Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Chinese Literary Journals in the Cultural Market†

Shuyu Kong

The economic reforms that have swept through China over the past two decades have created a vibrant cultural market, and the newly established norms of this market have in turn transformed the way in which culture is produced and consumed in China today. By tracing the transformation of literature from a crucial ideological tool during the Maoist period to a creature of market socialism—even, some might argue, a full-blooded capitalist monster—in recent years, we can gain a clear and striking view of major institutional and conceptual paradigm shifts within Chinese society as a whole. From best-sellers to "second-channel" (*di er qudao*) unofficial publishing and distribution; from promotional book reviews and symposia to alliances between literature and the television, film, and internet industries, a new set of literary practices that are economically rather than ideologically motivated has both eroded and reshaped the socialist literary establishment. In the midst of this rapid and dramatic metamorphosis, literary and cultural institutions must deal with some profound and complex dilemmas. For instance, on the one hand, publishing and media enterprises are still state owned and state supervised, weighed down by calls to compete in the market, to become financially independent, and ideally, to manage and operate themselves as if they were commercial enterprises. Likewise, although commercial incentives and the logic of the market have

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tended to bring literary production more into line with popular culture, and many worry that Chinese literature is suffering "the loss of its humanistic spirit" (Wang Xiaoming 1993: 27), one could also argue that the huge growth in literary and publishing venues over the 1990s has opened up a space for greater diversity of public discourse and a kind of cultural pluralism, freeing literature from the heavy burden of political and social moralistic teaching during the previous few decades (Wang Meng 1993: 10–17). Examining the transformations and paradoxes of contemporary literary practices in China today will thus help to broaden our understanding of the varied and contradictory forces that impel social and cultural change in a complex transitional society.

Even today, China is the country with the most literary journals in the world, and the literary journal system, formerly a state-funded institution, played a crucial role within the socialist cultural establishment after 1949. However, during the past two decades, literary journals have faced unprecedented challenges as a result of sweeping economic reforms and the gradually emerging cultural market. This once popular and prestigious industry has declined to such an extent that it has now reached a crisis point, and many journals cannot ignore the possibility that every issue could be their last.[1] By describing the recent attempts of literary journals to deal with this crisis, I hope to provide some concrete and specific evidence of the cultural transformation that is taking place in China. Although my case study approach may appear more sociological than purely literary, I believe we cannot properly understand the change in content of contemporary Chinese literature without some knowledge of the social mechanisms guiding its production and consumption. Also, while presenting the dilemmas and struggles of literary journals as they make the difficult transition from socialist state-sponsored institutions to market-oriented cultural enterprises, I explore at the same time some of the larger issues at stake. For instance, how does the introduction of a market economy affect literary production? Can formerly state-sponsored institutions mold

[1] Here I focus on so-called "pure" or "serious" literary journals (*chun wenxue* or *yansu wenxue qikan*). Although the concept of pure literature is of course controversial, there was until recently quite a clear demarcation in China between pure, serious journals and popular ones. The vast majority of officially published literary journals after 1949 were "serious" journals—and still conceive of themselves as such—because of government efforts to eliminate popular entertainment literature and promote a kind of moralistic literature supporting its revolutionary course. Perry Link's *The Uses of Literature: Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System* gives a thorough and detailed description of these characteristics of the literary system. This situation lasted till the early 1980s, when many popular literary journals were established and took the literary market by storm over the next few years. Because they were the main publishing venue for officially approved mainstream literature, pure literary journals initially enjoyed many privileges, yet when a market economy began to replace the state-planned economy, these journals obviously had the most to lose, both financially and ideologically. They also had to undergo much more drastic changes in order to survive, as compared with popular literary journals that were born from the market economy and were profit oriented from the very beginning. Consequently, because they have been forced to totally reinvent themselves, pure literary journals give us a more useful and vivid picture of the literary transformations that have taken place in contemporary China than other, more popular kinds of journals.

themselves into viable commercial enterprises? And is it possible for contemporary Chinese cultural production to negotiate a compromise between embracing commercial practices and submitting to official control?

I begin by briefly describing the sense of crisis among literary journal editors in the late 1990s, then trace the roots of this crisis back to the mid-1980s, when the government first reduced funding for many cultural institutions and required them to introduce market mechanisms into their management. I examine various strategies that journal editors adopted during the late 1980s and early 1990s to try to raise capital to survive, including their often awkward attempts at selling advertisement space and seeking corporate sponsorship. Finally, I show that since the late 1990s, a few journals have attempted to plot a middle course—adopting rational marketing methods while at the same time broadening their definition of literature. In so doing, they hope to avoid both the rock of their outdated and inefficient socialist literary legacy and the hard place of financial ruin brought about by the market.

To provide a sense of continuity to this process, I focus on one specific journal, *Beijing Literature* (Beijing wenxue), but I also refer to other journals where relevant (fig. 1). I chose *Beijing Literature* for two reasons. First, it is one of the most prestigious of the provincial-level literary journals affiliated with the local branches of the Chinese Writers Association (Zhongguo zuojia xiehui) or the All China Federation of Literary and Artistic Circles (Zhonghua quanguo wenxue yishu jie lianhehui). Founded in 1950 and known as *Beijing Literature and Art* (Beijing wenyi) until 1980, it owes its existence to the socialist literary establishment, and until the recent "systemic reforms in the artistic and literary fields" (*wenyi tizhi gaige*), it was almost exclusively dependent on government funding. Today, unlike the top national journals, such as *People's Literature* (Renmin wenxue), or journals affiliated with publishing houses, such as *Contemporary* (Dangdai), provincial-level journals such as *Beijing Literature* lack both a countrywide reputation, with the broad subscription base that this brings,

Figure 1: Covers from *Beijing Literature* in 1999 (top) and 2001 (bottom).

and any adequate external funding from the government or publishing houses. As a result, they have been among those most seriously affected by economic reforms. Second, because of its geographical proximity to the central government and the cultural circles of the capital, *Beijing Literature* illustrates particularly clearly the contradictions that result from attempting to overcome financial problems, yet simultaneously dealing with political pressures that restrict the measures its editors can take. Unlike equivalent journals in remote provinces or the more relaxed special economic zones, such as *Foshan Art and Literature* (Foshan wenyi) in Guangdong, and *Frontiers* (Tianya) on Hainan Island, *Beijing Literature* can neither completely follow the demands of the market nor test the boundaries of politically provocative content without facing immediate criticism and penalties.

Because of the contemporary nature of this research, and also because of the complexity of cultural practices in present-day China, to gain an accurate understanding of these journals, one cannot rely simply on official regulations or officially published materials. Many of the more imaginative economic reforms undertaken in the literary field are tacitly tolerated but not openly permitted by the government, as occasional crackdowns have demonstrated. As a result, much of the material for this study necessarily comes not from published sources but from interviews conducted with various journal editors and publishers in Beijing during the winter of 1999–2000 and the summer of 2000. I have also paid careful attention to the literary journals themselves, especially their format and content changes. Finally, other important sources are Chinese newspaper and journal articles, which, though they must be used with caution, often give a good sense of what is really happening in the literary field today. Where doubts exist about the veracity of such materials, I have so indicated.

Crisis

In the fall of 1998, the presidents and editors-in-chief of over eighteen literary journals—many of them prestigious journals such as *People's Literature*, *Beijing Literature*, and *Zhong Mountain* (Zhong shan)—met at the foot of Tian Mountain to discuss the alarming state of literary production in contemporary China. The central issue on the conference agenda was how literary journals could adjust to the new demands of the cultural market, or more precisely, how they could overcome the financial difficulties that most have suffered since the late 1980s. With a dramatic drop in subscription levels and much slimmer allocation of government funds—with some even losing all their funding—literary journals were besieged with problems on every side. Many editors-in-chief voiced the difficulties they faced in simply keeping their journals running and their uncertainty about the future. Most also felt that the government had betrayed them and left them to languish in the new market economy. Trained to run their journals for the Party and having worked in the state-sponsored literary world for decades, how were they supposed to compete with the new crop of tabloids, pulp fiction, fashion magazines, and other popular publications in China's poorly regulated cultural market, especially when they were still expected to concern themselves with the "social benefit" and "artistic value" of what they published (Guo 1998: 207–208)?

