading concert pianists of his time, acclaimed especially for his performances of the Chopin Mazurkas.<sup>2</sup> The *Letters* were edited and published in Hong Kong and China by the couple's second son Fu Min 傅敏, using material he collected from his brother's London home.<sup>3</sup> They are a moving testimony to the inner life of a tormented

Chinese intellectual under the yoke of Communism. Hu Mingyuan, in this remarkable new study, quotes extensively from the *Letters*, which she perceptively characterizes as “an epic poem from beginning to end.”

I am taking the liberty to append to this review-essay a few examples from the aborted translation of the *Letters* themselves. From this sampling of the dialogue Fou Lei conducted with his brilliant young son, readers can form a first-hand impression of his character, which can serve as a counterpoint to Hu Mingyuan’s critical study, placing it in an intimate personal context.<sup>4</sup>

The *Letters* vividly illustrate the evolution of Fou Lei’s thinking during the mid-1950s, crucial years in the establishment of the new party-state and its cultural policies. In 1954–1955, immediately after Fou Ts’ong’s departure for Poland, Fou *père* sought tirelessly to share with him the fundamentals of Chinese and European philosophy and aesthetics—sending him carefully selected Chinese books and quoting passages from the great Chinese poets. The *Letters* are peppered with references to classical Chinese literature and philosophy, which is one reason why translating them required the copious addition of footnotes (which I have abbreviated here). In addition to this classical background, there was also the need for the translator to sketch in for the lay reader the fraught political landscape of the years 1954–1958, against which Fou Lei was writing. The heavy-handed denunciation in 1954 of Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900–1990), one of China’s most distinguished literary scholars, and the 1955 Purge of the writer Hu Feng 胡風 (1902–1985) loom darkly behind the *Letters*. Despite the gathering storm, Fou Lei strove to inculcate in his son the timeless Chinese notion of Self-Cultivation, *xiuyang* 修養, or cultural “*formation*” (in the French sense), while at the same time initiating him in the great trends of European music, literature, art and philosophy, thereby refining his musical, literary and artistic taste.

As can be seen both in the *Letters* and in Hu Mingyuan’s *Fou Lei: An Insistence on Truth*, Fou Lei was a complex and intense character (many would say neurotic), torn by a host of internal conflicts. He was on the one hand a passionate idealist, and at the same time (despite recurring bouts of scepticism) a patriot with a burning aspiration to be a good citizen of the new society. He was a caring and empathetic father, and at the same time an overbearing and bullying patriarch.

Over the past decade, there has been a regrettable tendency within China to co-opt Fou Lei from the grave as a cultural icon, to distort and falsify his story, to promote and glorify the “spirit of Fou Lei” 傅雷精神, building statues of him outside schools, placing a highly misleading biographical plaque outside his Shanghai home, while conveniently failing to remember and remind others that the very ideological machine that destroyed him is still very much in the business of crushing freedom of expression and still specializes in silencing and punishing free spirits such as his. This reluctance to insist on the truth about

Fou Lei was much in evidence at an international gathering hosted by Fu Min in Shanghai in October 2016, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the couple's suicide, a gathering from which the older son Fou Ts'ong himself was noticeably absent. His dignified absence is hardly surprising given the pianist's own uncompromising views on freedom and art, as expressed in one of the very few letters to his parents that has survived, written from Poland in November 1957, where he writes, "Life outside China is so very different. Conditions here are so much more conducive to genuine artistic achievement. Life is so much richer, one can give one's imagination free rein. Artists need this freedom in order to live; without it they simply wither and die."<sup>5</sup>

Fortunately one or two intrepid souls are now beginning to write honest and nuanced accounts of this important and complex figure. Nine years ago the Australian scholar Claire Roberts published a fine full-length study of Fou Lei's close relationship with his friend the great painter Huang Binhong.<sup>6</sup> Now Hu Mingyuan, a Chinese-British scholar based in Europe, has published this impeccably researched and deeply sympathetic account of the evolution of Fou Lei's mental world, especially during his sojourn in Europe. Her monograph is more than a courageous and truthful account of one individual. It is a powerful indictment of the widespread reluctance of most scholars to speak the truth about the torments suffered by China's entire intelligentsia under Communist rule, an eloquent challenge to the international community of China academics, who are for the most part too scared of endangering their careers to insist on truth. Hu Mingyuan's book leaves the reader dreaming wistfully of a better China, of the boundless creative potential that could be unleashed within China, if the freedom of thought and the life of the spirit so evident in this book were ever to be sanctioned by the authorities. That would be a true Chinese Renaissance.

Hu Mingyuan's humanistic credentials are evident from the very first pages, where she quotes tellingly from the thoughts of Hannah Arendt and Simone Weil ("the relationship between destiny and the human soul"). So too is her virtuosity in navigating effortlessly between demanding texts in Chinese, English and French. In the course of her study (she calls it a story, an *histoire*) she has gone to enormous lengths to pursue hitherto unknown primary sources in French relating to Fou Lei's early life in Europe. Her sensitive reading in the opening chapter of Fou Lei's early Chinese writings, when he was a young man in Shanghai, is followed by several key chapters chronicling his transformation from a raw questing youth into the sophisticated cosmopolitan intellectual who returned to China to play a major role on Shanghai's cultural scene. Fou Lei's realization during this period that his true vocation lay in translation is a central part of the story, as is his insistence on the spiritual and cultural dimensions of the art of translation, on the necessity for the translator to have a deep Self-Cultivation, a broad cultural *xiuyang*.<sup>7</sup>

Here this absorbing book breaks new and fascinating ground, offering crucial evidence of the growth of a great translator's mind. It should be read with care by anyone engaged in modern Chinese intellectual history, and by all who are interested in the history of translation.