The anxiety and complaints of these editors were well founded. In 1998 alone, four literary journals closed down, including the well-established *Kunlun*. Then, at the beginning of 1999, *People's Literature*, the premier national journal conceived and fostered by the government for five decades, announced that over the next three years the government's allocated funding would gradually decrease, and the journal would ultimately have to become financially independent. This announcement caused further panic among those journals, which still placed some of their hope for survival on government support (Liu 1999).

Reports on such editorial symposia, as well as heated discussions on

how literary journals could survive in the market, appeared frequently in the Chinese media toward the end of the 1990s (Zhu 1997; He 1998), and the survival or collapse of literary journals became a favorite topic of conversation in literary circles. However, this mourning over their unpropitious fall from a privileged position was actually a belated and still reluctant response to the rapid decline of the socialist literary system and rise of a new cultural market over the past two decades.

Flourishing Literary Journals Before Reform

As noted, China has for many years been the country with the most literary journals. Ironically, this literary fecundity was almost the inevitable result of what Westerners tend to define as an "oppressive" and "totalitarian" socialist literary system. As many scholars have observed, literature assumed a central position in discussions of morality, social life, and even politics in Maoist China.[2] After 1949, the Communist regime established a forceful and comprehensive socialist cultural system, a nationwide bureaucratic network of central and local branches of the All China Federation of Literary and Artistic Circles and the Chinese Writers Association, and numerous state-funded cultural institutions, among which were literary journals, functioning as the main official venue for writers to publish their works. In 1949, *Literary Gazette* (Wenyi bao) and *People's Literature* were founded as the mouthpieces of these two cultural associations, respectively, with a mandate to establish the Party's new criteria for quality literature and to promote orthodox literary work. Over the next few years, with the establishment of branches of the Federation and Writers Association at municipal and provincial levels, many literary periodicals modeled after *People's Literature* also appeared. By 1959, there were already eighty-nine literary journals in China. As with personnel in other Chinese cultural institutions, the editors of these literary journals were always government employees, and their editorial boards included cultural officials who acted as liaisons between the Party and writers. Clearly, the mission of literary

[2] See, for instance, Link 2000. Link's book gives a detailed and comprehensive description of how the Chinese literary system worked and its functions in social life, focusing especially on the period from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. For the continuing Party control of literature and culture in the 1990s, see chapters in Geremie Barmé (1999), *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture.* In a recent historical survey of contemporary literature, Hong Zicheng (1999) also analyzes in great depth the establishment and mechanism of the socialist literary system from the 1950s through the 1980s in his *Zhongguo dangdai wenxue shi* (History of contemporary Chinese literature).

journals was to foster socialist writers and encourage them to publish works that supported the government and the Party. Therefore, besides restricting the content of literature in Chinese society, these journals also became important indicators of the Party's latest policies toward literature and broader cultural and social issues.

During the harshest years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), along with most other aspects of literary and cultural life, all literary journals, except for *People's Liberation Army Art and Literature* (Jiefangjun wenyi), ceased publication. So the late 1970s, often described in China as "spring after a chilly winter," basically saw the restoration of the literary establishment of the 1950s and a true renaissance of literary journals. Not only did all the pre–Cultural Revolution journals revive, but many new ones were also founded, including full-length journals focusing on novels and novellas (*daxing wenxue kanwu*) affiliated with publishing houses. These new journals, including *City of Flowers* (Huacheng; est. 1979), *October* (Shiyue; 1978), *Contemporary* (Dangdai; 1979), and *Zhong Mountain* (Zhongshan; 1978), became the most influential venues for the so-called Post-Mao literature from the 1980s on. By 1980, the number of nationally distributed literary journals had mushroomed to around 200, in addition to which there were numerous journals with just local circulation (Hong 1999: 24; ZGCB 1981: 659–664). Circulation figures for many journals also became extremely impressive. For instance, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, two journals, *People's Literature* and *Fiction Monthly* (Xiaoshuo yuebao), actually attracted over a million subscribers each, and several others, such as *Contemporary, Fiction Digest* (Xiaoshuo xuankan), *October, Harvest* (Shouhuo), and *Novella Digest* (Zhongpian xiaoshuo xuankan), regularly distributed over 400,000 copies (ZGCB 1981: 635; ZGCB 1984: 680).

The blooming of literary journals in the late 1970s and early 1980s, while certainly reflecting a mass hunger for literature, or "spiritual food," after the deprivations of the Cultural Revolution, also hinted at the multiple practical functions of literature in what was essentially still a pre-

reform socialist society. Three of these functions were especially important.

First, in a national environment where literature played an essential role in fostering morality, social life, and politics at every level, literary journals fulfilled an invaluable journalistic and public media function both for the government and for writers and readers. Certainly, "political leaders sometimes used literary outlets to broach purely political moves" (Link 2000: 14), and literary magazines were a place "where both the leadership and the public were accustomed to look for significant political messages" (15). Yet such was the literary thaw during 1978–1979 (a product of Deng Xiaoping's policy of conciliation toward intellectuals) that intellectuals and even dissidents were also able to tentatively voice their sincere opinions on political and social issues through literature. Similarly, from early 1980 on, when Deng began to issue warnings about "bourgeois liberalization," the leadership's new direction was reflected immediately in official criticism of previously published literary works. As a result, literary journals frequently became a contested public sphere, where writers, readers, critics, and political authorities all voiced their contrasting opinions about social and political issues. Often a novel, a piece of literary reportage (*baogao wenxue*), or even a short story in a literary magazine or newspaper could gain national attention and spark a national debate, as in the case of Liu Binyan's "People or Monsters," Lu Xinhua's "Scar," and Yu Luojin's "A Chinese Winter's Tale"[3] Obviously, such publicity also worked wonders for literary journals' circulation figures.

[3] "People or Monsters" (Ren yao zhi jian) first published in *People's Literature* (Sept. 1979), "Scar" (Shanghen) in *Wenhui Bao* (Aug. 11, 1978), and "A Chinese Winter's Tale" (Dongtian de tonghua) in *City of Flowers* (March 1980).

Second, in addition to their sociopolitical function, literary journals also served as one of the few available and acceptable forms of entertainment for general readers during this period. Even up to the mid-1980s, China was a country with an underdeveloped entertainment industry; it was extremely rare for ordinary families to own a TV or VCR, and for those who did, there was little variety of programs or choice of channels or tapes. Newspapers of the period consisted mainly of dry official announcements,

which neither challenged nor entertained readers. Literary journals, with their very cheap cover prices, thus became virtually the only avenue for people to escape everyday reality and find something imaginative, outspoken, or even just pleasantly sentimental to divert them.

Third, literary journals, as the core of the socialist literary system, were the main ladder for many "promising literary youths" to gain a measure of fame and career advancement through writing. Especially after the Cultural Revolution, a large population of "rusticated youth" (*shangshan xiaxiang zhishi qingnian*) had missed out on regular formal education and the opportunities for advancement that followed it. Many felt that writing literature was the only path open for them to get ahead in society and to improve their living conditions. After all, as Link (2000) has thoroughly demonstrated, professional writers in socialist China not only enjoyed social status but also had a relatively easy and privileged life in practical terms, including paid trips to conferences and places of interest, the chance to work and to be housed in a convenient and cosmopolitan city environment, and a decent and secure salary.