The second chapter, "Crisis: What Bruges did not appease," recounts the hitherto unknown story of Fou's encounter with the Catholic faith, based on Hu Mingyuan's exhaustive reading of the French Jesuit Archives, and set against her perceptive evocation of the French intellectual and political landscape of the time. In a letter written on 31 January 1929 by Fou Lei in French to the young Jean Daniélou (who later became a senior Jesuit and French cardinal), we read: "When two souls understand each other, when two hearts are touched by each other! What a beautiful thing this is that exists in the world!"<sup>8</sup> Here, and throughout Fou's search for spiritual comfort in his short-lived dialogue with the Catholic faith, we can already see the seeds of the sensitive and tormented translator's soul that was to be the ideal vehicle for Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*. The same restless spirit, the same quest for spiritual friendship, for a "knower of the sound," a *zhiyin* 知音, is very much in evidence throughout the *Letters to Fou Ts'ong*.

In Hu Mingyuan's third chapter, "Malady: Child of the Century by Lac Léman," she takes us to the Franco-Swiss border, to the idyllic lakeside setting of Saint Gingolph, where Fou Lei imbibes the heady romanticism of Chateaubriand, Lamartine and Byron, and enjoys the picturesque mountain landscape in the company of a band of kindred spirits (throughout the book one senses that Dr. Hu herself is a latter-day member of this very band). Here we witness the beginnings of Fou Lei's extraordinary ability to forge connections between differing languages and cultures, between different eras in history, to perceive the links binding together literature, music, the arts and philosophy—and translation. He has arrived at the existential state of the translator. As Hu Mingyuan comments, "Translation in this sense is inhabiting one space without leaving another. Eventually it reshapes one's relation to both."<sup>9</sup>

Hu Mingyuan's fourth and fifth chapters chronicle in detail Fou Lei's growth as a human being and artist, his *angst* and his *chagrins d'amour*. He turned to the cool reasoning of Hippolyte Taine's *Philosophie de l'Art*, seeking a remedy for a malady which was at once personal and public. But eventually he found his way to the romantic idealist Romain Rolland, with whom he corresponded and whose majestic roman-fleuve *Jean-Christophe* he translated into Chinese in its entirety, a work that became one of his great passions. Fou Lei the critic and translator had finally come to the realization that above all "he was an artist. His sensitivity, temperament, tastes were all those of an artist."<sup>10</sup> The artist's need to balance reason and emotion, philosophy and sentiment, his own need somehow to enliven his obsessive work ethic with the

light of the imagination, these themes resonate throughout the pages of his posthumous testimony, the *Letters to Fou Ts'ong*. The two correspondents shared a similar predicament: Fou Lei the inspired interpreter of Romain Rolland and Balzac, his pianist son the inspired interpreter of Chopin and Mozart.

The third and final section of Hu Mingyuan's study deals with Fou Lei's activities as a cultural critic after his return to Shanghai and his growing prominence in China as a translator of French literature. This ground has been covered in Chinese, but Hu brings to it fresh insights and an international (dare I say "cosmopolitan") perspective. She demonstrates on every page the very quality of *xiuyang*, or Self-Cultivation, that Fou Lei believed in so fervently. She identifies strongly with her subject, and is able to follow Fou Lei's thinking fully when he makes bold cultural comparisons and connections such as that between the spirit of classical Greece and the free-thinking Wei-Jin period. Throughout the book, Hu is never afraid to think laterally and creatively herself, infusing a lyrical quality into her writing, a quality which lifts her work far above the run-of-the-mill academic studies of modern Chinese culture. For me her most enlightening chapter is the eighth: "Translating, or the Search for a Brother." Here she describes in detail Fou Lei's obsessive dedication to translation, especially to the massively daunting *oeuvre* of Balzac. Again and again, as an indefatigable scholar-detective, Hu unearths precious materials, in this chapter sharing with us the touching correspondence and friendship between Fou Lei and his French friend the eminent man-of-letters René Étiemble, who devotedly sought out reference books for him in the bookshops of Paris.

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*Extracts from Letters to Fou Ts'ong*

### **Self-Cultivation and Largeness of Mind**

1954, 27<sup>th</sup> December, Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong<sup>11</sup>

We're sending you a parcel of books (all of them annotated editions), including: two volumes of *sanqu* 散曲 lyrics from the Yuan and Ming dynasties, two volumes of extracts from the anthology of ancient poetry called *Gushiyuan* 古詩源, two volumes of *ci* 詞 lyrics from the Tang dynasty and the Five Dynasties, and a single volume of selections from *New Tales of the World* 世說新語.

I know you don't have to hand any collections of essays (I mean essays in classical Chinese), and I think *New Tales of the World* is well worth reading for its classical prose style alone. The Japanese have long regarded it as a great literary treasure. I often recall with nostalgia the mood and literary ambience

of that period in the Six Dynasties, and consider it to have been one of the great peaks in the history of Chinese culture.

Too few young people nowadays are capable of reading Wang Guowei's *Poetry Talks in the Human World* 人間詞話.<sup>12</sup> One needs to know hundreds of regular poems and dozens of *ci* lyrics by heart to make any sense of it. And anyway, according to the present line of thinking, Wang's aesthetic philosophy is considered to be "metaphysical, and idealist." Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 is "taking a regular beating" at this very moment, and Wang himself has come in for criticism.<sup>13</sup> I personally consider Wang's *Poetry Talks in the Human World* to be the finest work of literary criticism in the entire history of Chinese literature. It opens the door of the soul, like a golden key. A man with no soul, a man who just spouts theory, is no better than a pedant, a dry-as-dust scholar, an academic nonentity churning out formulaic nonsense! The most important thing in any field of study is true depth of understanding.<sup>14</sup> Only depth can nurture character and "largeness" of mind, only depth can bring true vision. If one cannot see the larger picture, one is in danger of thinking that the sky is no bigger than it appears to be when seen from the bottom of a well.<sup>15</sup> I have always maintained that, for both scholar and artist, the first and foremost priority is to be "*humain*," to nurture the quality of being a human being, to develop the humanity within oneself to its utmost capacity.<sup>16</sup> Otherwise, no matter how distinguished and important one may be, one will only be capable of contributing little to humanity.<sup>17</sup>

*Comment by JM: The Letters contain many such eloquent statements of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics, which help the reader to build a portrait of a complex individual with numerous flaws and imperfections, a man capable of writing with sincere emotion, a man who was filled with pride for his son's achievements and aspirations, and was at the same time burdened with remorse at his own shortcomings as a father.*

### **A Father's Remorse and Love**

1954, *Evenings of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> January, Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong*<sup>18</sup>

As soon as the carriage started moving, we were all in tears, standing there motionless on the platform. It was only when the very last carriage had finally pulled out of the station that we started walking away.<sup>19</sup> Uncle Shen<sup>20</sup> kept comforting me as we left the station. But none of us could stop weeping on the pedicab ride home. Min was sobbing the whole time. We all of us slept poorly the whole of last night, and kept waking up. Today, as I lay down for my afternoon nap, just as my weary eyes were about to close, I awoke again with a sudden start. It is years since I felt the way I did last night, standing there on

the platform – my chest tight and my stomach churning. I’ve only ever felt this way in the past when I was suffering from a broken heart. For the whole of today, I’ve been feeling as though I’ve just started to recover from a serious illness. I’m so weak, and your mother keeps bursting into tears all the time – her eyes are terribly swollen; she has cried so much that they hurt, but still she can’t hold her tears back. She no sooner says, “We must just keep on trying to smile,” than she breaks down herself and starts sobbing all over again. My son, how we are going to miss you! Whenever I think about what happened between us in January last year, my conscience gives me no peace.<sup>21</sup> I treated you so badly. I shall never be able to make up for the wrong I did you! These thoughts have been in my mind all day; I just haven’t dared to speak about it to your mother . . .

As a father, I know I have made so many serious mistakes. If I examine myself, I can say that I have never in my life done any harm to friends or to society, but I know I have done things at home to you and to your mother that my conscience tells me have been wrong. Over the past year, these thoughts have often been in my mind. They have haunted me particularly these past few days. They refuse to go away, they are like a recurring nightmare . . . My boy, my boy, my dear boy! How I wish I could hug you now, to show you my remorse and my love!

*JM: Fou Lei constantly exhorts his son to strive diligently towards the highest artistic and spiritual ideals.*

### **Climbing to the Summit**

1954, *Chinese New Year’s Eve, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, Fou Lei to Fou Ts’ong*<sup>22</sup>

Dear Boy, I really must offer you a few words of praise. I recall, when you returned to Shanghai from Kunming in April 1951, you gave the impression of having already climbed from the lowlands to the foothills.<sup>23</sup> I hope that now you can sustain your general level of Self-Cultivation. If you do so, I have no doubt that you will soon reach the very summit. One can clearly sense from this recording of yours that you have matured in every way. Your true artistic purpose has finally come to the fore, something I’ve been hoping to see in you for many years. This makes me so happy. I place more importance on this progress of yours than on anything else. That you can now achieve the true artistic mastery of an entire piece of music proves that your art has gained in depth, that your artistic soul has grown stronger and more expansive, and that your whole personality and outlook have broadened.

*JM: And then with the passage of time, we see an extraordinary turn-around in the Letters. During the years 1956–1957, as the Hundred Flowers “wilted” and*

*the Anti-Rightist Purge got under way, Fou Lei turned from singing the praises of Wang Guowei and indulging in nostalgia for the free spirits of the Wei-Jin eccentrics, to eulogizing the Thoughts of Chairman Mao and the achievements of the Communist Party, urging his son to study not ci lyric poetry, but Dialectical Materialism and the thoughts of the Great Helmsman.*

### **Grasping the Dialectic, Mao the Great Master**

1955, *Evening*, 11<sup>th</sup> December, *Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong*<sup>24</sup>

. . . In the *Selected Works* of Mao, the two essays “On Practice” and “On Contradiction”<sup>25</sup> need to be read several times. They form the basis of all theory. Some of the books I sent you recently are purely theoretical. They should help you acquire a thorough understanding of dialectical Marxism-Leninism, and enable you to hone your analytical skills and your intellect, and be more objective in your thinking. A thorough grasp of the Marxist-Leninist Dialectic is an excellent path to follow. I myself tend to think systematically and objectively by nature, so I can get along well with books like that and I find them interesting. They resonate with my personality and my way of life. You, on the other hand, are a sentimental individual, you are weak when it comes to rational thinking, and you don't possess a great deal of will power. You must devote more time to studying books like this, or you'll be quite out of your depth when you return home.<sup>26</sup>

1957, *Late at night, Beijing*, 18<sup>th</sup> March, *Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong*<sup>27</sup>

Dear Son,

. . . Chairman Mao's speeches were extremely personal and straightforward, and his style and his tone were very accessible and humorous. His speeches never struck a didactic note, they were delivered at an easy pace, and they were interspersed with appropriate pauses. None of this could have been adequately conveyed in written form. His grasp of Marxism is truly transcendental.<sup>28</sup> Whenever he touches upon any aspect of the subject, he goes to the heart of the matter, expressing it in the most wonderful and natural way. The truth seeps imperceptibly into the minds of his audience. The underlying logic of his speeches is always hidden, never explicit. He is an artist, a true master . . .

Mao's mind is broad, his thinking is liberal. In fact he essentially differs in no way from old-style intellectuals such as myself. He is also extremely adept at the application of the dialectical method, and therefore eminently capable of managing our national affairs. Truly Chairman Mao has succeeded in fusing the philosophies of ancient and modern times, both Chinese and foreign.



*JM: In addition to his literary and ideological sermons, Fou père was forever impressing on his son the need to rein in his romantic feelings and to sublimate his amorous energies into the higher cause of art.*

### A Higher Belief

1954, 20<sup>th</sup> April, Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong<sup>29</sup>

I received your letter dated the 17<sup>th</sup> – I am so relieved to learn that you have surmounted yet another hurdle in life. Human suffering is made up of a few such basic recurring *themes*. The rest is just a set of *variations*.<sup>30</sup> The bitter taste of youthful love can help us forge a calmer and more dispassionate character later in life. The ancient proverb puts it splendidly: “The loss of a horse may turn out to be a stroke of luck!”<sup>31</sup> You have had a full experience of life much earlier than the average young person, and as a result you have matured sooner. This painful experience of yours will surely help you to grow. It will make you both a wiser human being and a deeper and more sensitive artist. I congratulate you for having had the courage to work through this yourself. No matter how many times you may stumble and fall, as long as you climb back up again, you will eventually reach the summit, you will transcend the limitations of the “smaller” you. Bitter tears are the yeast that bring about the fermentation of the soul! Those who have never experienced pain and suffering will never have a broad sense of humanity, a deep empathy. And so my son, I rejoice that you are undergoing these transformations in your life. I hope that you will grow to have a more profound understanding of the human condition than I do, a more passionate love for humanity, a higher and more heartfelt belief in art!