The typical route to becoming a writer supported by the state was to publish one's works in local literary journals, then graduate to provincial and even national journals, thereby gaining recognition, winning awards, and being invited to join the Writers Association. The literary journals themselves, affiliated as most were with the Writers Association or the Federation of Literary and Artistic Circles, also considered their mandate to be not merely publishing fiction and poems, but also discovering and training "literary newcomers." Journals therefore organized various writing workshops (*peixun ban*) and writers' symposia (*bihui*) for young authors, and many of the newly established journals focused specifically on "youth literature." With such enthusiastic encouragement and potential rewards, there was no shortage of young, hopeful writers submitting their works to fill the pages of the countless journals. According to one source (Song/Zhou 2001), in the early 1980s, manuscripts would arrive daily by the sack-

ful at the editorial offices of acclaimed journals such as *People's Literature, Beijing Literature, Harvest,* and *Contemporary.*

From the late 1970s until the early 1980s, therefore, literary journals managed to flourish because they fulfilled necessary and useful social functions in the eyes of the Chinese government, intellectuals, readers, and writers. Overall, their circulation remained extremely high, and the great majority of journals received generous government funding to subsidize their low subscription fees. Unfortunately for the journals, the enormous social changes and sweeping economic reforms of the next decade would soon wipe out many of the reasons for their success and leave most of them struggling to survive or, at worst, obsolete.

Decline

From the early 1980s on, with the onset of more extensive economic reforms in China, many factors combined to challenge the predominance of literary journals. We can summarize these under four main categories: withdrawal of government funding; competition from other forms of mass media and popular reading materials; writer- and government-oriented rather than reader-oriented editorial criteria; and outdated or inflexible institutional structures. The first two are external factors, totally beyond the journals' control, but the last two are internal issues largely resulting from the journals' socialist, state-planned setup, which caused them to drag their feet rather than adapt quickly to the new economic order.

Signs of government reduction in funding appeared as early as the end of 1984, when economic reforms were first implemented in the cultural arena. The government made it clear that apart from a handful of specific publications that would receive favorable treatment, most literary journals should make efforts to become "financially self-responsible" (*zifu yingkui*) (Anon. 1985: 1869). As a result, over the next decade, although in varying degrees, depending on the policies of local governments, the proportion of government funding as a percentage of the total income of

literary journals decreased annually. By 1999, many journals had lost all their funding, and others, such as *People's Literature* and *Beijing Literature*, could cover only one fifth of their expenses by relying on the government (Li 1999; and Zhang 1999).

Literary journals could no longer look for help from the Chinese Writers Association or the Federation of Literature and Arts Circle. After Deng Xiaoping's southern tour in 1992, when the march toward a market economy accelerated, these associations, formerly responsible for overseeing literary journals, had to face their own "systemic reforms" (*tizhi gaige*). They were transformed from "government and Party apparati" (*dangzheng jiguan*) into ordinary "public institutions" (*shiye danwei*), and were supposed to be managed more like business enterprises, with the aim of becoming self-supporting.[4] Accordingly, lacking government funding and resources of their own, they had no choice but to "wean" (*duan nai*) their literary journals, and "set them free" (*tuogou*), to use their own euphemisms. Hence, by the early 1990s, most journals were already facing the major challenge of learning how to support themselves and to swim in the sea of open business.

The second factor affecting literary journals was competition from popular reading and from a boom in the TV and entertainment industries. From the mid-1980s on, with the emergence of private publishing and distribution networks and the relative liberalization of the media, popular reading materials (*tongsu duwu*) and mass print media exploded onto the scene and steadily gained market share. These materials ranged from pulp fiction and popular romances to leisure and entertainment publications such as women's fashion and lifestyle magazines and tabloid-style weekend and evening newspapers.[5] According to official statistics provided by He Chengwei, vice-president of the Chinese Association of Periodicals, in 1978 there were 930 magazines and journals of all types published in China, but by 1993 there were over 7092 (Jiang Zhenxin 1993*b*). These new publications are evidence of the "publishing craze" that oc-

[4] The role and nature of the Writers Association and the Federation of Literary and Artistic Circles is a bit tricky in China. In theory they are just unofficial professional clubs, but in practice they function as a liaison between the Party and writers, and they are structured as part of the government apparatus (Link 2000: 118–122). But during the systematic government reforms of the late 1990s, the attention and sponsorship they received from the government gradually decreased. Accordingly, they had to develop many businesses and services to support themselves. The Chinese Writers Association, for example, established in 1991 a Chinese Literature Foundation (Zhonghua wenxue jijinhui), which now operates the following businesses: the Wencai Corporation, the Shenzhen Writer's Home, An Hui Wencai Building, and the Wencai Bookstore (Li 1999).

[5] For the growth of mass media and popular literature in China and their impact on contemporary culture, see chapters in Zha 1995; Zhao 1998; Barmé 1999; and Huot 2000.

curred during the 1980s and 1990s. Even if we focus only on popular fiction magazines, there was enormous growth in the mid- and late 1980s. As one writer of such fiction recalled: "In 1984, the winds of reform swept over the country with stronger and stronger force. Popular literature seemed to appear overnight, and rapidly spread everywhere. A bunch of popular literary magazines sprang up, such as *Zuojiang Literature and Art* (Zuojiang wenyi), . . . *Woodpecker* (Zhuomuniao), and *Legends Old and New* (Jingu chuanqi) (fig. 2). They were a breath of fresh air to readers and quickly gained ground. For the first time, literature had become connected with the market, with the mass of readers" (Tian/Tan 1999: 35). Indeed, by the mid-1980s, there were over 200 popular fiction journals alone, several of them with circulations numbering in the millions (Kaikkonen 1999: 134).

Figure 2: February 1994 cover of *Legends Old and New*.

The sudden appearance and remarkable success of popular fiction and its producers' ability to rapidly accommodate the demands of a mass readership were largely made possible by the introduction of market mechanisms to literary production and distribution. Such mechanisms were developed by unofficial "second channel" private-sector agents or "book dealers" (*shu shang*)—sophisticated entrepreneurs who started as individual booksellers, some having gained experience as editors of publishing houses or journals, then quickly expanded their businesses to include pirating and production of books and journals. They organized writers to produce or translate books specifically aimed at a mass audience, then paid them in cash for their manuscripts. Next they would either make a private—and strictly illegal—agreement with a publishing house to buy a book license number, contrive to take over the management of a literary journal as a franchise (*chengbao*), or act as the producer/editor (*cehua bianji*) of certain books, thereby obtaining the necessary permits to print and distribute their purchased manuscripts. Because profit was the major motivation for these "cultural private entrepreneurs" (*wenhua getihu*), we can certainly say that they were the first to introduce the ideas, mind-set, and strategies of a market economy into the literary field, even if the taste and

quality of many of the books they actually produced were suspect.[6]

The result of these developments was that popular literature rapidly claimed much of the readership that literary journals once monopolized, leading to the dramatic drop that we noted in subscriptions to literary journals since the mid-1980s. In fact, by 1988, among the sixteen so-called literature and art magazines whose distribution numbered over 400,000 copies, none were pure literature journals. Instead, almost all were popular fiction and popular culture magazines, some of which now claimed enormous numbers of readers—such as *Story Session* (Gushi hui) (fig. 3), with 4,410,000 readers, and *Popular Cinema* (Dazhong dianying), with 1,650,000 readers. This is a striking change from 1983, when there were still seven "pure" literary journals among the fourteen literature and arts magazines with over 400,000 readers (ZGCB 1984: 680). Although some critics claimed that literary journals were losing ground because people had stopped reading, the truth is that people were still avid readers—they had simply altered their choice of reading matter when offered greater variety. And during the 1990s, the general trend favoring leisure and light reading did not change; there was simply a great increase in the variety of magazines to choose from (Jiang Zhenxin 1993*b*). According to the latest available statistics, from 1997, the magazines with the highest subscriptions were *Story Session* (a popular literary journal) with 3.92 million, *Reader* (a Chinese-style *Reader's Digest*) with 3.7 million, *Girlfriend* (Nüyou) a lifestyle magazine for young women, with 2.98 million, and *Family* (Jiating), a women's magazine focusing on love and marriage issues, with 2.64 million (Anon. 1998).