*JM: In the Letters Fou Lei refers somewhat obliquely to his own youthful follies in Europe, usually in the context of his son's need to restrain his emotions, to find a balance, as man and pianist, between emotion and reason. In Hu Mingyuan's new book we can follow Fou Lei's youthful adventures in great detail. Hu's painstaking research, her own insistence on truth has led her to some precious out-of-the-way material, such as the confessional letters written by Fou Lei to his Catholic friend Jean Daniélou, unearthed in the French Jesuit Archives, and evocative personal photographs and letters kept in the Berguerand Family Archive (Fou Lei stayed in the Berguerand chalet at St Gingolph in the summer of 1929). These documented traces of Fou père's own ideological and amorous escapades in Europe are fascinating and important revelations, which add a deeper human dimension to our understanding of Fou Lei. Hu's Fou Lei: An Insistence on Truth and the Letters to Fou Ts'ong throw interesting light on each other.*

## Youthful Melancholy

1954, *Before noon*, 11<sup>th</sup> August, *Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong*<sup>32</sup>

I was twenty-one years old when I lived in Switzerland, and suffered from a sort of youthful and romantic melancholy. I was pessimistic, angry at the world, anxious, troubled at heart and at a loose end. This is the period I refer to in the preface of my translation of Romain Rolland's *Vie de Beethoven*.<sup>33</sup> My son, you are far more mature than I was at your age. You already experienced your period of youthful angst while you were still here in China. So you are several years ahead of where I was at your age. Now you can focus your life properly, and devote yourself all the more to studying – unlike me as young man. I wasted so much time back in those days, something that fills me with infinite regret now . . .

I have a few more words to add. First of all, one must never rely solely on *sensation* and *sensibility*<sup>34</sup> when playing the piano. Emotional factors such as these are so unreliable. What is brought to the surface by these two driving forces must then be collated and organised through rational thinking, so that it can be assimilated into your spiritual being, and later form part of your true personality and character.

Again, I must repeat myself and remind you to control your emotions as much as you possibly can, to sublimate them into your art. There are countless adorable beauties, “angelic beings” all around you. I’m worried that you’ll once again be unable to resist temptation. Don’t forget, you swore to me that you would be a puritan for a few years, that you would lead a “monk-like” existence, and adopt a lifestyle of abstinence as far as matters of the heart were concerned! You must constantly remind yourself of this resolution! Pay heed to it every minute of the day and night! Try to be aware of your problems and deal with matters at an early stage. Never allow your passions to become inflamed and then try to put out the fire. It will be a lot more painful that way, a lot harder and far less effective.

*JM: Fou Lei is surely at his best (and is probably most appreciated by Chinese readers today) not as a Byronic philandering romantic, nor as a sermonizing and overbearing Confucian father figure, still less as a Maoist apologist, but rather as an inspirational cultural and spiritual mentor, who still felt the timeless pulse of China, the China his contemporary Lin Yutang had so successfully brought to the Western world in books like The Importance of Living.*

## The Higher Realm of Literature

1954, *Early hours*, 27<sup>th</sup> July; *midnight*, 28<sup>th</sup> July, *Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong*<sup>35</sup>

The letter you wrote to us on the train is very interesting. So as long as there are real events and matters in life to talk about, it's impossible to write a

bad letter. And the way you distinguish between the two great poets Li Bo and Du Fu is very accurate. Realism has its strengths and its shortcomings. Its shortcomings are that it focuses too much on the finer details, and hence may end up lacking spontaneity or true vitality and resonance of spirit. That said, Du Fu wrote some superb poems too.<sup>36</sup> Take for instance:

*In high winds and tall skies,  
apes wail sadly;  
Over bright islets and white sands,  
birds circle in flight.  
As the infinite trees bleakly divest themselves,  
their leaves fall and fall;  
Down the river's endless expanse,  
the billows roll and roll!*<sup>37</sup>

Some of Du Fu's other poems, such as "Dreaming of Li Bo," and "Thinking of Li Bo at the Sky's End," also stir the heart deeply, they move the reader with their fervent emotional truth. There is no doubt that different eras produce very different styles of writing. The writers of the earlier Han and the Wei Dynasties were closer to the poetic Source of the Ancients. Their work was bold and vast in its scope, and hence has resonated through the ages. Du Fu himself wrote a large number of pastoral poems influenced by Tao Yuanming, but they are still written "through a veil"<sup>38</sup> (to quote Wang Guowei). Returning to the issue at hand: it may be possible to learn the craft of writing poetry, but it is impossible to learn the romantic spirit. It may be possible to imitate Du Fu, but it is certainly not possible to imitate Li Bo. Great geniuses such as Li Bo are rare, and few truly understand his writing – his works are at an unattainably high level. They are out of the reach of common mortals. The snow-capped peaks of his poems transport us to "porphyry towers, beneath jade eaves, to high places where the cold is unbearably intense."<sup>39</sup> Ordinary folk scarcely dare even gaze up at such elevated and sublime artistic realms.

*JM: The natural corollary of this literary aesthetic was Fou's insistence on the underlying purity and innocence of the artist's soul, a creed which had its roots firmly in Chinese philosophy, but was also greatly influenced by the European romantic movement, and most of all by the prolific writings of that arch-romantic idealist Romain Rolland, Fou's maître and alter ego.*

### The Heart-and-Mind of the Child

1955, 26<sup>th</sup> January, Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong<sup>40</sup>

Dear Son,

My son! Had we ourselves been in that hall where you played, we would have been unable to control ourselves! Our cheeks would have been wet with

tears. There can be no higher and purer joy in this world than the appreciation of true art, all the more so if that art flows from the hands and from the soul of one's very own son! Aside from our own personal joy, we are also immensely happy at the honour you are bringing to our country! And happier still that you are giving joy to so many others through your music! When we think ahead to the even greater achievements that still await you in the future, of the boundless progress that still lies ahead for you as an artist, and of what a great service you will be able to perform for so many others – rousing their spirits and consoling them in their pain – our hearts are ready to burst with joy!