In addition to popular printed materials, new forms of mass media and entertainment, which spread at an incredible rate in the second half of the 1980s, also hurt the literary journal market. Chinese people, especially in the cities, could now choose from a wide range of entertainment options: numerous new national, local, and satellite TV stations; recorded music on CDs and audiotapes; live concerts by popular singers; a burgeon-

[6] **In China, publishing and distribution used to be monopolized by the state, and even today, the government attempts to prevent unofficial publishing by strictly allocating book license numbers (*shuhao*) to state-owned publishing houses. Without these numbers, books cannot, theoretically, be printed or sold. "Second channel" originally referred only to the private distribution outside the Xinhua bookstore system that was introduced as early as 1982. With the huge profits that publishing seemed to promise, many of these private booksellers ventured into unofficial and illegal publishing. Despite frequent government campaigns against "buying and selling book license numbers" (*maimai shuhao*) and "illegal publishing" (*feifa chuban*), this unofficial publishing has grown into a sophisticated and vibrant industry with more and more qualified editors becoming involved. Many Chinese books, especially the more popular titles, are brought out by private book dealers (also called "shadow publishers") who buy book license numbers from state-owned publishing houses. See the chapter "The Self-Liberalization of China's Mass Media" in Minxin Pei (1994), a lucid account of private-sector agents' penetration into government-owned publishing houses and the relationship between this process and the government's policies on reform and market economics. The persistence of second channel publishing is further evidence of the contradiction in the publishing field between government control and market logic.**

Figure 3: September 1993 cover of *Story Session*.

ing café, bar, and club scene, with its accompanying rock music, discos, and Karaoke; and, of course, movies produced in mainland China, Hong Kong and foreign countries, many of which became available on pirated VCDs or were shown at video halls. As with the popular fiction distributed by book dealers, most of these new cultural products were cleverly tailored to accommodate consumers' needs and were delivered in an efficient commercial way.

All these developments were clear signs of the formation of a new consumer-oriented cultural market, in which the economic principle of supply and demand took precedence, gradually challenging, though still sometimes forced to collaborate with, the existing state-planned cultural policies and regulations. Entrepreneurs and businesspeople became adept at finding ingenious methods to circumvent the various official restrictions to succeed in the new economic environment.

However, most literary journals were unable to respond to the demands of the new cultural market and to profit from the new opportunities that it presented. This was largely due to a third factor obstructing the reform of literary journals, namely, that they had inherited a comprehensive cultural system that was totally unsuited to survival in a competitive marketplace. Because, according to this system, each journal was completely supported by and responsible to the Writers Association or the Federation of Literary and Artistic Circles, and because its mandate was to showcase the "the cultural work achievements" of a particular region, journals tended to be writer and Party oriented, seldom considering whether or not their content appealed to the reader's interests. Likewise, there was little need for individuality in editorial ideas and vision. Even up to the mid-1990s, virtually all literary journals continued to follow the unimaginative format of "four dishes"—fiction, prose, poetry, and literary criticism—with little regard for attractive presentation. The complex hierarchical and regional organizational system also led to artificial separation within the literary world, resulting in many journals simply duplicating much of the

material that had appeared in other journals. What caused literary journals even greater problems in the competitive marketplace was their remarkably inefficient distribution system. Unlike the privately distributed popular reading materials already mentioned, the state-owned literary journals were sold only through the national post office, which even today has a monopoly on their distribution. As a result, most journals were simply unavailable in normal bookstores or retail outlets, especially outside the cities where they were published. Consequently, ordinary shoppers or impulse buyers would not find them on the shelves of stores, and even regular readers often could not easily obtain their copies. This situation certainly put these journals at a further disadvantage compared to the ubiquitous popular magazines. To take *Beijing Literature* as an example, even as recently as 1999, among eleven readers' letters published in the May issue, four complained about the difficulty of obtaining a retail copy of the journal even in relatively accessible places within Shandong, Henan, and Sichuan provinces. One might call this a "vicious circulation" problem, because unlike publishing houses, which were able to start self-marketing (*zi ban faxing*) from the late 1980s, most literary journals could not afford to organize their own marketing and distribution efforts, which might have increased their subscriptions. Yet private bookstores and bookstalls, which constituted an increasingly large proportion of retailers, were reluctant to take literary journals because of their low and unstable sales figures.

As mentioned, from the 1950s to the late 1970s, such a cultural system had served a useful purpose both for the government and for writers. Despite the relative disregard of these literary journals for readers' tastes and needs, people subscribed to them for lack of a better option. However, even after readership and income began to plummet during the mid-1980s, most literary journal editors seemed content to rely on government sponsorship to maintain their privileged and elitist position, and they saw little need for thoroughgoing reforms. As a result, whereas other newer

forms of journalism and mass media constantly looked outward to society to fulfill the needs of the reading public, literary journals followed a tendency among their writers to turn inward toward personal and individual concerns, and to become more and more elitist in their attitudes. They were filled with experimental works by a new generation of young writers, interspersed with difficult critical articles playing intellectual games and spouting academic jargon and theory. A major bifurcation between popular and "serious literature" occurred in the second half of the 1980s—something that had not really existed in socialist China up to that point—and most writers and editors viewed the market with barely disguised hostility. They felt that although "market-stall literature" (*ditan wenxue*) certainly sold well, it was tasteless, satisfying the most vulgar desires of the masses, whereas serious literature of high artistic quality would necessarily appeal only to a small group of discriminating readers. One might agree with such editors that quality literature is unlikely to appeal to a substantial readership, and that literary journals should focus instead on a small, well-informed, and cultivated elite. Unfortunately, in the competitive cultural market of the late 1980s and 1990s, only a tiny number of such elite journals could survive—certainly not the hundreds left over from the socialist system.

Another attitude inherited from the socialist cultural system that editors still had to contend with in the reform period was that literary journals, like other public institutions under the present "two-track system" (*shuang gui zhi*), were supposed to continue acting as exemplars of "socialist spiritual civilization." Thus, not only did they have to consider the "economic benefits" (*jingjixi xiaoyi*) of their work, they were also required to pay attention to its "social benefits" (*shehui xiaoyi*), which essentially meant keeping in step with shifting, sometimes contradictory, government policies and regulations. This double function resulted in occasional government censorship of journal content, especially those journals published close to the central government. For example, in the couple of years after

the 1989 student movement, *Beijing Literature* was punished for its radical "bourgeois liberalism"—in other words, for its relatively avant-garde content—in the 1980s, and its editors-in-chief Lin Jinlan and Li Tuo were replaced by Hao Ran, a former peasant writer who rose to prominence during the Cultural Revolution. The journal then adopted for an extended period a strictly politicized and conservative approach and lost much of the already declining elite readership that it had prior to 1989. By the early 1990s, the journal's reputation plummeted and subscriptions dropped to just a few thousand copies. Even though government supervision of literary journals generally became much less strict over the 1990s, factional fighting within the complex bureaucracies that control these journals has continued up to the present, often leading to mutual accusations of "spiritual pollution." Unable to ignore such accusations, the government must still occasionally step in to censor journals' content. In this case, the journals are their own worst enemies (Li 1999; Zhang 1999).

More significant than government censorship, however, is the "dead hand" structural legacy of socialist cultural institutions that continues to burden the entire administrative and personnel system of journals and inevitably results in economic inefficiencies. Although income from journal sales and government subsidies hardly covers the basic costs of running a journal (manuscript fees, production and printing costs, and editorial staff salaries), there are still other major expenses required to maintain employees of these institutions in the socialist lifestyle to which they have become accustomed, including housing, medical expenses, and other benefits, for present employees and retirees alike.

Facing this impossible situation, with countless mouths to feed and huge annual deficits, many literary journals have abandoned their elitist tastes and sold out to the lowest common denominator, reinventing themselves as popular magazines. It is here that the contradictory demands of market capitalism and welfare socialism emerge in highest relief. For example, the journal *Youth* (Qingchun), formerly known as *Nanjing Litera-*

ture and Art (Nanjing wenyi), was once a highly regarded "pure literature" journal that published the works of many promising young writers in the early 1980s. However, by the late 1980s, hit with government funding cuts, the journal suddenly had to deal with debts of around 70,000 yuan. The only option for its editorial board was to re-create the journal as a popular magazine, publishing so-called "social reportage" (*shehui jishi*)—a code word for sensationalist reports on crime, sex, and strange events, much in demand at that time. Although in 1994 eighteen renowned local writers signed a petition to "save *Youth*," arguing eloquently that this once pure literary journal had degenerated into vulgar market-stall literature and demanding a return to the good old days, the journal's editor-in-chief, rejoicing that the journal was once again profitable, made it clear that the market was ruthless and that his job was to help the journal and its employees survive in the new cultural environment, even if this required some painful changes (Xie 1994). In the 1990s, many more journals, especially those at the provincial and municipal levels, followed *Youth*'s lead, including *Tianjin Literature* (Tianjin wenxue), which was renamed *Youth Reading* (Qingchun yuedu), *Hunan Literature* (Hunan wenxue), now known as *Native Tongue* (Mu yu), *Sprout* (Mengya; from Shanghai), and *Flower Creek* (Huaxi; from Guizhou). All became transformed into popular magazines targeting, in particular, urban teenagers or other young adult readers with entertainment news, hot topical issues, fashion, and sentimental romance.

I have shown that from the mid-1980s on literary journals lost substantial numbers of readers to competitors in other forms of entertainment. This problem was exacerbated by unavoidable increases in journal cover prices because of deregulation of the prices of books and printing costs in the mid-1990s (Jiang Zhenxin 1993*a*) and by the slow pace of change among most journals in adapting to the market. As a result, the circulation of virtually every literary journal has continued to drop drastically every year for the past decade. Taking the premier journal *People's Litera-*

ture as an example, while its cover price rose from 0.40 yuan in 1980 to 1.20 yuan in 1988, 3.00 yuan in 1993, and 6.00 yuan in 1996, its circulation dropped from over 1.32 million in 1980 to 452,000 in 1983, and continued plummeting to less than 200,000 in 1988 (ZGCB 1981: 635; 1984: 680; 1989: 59). The most recent figures (from 1999) give the circulation as just 50,000 (Li 1999). But even with that number, *People's Literature* still ranks as one of the best performers among literary journals. The decline of *Beijing Literature* has been even more serious: in the late 1970s and early 1980s, its circulation was around 250,000 copies, but currently it is down to just 5,000 to 8,000 copies (Zhang 1999). And according to the latest available figures, the national average for literary journal subscriptions is now around 3,000 copies, with some as low as a few hundred, making them uneconomical even to print.[7]

Clearly those literary journals that wished to preserve their reputations and avoid the pulp fiction route had to make drastic changes to their whole operation just to survive in the marketplace. In the second part of this paper, I describe the often fascinating attempts that mainstream literary journals have made over the past decade or so to maintain their readership and to seek alternative sources of funding. I focus mainly on *Beijing Literature,* which, like most other literary journals of similar quality, has gradually and painfully learned to juggle the contradictory demands of the market, of business interests, of readers and writers, and of the government. In the process, however, its editors have had to broaden significantly their definition and concept of "literature" and have attempted to discover for themselves new social functions in a Chinese society that is markedly different from what it was twenty years ago.

Flirting with the Sirens of Commerce: Initial Experiments

Like many other literary journals, *Beijing Literature* has adopted various strategies to raise money and improve its subscription base. Some changes, especially the recent adoption of a new format and focus, have undoubt-

[7] See He 1998; Xiao 2000. My personal research, including interviews with editors, seems to confirm that these basic figures, although not precise, do reflect the reality of literary journal subscriptions today. *Beijing Literature* presently sells around 5,000 copies per month (interview with its president Ms. Zhang Dening, Dec. 1999); *Writer* (Zuojia) sold 8,000 copies per month in 1999 (interview with editor-in-chief and president Mr. Zong Renfa, May 2000); and *Lotus* (Furong), regularly sells 7,000 copies, according to Xiao Yuan, its editor-in-chief (Xiao 2000). Because the information is so recent, I haven't yet been able to find more precise statistics. There is a joke in Chinese literary circles: don't ask a lady her age, and don't ask the editor of a literary journal about its subscriptions! Other factors also make it difficult to find out true subscription figures; for instance, a journal might print more copies than the real subscription because printing houses won't do a print run if the number is too small.

edly made the journal more reader-friendly and given it a valuable niche in the cultural market. Others, such as the introduction of so-called "enterprise literature" (*qiye wenxue*) and certain ill-advised publicity gimmicks, may have brought in extra revenue, but arguably at the expense of the journal's overall quality and reputation, and blurring the distinction between literature and naked commerce.

The first advertisement in *Beijing Literature* appeared on the back cover of the January 1988 issue: an ad for the Polyester Fiber Factory of Yixing (fig. 4). Since then, almost every issue has carried such ads, mainly promoting industrial products ranging from fabrics and textiles to automobiles and electrical parts. These ads generally consist of a central piece of plain, dull prose introducing the company and its products, plus some uninspiring and often badly shot photos. Very often a photo of the company's general manager or president takes pride of place.

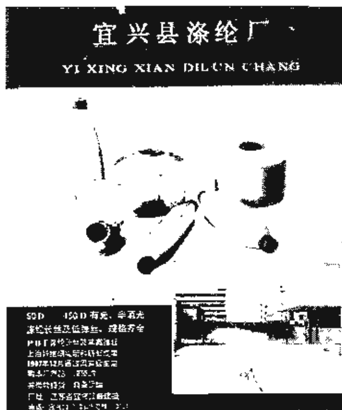

Figure 4: An ad for the Polyester Fiber Factory of Yixing (Yixing dilun chang) on the back cover of the January 1988 issue of *Beijing Literature*.

At first glance, selling advertising space might seem like a rational strategy for literary journals to raise funds. However, as the preceding examples illustrate, most products that the journal has helped to advertise would have had little appeal to readers. Few *Beijing Literature* subscribers, for instance, would rush to order industrial materials from the Fangshan Cement Plant (1989.9) or the Yanshan Iron and Steel Corporation (1989.11). Obviously, journal editors were willing to run ads for virtually any company that would pay for the space, no matter how incongruous the fit with the journal's content. And equally clearly, the reward for the company that advertised was not greater sales of its industrial products—because few readers would have been in a position to purchase them—but personal kudos for the companies' managers and presidents; hence, their prominently displayed photos.