I always remember the saying about the Heart-and-Mind of the Child. The child does not know loneliness. Even when alone, it can still create an inner world of its own, it can still people that world with a host of spiritual friends! If we can but preserve our Heart-and-Mind of the Child, if we continue to seek out others with that same Heart, if we can connect with them, embrace them, then we will never fall by the wayside, we will never be abandoned or desolate, even in old age! That friend of yours put it so well: the power of any performance to move others comes from the purity and innocence of the artist's soul! If that soul is not itself pure as a brightly burnished mirror, how can the performer ever enter into communion with the souls of the great artists of the past?

The Head of the Conservatory says that your playing is like a flowing stream, like a river. This reminds me of the symbols in *Jean-Christophe*. Uncle Tian said that you often identified with Jean-Christophe when you were younger. Your personality has indeed turned out to be like something out of the novel: the River, the Rhine, the surging of the waters . . . the sound of bells again, the breaking of dawn . . . China has indeed arrived at a time of renaissance, a new dawn. I hope you can be a bell announcing that dawn – for the New China – ringing around the world, echoing in all men's hearts! May the endless current of your playing pour forth into the hearts of mankind, carrying them with you far out onto the boundless ocean of music! The great Yangtze River, the Yellow River, these are grander by far even than the Rhine! Remember those words of Li Bo:

*O can you not behold the waters of the Yellow River  
Pour from the sky,  
Rushing down to the sea never to return?*<sup>41</sup>

And Du Fu:

*An infinity of trees bleakly divest themselves,  
Their leaves fall and fall.  
Along the endless expanse of river  
The billows roll and roll!*<sup>42</sup>

A people such as ours, with our great tradition of poetic souls such as these, will always call out for expression in ever newer and grander ways.

You wrote that you often find yourself caught between conflict and happiness. I believe that without conflict, an artist cannot progress, cannot change, cannot delve deeper into life. The presence of conflict is in fact evidence of an artist's vitality. What you are feeling at present is simply the conflict between the demands of technique and the ideal of pure Art. Later, you will no doubt face greater and recurring conflicts. There will always be endless conflicts to surmount; the Realm of Art is boundless. There is no such thing as *perfection* in Art, just as there is no such thing as *perfection* in Life! That is why we must continue to strive, to nurture Self-Cultivation, we must persevere in this quest, for the duration of our lives. If we stand to one side, filled with a sense of superiority, and watch the world go by, life will have ceased to have any meaning!

### For the Whole of Humanity

1955, 21st April, Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong<sup>43</sup>

Of course, it's wrong to be too easily satisfied with one's accomplishments. One should always aim high. But at the same time it's unhealthy to be overly ambitious, to indulge in unrealistic fantasies. I'm probably the one person who can say this to you directly. I may have misunderstood you (your long letter which went missing may have shed some light on this), in which case you should treat my advice according to the old saying: "If there *is* a problem, rectify it; if there *isn't*, be vigilant nonetheless."<sup>44</sup> I am your father, and everything I say to you, every single piece of advice I offer you, is for your own good. It is also intended for the good of our musical world, for China, for our people, for the whole of humanity!

I understand that the gulf between Jean-Christophe (in his later years) and the much younger Georges was inevitable given that they lived in such turbulent times.<sup>45</sup> I never want to fall behind, I always want to keep up with you; I want to understand your generation and everything about it; I want to draw new life from you, fresh blood, I want to breathe fresh air. At the same time, I shall always strive to offer you my own experience of life (and that of my entire generation), and with it a cool, dispassionate sense of reason, as a trusty support for you to lean on! If there ever comes a day when you feel that this trusty support of mine has become a burden, that it has outlived its usefulness, then I will silently and invisibly disappear – I never want to be a hindrance!

You praised Richter to the skies last year. Min bought his recording of Schumann's "Des Abends" at the International Bookstore in mid-February. It's such an extremely flat performance. Min also bought his recording of Schubert's "Moments Musicaux," which I think is a complete failure,

unbelievably heavy, without a hint of the music's delicacy, its elegance and grace, its *Viennese* style.<sup>46</sup>

I find myself reflecting on all the long endless letters I've written you. I hope they amount to something more than idle chat, or *gossip*. I hope they can serve several functions. First of all, I want to have a dialogue with you for its own sake, I want to discuss music and art with you, as an equal. Secondly, I want to draw fresh youthful ideas out of you, I myself want to be nourished by them, so that I can go on to disseminate them to other young people. Thirdly, through this correspondence of ours, I want to help you develop your writing skills, your whole way of thinking. And finally, I want to be your "alarm bell," your compass, whenever you need one. I want to serve as a "true mirror" for you – for the way you live, for your personal life, your whole Self-Cultivation as an artist, your posture and manner as a performer. As your father, I want to be your shadow, your other self. I want to be there to help you and protect you if you are ever in need. But I never want to be a nuisance.

Don't you feel a passion to serve China, to serve the people?<sup>47</sup>

*JM: The Letters were a form of therapy, for both father and son. They were also for Fou Lei a venturing into the epistolary art. He was a highly articulate critic, though never himself a performer or practising artist. Fou Ts'ong has written of his high regard for his father's taste in music.*

### **Tone Colour in Music**

1955, Noon, 27<sup>th</sup> December, Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong<sup>48</sup>

Musically, I think your playing of the [Chopin] concerto is subtle and understated.<sup>49</sup> It has none of Rubinstein's sentimentality. Your emotion is entirely interior and authentic. Your technique in the first movement leaves something to be desired, and there are some obvious flaws towards the end. Still, the second movement shows a fine attention to detail, and an extremely *delicate touch*. The last movement is especially brilliant. As for the Berceuse, it's so much better than your performance at the award ceremony concert, and the *mood* is quite changed too, more peaceful. The Fantaisie is now entirely different. The introduction is excellent – deep, solemn, and with a heavy Beethovenian feel to it. You used to play the *slow singing part* in the middle in a *sad, tragic* way. Now your playing has more of a mellow, melancholic tone. The piece as a whole is like a majestic building. It creates an impression of grandeur, of solidity, of clarity of structure, with a passionate *élan* that rolls through it wave after wave.