Further evidence that such ads were designed largely to bolster the reputation of the sponsoring companies' managers and to attract financial support comes from the fact that around the same period promotional pieces also began to appear within literary journals under the eu-

phemistic heading of "enterprise literature," sometimes also referred to as "corporate alliance literature" (*lianyin wenxue*). As defined in one article on the trend:

> Corporate alliance literature refers to a marriage between writers and entrepreneurs or reformers. It is a product of the market economy. Some influential literary journals, such as *People's Literature, Beijing Literature*, and *Zhong Mountain* treat it as one of their major interests. Corporate alliance literature uses reportage techniques to describe the important developments taking place among enterprises, aiming to inspire other entrepreneurs to emulate their success. The writers are mostly cultural figures, some even well known authors. Corporate alliance literature has already built up a valuable treasure trove of spiritual resources for enterprise culture, while at the same time helping to support serious literature. Corporate alliance literature differs from both ordinary advertising formats and news reports in that it ultimately remains a literary genre: it exemplifies literature moving in sync with the times. (Ding 1998)

This account seems unduly optimistic about the effects of such writing on the development of literature. Unlike the reportage popular in the early 1980s, which often exposed serious social problems and voiced ordinary people's concerns and sometimes, of course, also praised the achievements of socialism, enterprise literature has instead focused on paying fulsome compliments to model enterprises and successful entrepreneurs who "rise above the waves of economic reform"—not surprisingly, because the journals depend on such entrepreneurs for financial support. For example, the reportage entitled "Red Flood" (Hong liu), which appeared in the September 1989 issue of *Beijing Literature*, waxes lyrical about the excellent management of the Yanshan Iron and Steel Complex, and the ad on the back cover is also for the Yanshan Iron and Steel Complex. Similar examples are easy to locate, coming as they do in almost every issue of the journal after 1989. Obviously, the advertisements and the "reportage" are closely

related, designed to form a promotional whole to praise the manager and the firm while advertising its products.[8]

Though this kind of "business alliance" between literary journals and industries began as a piecemeal and occasional practice, as can be seen from the initially inconsistent appearance of back cover ads and the surreptitious placement of articles under the established genre of "reportage," but gradually the ads became much more regular and the reportage section was flooded with promotional literature. Then in 1992, after Deng Xiaoping's southern tour and the Fourteenth Party Congress, the government urged cultural institutions (*wenhua shiye*) to transform themselves into cultural enterprises (*wenhua chanye*) and aim for self-sufficiency. They would now have to "make use of their cultural background to provide cultural services to (other industries)" (*yi wen yang wen*) and "diversify into other business ventures" (*duo ye zhu wen*) in order to make a profit. They would also have to develop "management and market consciousness" (*jingying yishi, shichang yishi*), and pay greater attention to "economic benefits" (*jingji xiaoyi*).[9] Because the government looked so favorably on "alliances between enterprises and cultural institutions" (*wen qi lian yin*)—sometimes even helping to arrange them—literary journals felt completely justified in greatly expanding their experiments in "enterprise literature" and using it as their main method for raising the money they desperately needed to survive. Besides the promotional articles, various "symposia on enterprise literature" were co-organized by journal editorial boards and enterprises, often attended by cultural officials from the Propaganda Department of the local municipal government and representatives of the Federation of Literary and Artistic Circles. And now, rather than waiting for writers and enterprises to come to them, journals began to act as aggressive commercial middlemen between the two groups. For example, in its last two issues of 1991, *Beijing Literature* ran a notice from the editorial board announcing that the journal was holding an enterprise literature contest entitled Enterprise Stars (*qiye zhi xing*) and that

[8] This kind of promotional reportage actually originated with newspapers, where "all-expenses-paid news reporting" emerged as early as the mid-1980s. By the late 1980s, the practice had clearly spread to other print media, including literary journals. The authors included journalists, professional and amateur writers, and even college students—whoever had access to potential sponsors and was willing and able to write a flattering piece. The host company would introduce its "achievements" to the writer, providing free transportation, meals, and accommodations during the visit, and the writer would then receive a fat commission fee on completion of the article, with the journal or newspaper in which the piece was published also handsomely rewarded with advertising fees. For a more detailed account of the development of this practice, see chapter 4, "Corruption: The Journalism of Decadence," in Zhao 1998.

[9] See the report of the speech given by Gao Zhanxiang, then Vice Minister of Culture, in *Wenxue bao* (Sept. 17, 1992). Gao's speech represented the official attitude toward reform of cultural institutions after Deng Xiaoping's "southern tour" and called for deepening market reforms. Reports and discussions on the establishment of a cultural market, contracting of professional writers, and writers engaging in business activities became ubiquitous topics in official literary news publications such as *Wenyi bao* in late 1992 and 1993.

the entries should consist of reportage about the achievements of the most promising companies in the nation (fig. 5). If published, both the writer and the subject of the report—represented by the entrepreneur in charge of the company—would then receive an Enterprise Star award. The notice also called for enterprises to express their willingness to be featured in this contest, and noted that if the enterprise could not produce a suitable article itself, the journal would be willing to provide a qualified writer to carry out this service. From 1992, the journal then began running a special section, also entitled Enterprise Stars, to publish the best entries from the competition. By this stage, enterprise literature had taken over virtually all the space in the journal previously allotted to true reportage—in contrast with only nine true reportage articles for all of 1992, there were thirty-one "enterprise literature" pieces that year, with five in the December 1992 issue alone. Because of its success, this special section was revived in 1996 as a regular feature, and it continues to the present, though in 1997 its name was changed to Grand Views (*da jingjie*).

We do not have space to include a complete example of enterprise literature, but to give a taste of the new genre and to show that even in more recent issues it remains unashamedly promotional, we quote some representative passages from a piece entitled "A Creative Star Shines its Heart Out: A Report on Factory Manager Guo Xuecai of the Changchun No. 1 Autoworks: Affiliated Autobody Branch Factory" from the "Grand Views" section of the August 1999 issue of *Beijing Literature*. The piece begins:

> The spring breeze of reform and opening up has blown over our whole great nation, and group after group of outstanding entrepreneurs have continuously emerged, like dazzling bright pearls, or like bamboo shoots after spring rains. These "bright pearly" entrepreneurs are a precious resource for our Party and people, and Comrade Guo Xuecai of the Changchun No.1 Autoworks: Affiliated Autobody Branch Factory is one of their most brilliant representatives. (Guo 1998: 110)

“企业之星”报告文学征文启事

在改革开放的大潮中，涌现出无数可歌可泣的优秀人物，他们是时代的弄潮儿，他们身上闪烁着迷人的时代光彩，企业家便是其中显赫的一群。文学作品理应描绘他们，讴歌他们，为他们树碑立传。

在所有文学样式中，报告文学是最灵便的“轻型武器”，它能最灵敏、最真实、最及时地反映社会主义时代的主旋律，拥有广泛的读者群。

为此，我刊从1992年元月起，举办“企业之星”报告文学征文评奖活动。

一、凡反映在改革开放中取得一定成绩的企业和企业家先进事迹的报告文学，特别是报导北京市市属企业和企业家的报告文学，均可参加评选。本刊将邀请知名作家、评论家和企业家组成评选委员会，于1992年年底评选出优秀作品和优秀主人公，给予奖励。

二、获奖作者将授予获奖证书和奖金。作品分为一、二、三等奖，一等奖一千元；二等奖五百元；三等奖三百元。获奖主人公（优秀企业家）授予荣誉证书和纪念奖。

三、应征作品要求内容翔实，描写具体，形象生动，富于文学性；篇幅力求短小精悍，以三四千字为宜。

四、为保证征文质量，凡企业事迹突出而本单位又无暇撰写者，本刊将邀请作家直接进行采写，欢迎来人来函联系。

《北京文学》杂志社

1991年11月

Figure 5: Ad for Enterprise Stars literature contest in the November 1991 issue of *Beijing Literature*.

The writer next gives some background about the company, and then relates a "moving" experience:

> The perceptive Guo Xuecai, noticing my excitement, said: "The weather is good today, it's not windy or raining. I'll give you a tour of the factory." I followed Guo into the workshop, and immediately I was completely dazzled: I stared with my mouth wide open and feasted my eyes. The whole workshop was totally outfitted with top quality modern equipment . . . and was extremely clean; there was no noise except for the quiet humming of machines, which the workers were operating in a relaxed but methodical manner. (Guo 1999: 110)

The piece continues for several more pages in the same "purple prose" manner, giving a rags-to-riches account of Guo Xuecai's life and his determined struggle to overcome all kinds of difficulties, eventually setting up this collective rural factory (*xiangban qiye*), perfecting its operation, and being showered with various entrepreneurial awards and accolades from the government.