*JM: Even as Fou Lei was attempting to heighten his son's aesthetic awareness, on the home front he was mixing with powerful cultural bureaucrats, and in the Letters endeavoured to pass on the new ideology.*

### **Engaging with the Commissars**

1955, Noon, 27<sup>th</sup> December, Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong<sup>50</sup>

Apart from the excitement of listening to your recordings, I've been busy with a lot of other things these past few days. Next year is to be a "key" year for the "thought-reform and re-assignment of senior intellectuals."<sup>51</sup> Leading cadres at all levels are playing a "key" role in this process. That's why Mr. Zhou Erfu<sup>52</sup> and Mr. Wu Qiang<sup>53</sup> came to talk to me last night. I had been collecting my thoughts for several days beforehand, and spent seven hours yesterday putting my ideas down in writing – a total of nine thousand words. In addition to talking to them, I also gave them a copy of what I had written. Apparently, in order to meet the national five-year plan, and in order to fit in with the development of co-operative agriculture and industrial and commercial reform, the Government has decided to draw upon the latent potential of China's intellectuals, and is therefore helping them solve all manner of problems – those relating to everyday life, as well as those pertaining to their working conditions.

### **Marxism-Leninism**

1955, Early morning, 21<sup>st</sup> December, Fou Lei to Fou Ts'ong<sup>54</sup>

Dear Son,

This summer I had to stop doing my own work because of my poor health, and was therefore able to read a few theoretical works. I bought some for you this time, and also quite a few for myself. I've read three short works one after the other during the past few days – the first on the basic principles of dialectical materialism, the second on the concept of criticism and self-criticism as a driving force in the development of Soviet society, and the third on the principles of socialist economics. These readings have inspired a great many ideas, which I'd like to share with you.

The first and most significant idea is this. Theory and practice cannot be separated from one another. Studying must be connected to real life. Marxism-Leninism isn't an abstract philosophy; it's something extremely practical and concrete. Not only has it been the guiding theory for social revolution, it is also the foundation for a whole philosophy of life. In the six years that have passed since Liberation, our society has certainly seen enormous progress. But many problems still exist, in particular with regard to the competence of cadres

at various levels.<sup>55</sup> I frequently get the impression that for the average person today, political study is undertaken more for its own sake, than for the purposes of real life, for its application to real struggle. Cadres can be very eloquent when it comes to theory – whether they’re talking about materialism, the dialectical method, criticism of others or self-criticism – they can go on about such things for ever and a day. But as soon as they’re faced with a practical issue, as soon as the cadre sits back down at his office desk, or ventures out into the real world of factories and the countryside, he forgets every bit of whatever theory it is he’s been studying. The same thing happens in the field of education. University students have told me that their political debates can sometimes be extremely animated. Some of them come up with excellent questions, and are able to draw the most insightful conclusions. But in their actual dealings with fellow students, with their teachers and with the university leadership, they tend to play safe, and think mainly of their own selfish interests. I think this attitude to studying is fundamentally opposed to Marxism-Leninism. Why turn that most practical of sciences, dialectical materialism, into a series of empty slogans and clichés? Why not take all the grand principles they speak so eloquently about and apply them sincerely to their own daily lives?

*JM: Fou Lei was now educating his son in the foundations of party dogma – it was a family version of “thought reform,” a different kind of therapy altogether from the reading of classical poetry, a far cry from the Self-Cultivation of Wang Guowei.*

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The last chapter of Hu Mingyuan’s book, “Creatures of Prometheus, or Unresolved Grief,” tells the heart-breaking story of the final dénouement in 1966, in which Fou Lei and his wife are finally driven to take their own lives. Étiemble had once referred to Fou Lei as “*un grand lettré libéral*.” It is an old and noble designation, in France as in China. In 1988 the celebrated French TV host Bernard Pivot called Étiemble himself “*un lettré*,” to which Étiemble’s telling comment was: “In the Confucian sense, yes – that is to say, someone who would give his life to tell the truth.”<sup>56</sup> With these powerful words Hu Mingyuan closes the chapter, and they are both a fitting epitaph for her subject, and a tribute to the host of Chinese creative artists and intellectuals who have suffered for their ideals and ultimately had their lives and their work destroyed.

John Minford

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## NOTES

1. This spelling of his surname was the one he insisted on. It accorded with the standard French Romanization of the Chinese character 傅, and at the same time subtly evoked Fou Lei's impetuous "folly." Fou Ts'ong kept his father's spelling, while in this essay I retain the Mainland Pinyin spelling "Fu" for the China-based younger son.

2. In 1960, Hermann Hesse described Fou Ts'ong as the "only true interpreter of Chopin," at the same time referring to him as "an ancient Chinese master painting with a brush." (*Fou Lei: An Insistence on Truth*, pp. 187–191) Fou Lei himself analyzed this paradox clearly in terms of the Chinese poetic sensibility, writing to his son in May 1955: "We Chinese have a certain romantic streak in our own tradition, but it is more understated. You only have to look at the poets of the Han and Wei dynasties, or at the famous Tang-dynasty poets such as Li Bo and Du Fu for an example of this romantic streak. The last Emperor of the Southern Tang, Li Yu, the great writer of lyric verse, was the most romantic of them all. But he had far better taste; he was subtle and refined in comparison to the Western romantics. This is why we Chinese have a natural predisposition that serves us well in interpreting Chopin."

3. Several of the *Letters* were addressed to Zamira Menuhin, Fou Ts'ong's wife at the time, daughter of the celebrated violinist Yehudi, and these were written in French and English. Menuhin has written of the importance of these letters in his autobiographical memoir, *Unfinished Journey* (London 1978, p. 270): "Fou Ts'ong introduced me to a people, a mentality, a way of life that represents one of the foundations of human history. His father, an eminent French scholar, sent us from China letters we shall always treasure: in the most cultivated French, written (or drawn) with a brush, expressing his happiness that two of the oldest races in the world, the Chinese and the Jewish, should thus be united." The project to translate the complete *Letters* has recently been terminated by Fu Min, as the result (I believe) of my personal insistence that these letters written by Fou Lei in English and French should be included. Both brothers had agreed with me when I consulted them personally, in Shanghai and London respectively, that it was logical for them to be an integral part of the book, but this judgment was subsequently over-ruled by the Hong Kong-based intermediary who had been responsible many years earlier for the translation of the letters into Chinese for Fu Min's book.

4. The young Harvard scholar Chen Guangchen wrote the following in November 2016 on the Kennedy Center Blog, in an account entitled "Remembering the life of a Cosmopolite – On the Fiftieth Anniversary of Fou Lei's Suicide": "The *Letters* are currently being translated into English for the first time. The project . . . benefits from contributions from the scholar Louis Lee, and most notably John Minford, the translator (together with David Hawkes) of the definitive Penguin edition of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. With one of the most brilliant translators of our time translating the writings of his great predecessor, this project promises to represent the art of translation at the highest level." Chen's words have acquired a bitter irony today.

5. *Letters*, p. 22. Page numbers refer to the revised Hong Kong Joint Publishing edition of 2006.

6. Claire Roberts, *Friendship in Art: Fou Lei and Huang Binhong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2010). Dr Roberts quotes extensively from the *Letters to Fou Ts'ong*.

7. Jindong Cai and Sheila Melvin, in their excellent *Beethoven in China* (Penguin Books, 2015, p. 50), draw attention to Fou Lei's "resemblance in spirit" theory of translation: "Translation should produce not a likeness in form but a likeness in spirit."

8. “Quelle belle chose qui existe dans le monde!” It is an admirable quality of this study that the author provides the reader with generous references to original texts in French and Chinese.

9. *Fou Lei: An Insistence on Truth*, p. 73.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

11. *Letters*, p. 40.

12. This famous work of literary criticism by the great scholar, critic and poet Wang Guowei (1877–1927) was one of the last and finest in the old epigrammatic tradition of “poetry talks.” Wang Guowei was a great influence on Fou Lei. In later life Fou Ts’ong attached great importance to this work.

13. Yu Pingbo the prominent essayist, critic and scholar, was vehemently attacked in late 1954 for his politically incorrect “bourgeois” approach to literature. At the time Fou Lei was writing this letter, in December 1954, things would indeed have been very tough for Yu. The expression used here by Fou Lei, 大吃生活 (literally “eating a big slice of life”) is a colloquial Wu-dialect phrase meaning “to get a severe beating from one’s parent.” It was Fou Lei’s roundabout way of referring to the savage campaign to denounce Yu that had been personally initiated by Chairman Mao earlier that year. It is interesting to note that Fou Lei himself had been in the habit of inflicting severe physical chastisement on his young sons. (They too “ate a big slice of life” at their father’s hands.) A Soong family maidservant, Lu Chunli, who had once lived next door to the Fou family in Shanghai, remembered hearing Fou yelling and screaming, hurling things around and beating his children. See the biographical memoir by Roland Soong of his father Stephen Soong 宋淇 (Fou Lei’s close friend), *Song Qi chuanqi* (Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 130. In the *Letters* Fou often expresses his remorse for this harsh treatment (see the next example). Stephen Soong was a dear friend of mine, and it was from him in the early 1980s that I first came to hear of Fou Lei.

14. The word *tong*, which Fou Lei uses here, in this forceful (and in the political context of the time dangerously heterodox) statement of his idealistic position on literature, art and life, has many levels of meaning. It implies the ability to penetrate deeply into the heart of a matter, to make connections, to see, appreciate and understand things more holistically, in a deeper and broader perspective. This can only be achieved through persevering Self-Cultivation. “Depth” is only an approximation.

15. The frog at the bottom of the well is the image of the small-minded man in the famous chapter “Autumn Floods” from the Taoist *Book of Master Zhuang*. “You cannot discuss the ocean with a frog at the bottom of the well.” Much of Fou Lei’s philosophy can be traced back to the ideas of early Taoism.

16. Fou Lei uses the French word *humain*.

17. This and subsequent extracts are all taken from the unpublished complete translation of *Letters to Fou Ts’ong*, which I revised over several years from the original draft done by my young friend Louis Lee 李雅言, a revision much aided by the devoted editorial work of my daughter Laura May.

18. *Letters*, p. 39.

19. Fou Ts’ong was an official competitor in the Fifth International Chopin Piano Competition in Poland in 1954, and stayed on there afterwards as a student. The entire family said goodbye to Fou Ts’ong at Shanghai Station on 17 January 1954. He travelled first to Beijing, and then onwards to Poland.

20. Shen Zhibai (1904–1968) was one of Fou Lei’s old friends, and Head of the Composition Department at the Shanghai Music Conservatory. He taught Fou Ts’ong music theory as a young man. He suffered during the Hu Feng Purge of 1954, and died as a result of persecution during the early months of the Cultural Revolution.

21. In January 1953, Fou Ts’ong had a fierce argument with his father as to which of the Beethoven violin sonatas was the most important.

22. *Letters*, p. 42.

23. Between 1949 and 1951, Fou Ts’ong was in the southwestern city of Kunming, returning to Shanghai in 1951 to concentrate on his musical studies.

24. *Letters*, p. 114.

25. These two essays by Mao, both written in 1937, were compulsory reading in the 1950s.

26. Fou Lei here takes it upon himself to educate his son in the current Marxist ideology, in which he himself is obliged to function. Fou Ts’ong never did return to take up residence in China.

27. *Letters*, p. 153.

28. In his fulsome praise of Mao, Fou Lei uses a term derived from Buddhism, and found in traditional Chinese literature and aesthetics, *huajing*, literally “the Realm of Transformation.” The Zen-inspired critic Yan Yu (1191–1241) wrote: “It is by means of words that the poet reveals the Realm of Transformation, *huajing*, or the transformed state of being, in which one is identified with the Tao and has no longer any need for words.” In an essay published in the early 1960s, Fou Lei’s close friend Qian Zhongshu, the Oxford graduate who was himself during the 1950s deeply involved in the project to translate Mao’s works into English, uses this exact term *huajing* to praise the work of the veteran translator Lin Shu (1852–1924).