Presumably, such flattery disguised as reportage attracts very few readers, apart from employees of the featured enterprises themselves. Yet the fact that enterprise literature has remained a constant feature of many literary journals for over a decade shows that it must be a profitable venture. Editors are doubtless willing to sacrifice some space for these articles in order to raise the money to continue publishing serious literature in the other sections of their journals, a practice the editor of *Beijing Literature* justified with the vivid phrase: "On the stage that money builds, literature can give its performance" (*jingji datai, wenxue changxi*).

Besides advertising and "enterprise literature," there were many other ways in which literary journals sought to develop corporate relations and improve their financial situations. These included various activities organized by the journal but sponsored by enterprises, such as symposia on certain writers or literary works, excursions for staff and writers to scenic

《北京文学》董事会隆重成立

①北京市委宣传部副部长、市文联党组书记马玉田在董事会成立大会上讲话。

②《北京文学》主编名誉董事长浩然在大会上发言。

③《北京文学》董事会董事长吴崇其在大会上发言。

④董事会副董事长曹印修和市文联党组副书记赵金九。

一九九三年十二月十一日，《北京文学》董事会在老舍茶馆隆重召开成立大会。在京的十余名董事、十位著名中青年作家、十几家新闻单位的记者和本刊全体同仁出席了大会。市委宣传部副部长、市文联党组书记马玉田代表文联党组向董事们颁发了聘书。本刊主编、名誉董事长浩然，董事长吴崇其，副董事长刘向阳，董事代表、老舍茶馆总经理尹盛喜和著名作家陈建功先后在会上作了热情洋溢的讲话。文联党组副书记赵金九、张淑兰，副董事长曹印修、许志远，董事李增海、李万柏、杜彤、王安琪、刘德俊和董事陈为东的代表出席了大会。

（亦兵）

⑤副董事长刘向阳在大会上发言。

⑥董事会副董事长许志远。

⑦董事会成立大会会场。

⑧市文联党组副书记张淑兰和董事

⑨陈建功代表与会作家发言。

⑩董事会董事、老舍茶馆总经理尹盛喜在大会上发言。

Figure 6: Appearing in the February 1994 issue of *Beijing Literature*, this page shows photographs from the founding meeting of the Beijing Literature Board of Directors, held at the Lao She Teahouse in Beijing on December 11, 1993.

retreats to "broaden their life experience," and especially literary competitions and awards, generally named after the sponsors. For example, in 1993, *Beijing Literature* set up a Suburban Tourism Cup (*jingjiao luyou bei*) for the best piece of fiction submitted to the journal; and in 1996, it announced the Shenhua Cup (*Shenhua bei*) for fiction and the Jiumuwang Cup (*Jiumuwang bei*) for lyric prose, each named after its corporate sponsor.

These efforts to formalize corporate relationships between journals and enterprises were most clearly manifested by the establishment of Boards of Corporate Directors (*dongshi hui* or *lishi hui*). For instance, starting from 1994, on the first page of every issue of *Beijing Literature* a list of its Board of Corporate Directors appeared, consisting of more than twenty entrepreneurs from all kinds of businesses, along with a few government officials and public figures (fig. 6). The members of this Board changed regularly, about once a year. Their stated purpose, according to an announcement in the April 1994 issue, was "to build a bridge between writers and entrepreneurs," which in turn would "provide writers with broader opportunities to gain real life experience of ongoing economic reforms" and would "help enterprises to build up their enterprise culture." However, despite these high-sounding words, far from being a group of business specialists who offered advice to the journals' editors on how best to improve their economic performance, as one might expect from a board of directors, these boards were just another strategy used by journals to attract financial sponsorship in conjunction with advertising and enterprise literature. In other words, a hefty financial contribution to the journal was the only requirement for joining its Board of Corporate Directors. Evidence for this comes from the random and constantly changing selection of enterprises that supplied the Board members, most of whose leaders were completely inexperienced in cultural ventures; and also from comparing the back cover advertisements and promotional pieces in relevant issues with the names of the directors on the Board. From this comparison, we can clearly see that the journal must have offered entrepreneurs a

Figure 7: An ad for the Beijing Badaling Tourism Corporation Ltd. on the back cover of the January 1994 issue of *Beijing Literature*.

Figure 8: On the inside back cover of the January 1994 issue of *Beijing Literature* appears a short biography of Qiao Yu (right), General Manager of the Beijing Badaling Tourism Corporation Ltd. To his left, is a regulated verse poem written by Qiao.

"package" in return for their generosity, namely, full-page advertisements on a number of issue back covers, a glowing reportage article, and one-year membership on the Board with their name prominently displayed inside the front cover of the journal.

Occasionally, as part of the deal, the journal would even include poems and other short pieces composed by the sponsoring entrepreneurs themselves. This was an especially effective strategy if a company manager or director had once been a "literary youth" who had never been able to fulfill his or her creative aspirations. For example, the back cover of the January 1999 issue of *Beijing Literature* contains a full-page ad for Beijing Badaling Tourism Corporation Ltd., including a picture of General Manager Qiao Yu prominently positioned (fig. 7). On the inside back cover, there is another picture of Qiao along with one of his poems in classical style, and a short resume stating that he belongs to the Beijing Writers' Association and has previously published a collection of poetry (fig. 8). Not surprisingly, Qiao Yu's name also appears at the top of the list of Board members as Chairman of the Board of Corporate Directors for 1999. Innovative and economically effective, this idea of featuring Boards of Corporate Directors was soon adopted by several other literary journals and became quite a common method for attracting financial sponsorship.

A related, but even more peculiar, phenomenon was the introduction by some journals of the misleadingly named position of "co-editor." Instead of constantly begging for money from several sponsors, a journal might be fortunate enough to find a single sponsoring enterprise willing to donate tens or hundreds of thousands of yuan to support it. As a reward for such magnanimity, this sponsor would then be given the title of "co-editor" of the journal, with its name printed next to the actual editorial committee on the front cover. For instance, the journal *Zhong Mountain* is presently "co-edited" by the Jiangsu Writers' Association and the Xuzhou Tobacco Company; *Master* (Dajia) by Yunnan People's Press and the Red River Tobacco Company; and *Mountain Flowers* (Shanhua) by the

Guizhou Writers' Association and the Huang Guoshu Business Group, to name just a few. Interestingly, many of these "co-editors" are tobacco companies, which are highly profitable businesses with few places to spend their advertising money because of restrictions on promoting tobacco. As with the Boards of Corporate Directors, there is no evidence that these "co-editors" play any direct role in deciding the journals' content, editorial policy, or even business practices. They are simply being acknowledged for their generosity.

Certainly, not all sponsors and "co-editors" of literary journals are companies engaged in completely unrelated businesses; some are cultural institutions themselves or media companies such as newspapers or TV stations, which actually make money in the burgeoning cultural market and have been encouraged by local governments to help out their poor literary cousins. For example, *Shanghai Literature* is sponsored by the Shanghai *Worker's News* (Laodong bao), and *Raindrops* (Yuhua) has been assisted by Jiangsu TV Station. Yet generally speaking, there is little evidence of corporate synergy between the majority of literary journals and their sponsors.

Part of the reason for the hands-off approach of sponsoring enterprises is the ambiguous identity of cultural institutions such as literary journals under the contradictory demands of the present "dual-track system" in China. Although the government encourages these institutions to become self-supporting enterprises, it still refuses to give up its ownership, and it continues to maintain tight control over the publishing industry, even after the Fifteenth Party Congress in 1997 when a massive plan was announced to convert state-owned enterprises into shareholding ones. This control is exerted through a strict license-number system that covers both journals and books and various subsequent campaigns against illegal publishing and selling of book-license numbers. This situation certainly discourages the kind of further privatization that has occurred in some other areas of business.