29. *Letters*, p. 48.

30. The words “themes” and “variations” appear in English in Fou Lei’s original letter.

31. This ancient Chinese proverb, which Fou Lei quotes, first appears in the Taoist *Book of the Huainan Master* (second century B.C.). The original story is of a man who loses his horse on the borderlands, but later gets it back in the company of a fine stallion. The original passage concludes: “Fortune may turn out to be Calamity, Calamity may turn out to be Fortune. The Transformations of Life are boundless, they are too deep to be fathomed.”

32. *Letters*, p. 56.

33. Romain Rolland (1866–1944), French author, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1915. Fou Lei completed the first draft of his translation of Rolland’s *Vie de Beethoven* in 1932, and revised it in 1942. It was published in 1946.

34. The words “sensation” and “sensibility” appear in English in Fou Lei’s original letter.

35. *Letters*, p. 52. Fou Ts’ong had taken the train to Warsaw via Moscow.

36. Fou Lei is here using expressions from traditional Chinese aesthetics. In “true vitality and resonance of spirit,” *lingdongde yunzhi*, we find several of the old aesthetic terms compressed: *ling*, literally “spirit” (already encountered above) and *yun*, literally “rhyme” or “resonance.” “Superb,” *huncheng*, means literally “whole and complete.” Lin Yutang paraphrases it well: “Like nature itself, effortless, the highest quality of art. It is used of writing which is deep and mature.” It is this traditional way of talking that makes Fou Lei’s comments on art and literature so eloquent and so hard to translate.

37. These four lines are from Du Fu's poem "From a Height," translation based on David Hawkes in J. Minford and J.S.M. Lau, *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations – Vol. 1: From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 782.

38. Fou Lei is using another term taken from Wang Guowei. Wang had proclaimed that the very best poetry (including that of Tao Yuanming) had the quality of being in direct contact with the scene or emotion that inspired it. It was "unveiled," written with the utmost sincerity and simplicity.

39. These lines are taken from a famous lyric by the Song dynasty poet Su Dongpo (1039–1101), to the tune "Prelude to Water Music," translation by Burton Watson.

40. *Letters*, p. 87.

41. Translation based on Elling Eide in *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations*, p. 730.

42. Fou Lei is quoting lines from Du Fu's poem "From a Height." The translation is based on David Hawkes in *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations*, p. 782.

43. *Letters*, p. 99.

44. This famous saying comes from the commentary on the *Confucian Analects* Book I, by the great Song-dynasty Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi (1130–1200).

45. At the very end of Romain Rolland's long roman-fleuve *Jean-Christophe*, the hero Jean-Christophe forms an intense friendship with the much younger Georges Jeannin. It is impossible to overstate the importance for Fou Lei of this author (he also translated in the 1930s Rolland's lives of Michelangelo, Tolstoy and Beethoven). *Jean-Christophe* is little read in France nowadays, and the bookseller in Céret from whom I purchased my copy in 2016 was astonished to learn of its popularity in China, which is due entirely to Fou Lei's fine translation. Fou Ts'ong echoed his father in an interview given in 2002: "*Jean-Christophe* represented the spirit of idealism that was so sorely needed in China . . . Romain Rolland was a great humanist, and one of the novel's principal themes is the emancipation of the individual. I feel that the most important reason for the book's huge influence on its Chinese readers was precisely the fact that China needed this above all else."

46. Fou Lei here uses a series of resonant terms from traditional Chinese aesthetics: *qingling*, literally light and airy, *qingxiu*, pure and graceful, *roumei*, soft and beautiful.

47. When Fou Lei wrote this letter, in May 1955, the Purge of the writer Hu Feng and his anti-Party "clique" was in full swing, threatening whole sections of China's intelligentsia. The following year Mao announced that "a hundred flowers should bloom," and openly encouraged critical debate, in an effort to draw distinguished intellectuals such as Fou Lei into the Party fold, but this "blooming" was short-lived and treacherous, soon giving way to the widespread Purge known as the Anti-Rightist Movement, which caught Fou Lei in its net. Chairman Mao had first made the slogan "Serve the People" popular in a speech given at the funeral of a friend in the Communist guerilla base, Yan'an in the 1940s. This speech was later published as one of Mao's "Three Old Essays."

48. *Letters*, p. 117.

49. *Hanxu* is a key term in traditional Chinese aesthetics, meaning understated, suggestive, pregnant, restrained, not too explicit, somewhat reticent and reserved, of writing "leaving much unsaid for the reader to think about, true art concealing art" (Lin Yutang).

50. *Letters*, p. 117.

51. “Thought reform” and “transformation” were Orwellian euphemisms for political indoctrination or brain-washing. A key element in the Communist Party’s strategy towards the nation’s “intellectuals” at this time was to “re-engineer” their thinking (ideologically remold them) and create a new function for them in society. Fou Lei, as a prominent and well-connected member of the Shanghai cultured elite, was clearly being groomed for a role in this.

52. Zhou Erfu (1914–2004), party ideologue, novelist and critic, was Vice-Minister of Culture and deputy-head of the United Front Bureau of the Shanghai Communist Party. He was disgraced and expelled from the Party in 1986, after a trip the previous year to Japan in which he ill-advisedly visited the Yasukuni War Shrine. He was reinstated as a party member in 2002.

53. Wu Qiang (1910–1990) was a popular novelist (author of the 1959 novel *Red Sun*), and high-ranking cultural bureaucrat in the Shanghai area. He was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, and did not have his name cleared until 1978.

54. *Letters*, p. 112.

55. The countable noun “cadre” (as opposed to the collective noun), Chinese *ganbu* (itself derived from the earlier Japanese), covers the whole range of what the French would call “fonctionnaires,” from high-ranking Party members, *gaogan*, to local public servants. They constituted the political establishment. This is the first time Fou Lei uses the word in the *Letters*, and is another indication of his sincere endeavour to come to terms with current political reality and its language, and his resolve to deliver a lesson in political thinking for Fou Ts’ong’s benefit. Fou Lei himself was beginning to take part in the soul-destroying business of party-dominated cultural politics, sitting on several party-led committees.

56. *Fou Lei: An Insistence on Truth*, p. 221.