Also, most of these corporate relationships were not built on a foundation of real mutual interest, as is perhaps proved by their generally short-lived nature. Frequently, the sponsoring entrepreneur was playing the role of a cultural philanthropist, or in some cases merely acting from a sense of personal obligation to the journal president or editor-in-chief. So if the entrepreneur's company ran into difficulties and began to lose money, or if there was a change of personnel on either the company's or the journal's side, the sponsorship deal would normally fall by the wayside (Li 1999). And as we noted, the commercial returns of advertising in literary journals would be negligible because of their low readership and because readers of literature were not necessarily target customers of the sponsor. Overall, therefore, these experimental alliances between literary journals and randomly selected enterprises were more like one-night stands than long-term relationships: they failed to benefit the sponsors in any tangible economic way, and they did not lead to any thoroughgoing changes in the management practices of the journals to make them more efficient, profitable, and independent.

Branching Out: Other Money-Making Ventures

Besides alliances with enterprises, journal editors dreamed up many other ideas, some quite ludicrous, in an attempt to transform their journals into profitable businesses. For instance, after the government encouraged cultural institutions to offer various social services and to develop culture-related businesses, the journal *Sprout* (Mengya) tried to develop its own "service industry," including book and magazine retail, investing in the stock market, and a restaurant business (Dou 1992). In many cases, far from improving the situation of literary journals, these desperate "money-making ventures" greatly damaged their collective image without really stemming the tide of their debts.

This negative effect was especially evident when journals tried to exploit the reputation and appeal of literature among ordinary people who

still saw publishing in a literary journal as a great honor. For example, journals arranged various correspondence courses (with substantial fees) in creative writing (*chuangzuo hanshou ban*); they also organized symposia or training sessions (*bi hui, gaigao hui*), administered literary competitions and awards, and published collections of winning works. These kinds of practices had been introduced in the late 1980s by prestigious journals and institutions, such as *People's Literature* and the Lu Xun Literary Academy, with the serious purpose of training young writers. However, they gradually deteriorated into shady cultural business ventures used by many journals simply as means of making money. Some editors were even willing to publish eager contributors' writings in their journals or in special anthologies in return for a fee—although they disguised the fact that this was simply vanity publishing by referring to these fees as "tuition," "registration," or "sales" costs. For example, in the March 17, 1993 issue of *Literature Press* (Wenxue bao) there is an advertisement for the Correspondence Center of *Spring Breeze* (Chunfeng), a monthly literary journal based in Liaoning Province. The ad states that the tuition fee for their Advanced Class is 100 yuan, and that students in that class can submit ten pieces of writing for tutorial comments, the best of which will be selected for publication in the journal. The Center also advertised a Popular Fiction class, with a 100-yuan tuition fee. Students would submit one piece of fiction at the end of the class, and the journal would arrange to publish a special collection of these pieces.

These practices were so poorly regulated that they soon attracted the attention of individual charlatans, who made money by inventing fake literary organizations or journals, and deceiving naive contributors from far-flung regions by promising to publish their writings for a fee.[10] In 1993, one obscure group advertised a Contest to Discover One Hundred Chinese Poet Laureates. Each entrant would pay an 18.5-yuan fee, and when the contest was completed they would receive a copy of the *Encyclopedia of Modern Chinese Poetry* in which the poems of these Poet Laureates would

[10] *Wenxue bao* published several articles on these practices. See a series of reader's responses and discussion in issues from April 28 to June 16, 1994; also a report entitled "Jingti daitu zuoan wentan" (Watch the cheats who fool around in the literary field), by Gu Lieming, in *Wenxue bao* (Oct. 28, 1993).

be collected. The contest turned out to be a scam, and no such *Encyclopedia* was ever published (Gu 1993). The situation became so serious that in 1994 a forum called "Weinai haishi chouxue" (Feeding or drawing blood?), initiated by letters from a group of angry readers deceived by such practices, was held by *Literature Press* to expose the scams of various literary organizations and journals. However, the negative publicity surrounding such shady ventures did little to help the circulation figures of the more reputable journals. At best, it may have been the final straw persuading many editors that a more rational approach to reform was necessary.

A More Businesslike Approach to Literary Journal Publishing

By the late 1990s, after several disheartening years spent begging for money from rich entrepreneurs, and after taking stock of the increasing commercialization of literature and development of a cultural market in China, the editors of most literary journals were forced to rethink their piecemeal approach to economic reform. Many concluded that solving their root problems required much more serious engagement with the cultural market and radical structural changes to compete with other cultural products in that market. Specifically, they realized the need for a more business-oriented editorial attitude and an effective and wholesale overhaul of their management practices. In this final section, I outline some of these changes by drawing examples from *Beijing Literature*, with further evidence from other provincial literary journals.[11] One can see these changes in four main categories: broadening the definition of literature; effectively marketing the journals to a target readership—in other words, becoming more "reader friendly"; improving their journals' appearance and packaging; and developing synergistic alliances with businesses in related fields.

The first noticeable change has been to abandon a conventional and narrow definition of literature and to embrace the concept of "literature broadly defined" (*da wenxue*), an approach that allows the journals to include more general, culturally oriented content that will appeal to a

[11] As I mention at the beginning of the essay, the case of such provincial journals is especially instructive because they are in the awkward situation of being neither "highbrow" nor "lowbrow" enough. The top-ranked national journals, because of their previous reputation and loyal readership built up over the years, still have considerable "invisible capital" (*wuxing ziben*), which is sufficient to keep them running. For instance, the healthy sales of *Harvest*

wider audience, as well as to promote new genres that are marginal, mixed, or undefined. The rationale behind this change is that since 1989, although popular culture circles seemed to have adopted an unwritten "contract" with the government to avoid political subjects—a development that allowed nonthreatening, profit-seeking press media such as entertainment newspapers and sensationalist magazines to bloom—there was still much debate among educated people about intellectual issues and broad social problems that in some cases indirectly challenged the political status quo. Literary journals picked up on this interest by including more articles on such issues. The trend was started by *Frontiers* (Tianya), a literary journal from the remote southern special economic zone of Hainan Island, and was masterminded by two well-known writers, Han Shaogong and Jiang Zidan. Since changing its format in 1996, *Frontiers* has developed various "brand name" columns such as Folk Language and Literature (*minjian yuwen*) and Writer's Position (*zuojia lichang*). The former column presents works by nonprofessional writers dealing with everyday life: diary extracts, letters, and oral literature. The latter column publishes different writers' opinions on social and cultural issues and current affairs. The issues raised in these columns are relevant to readers' lives, often dealing with politically sensitive and pressing cultural questions; the opinions presented are frequently insightful and positive; and the journal editors lead the discussions in a serious and careful way, always stressing the need to communicate with a mass audience, not just with a narrow circle of intellectuals. As a result of these innovations, *Frontiers* quickly attracted readers from many social groups and established its reputation on the cutting edge of the literary publishing field.

Inspired by the success of *Frontiers*, many other journals also ventured out from their narrow definitions of literature and staked their claims over the latest cultural trends, hoping to develop brand recognition and loyalty among their readers. For example, from 1999, *Beijing Literature* began to run radical debates on intellectual history and cultural/political is-

have allowed it to avoid, even in recent years, running advertisements or publishing enterprise reportage. Moreover, some of these larger journals are associated with publishing houses, and therefore face less financial pressure and distribution problems as compared with journals attached to the Writers Association or the Federation of Literary and Artistic Circles system. For instance, *City of Flowers*, affiliated with Huacheng Publishing House in Guangzhou, is another journal that can afford not to print advertisements or publish enterprise literature. These top-ranked journals see little need for now to drastically alter their approach, because their editors realize that changes done improperly might lose them their present readers without necessarily attracting new ones. For many provincial journals, however, by the1990s their circulation was no longer adequate to support their costs, and government funding also covered only a small proportion of their expenses. At the same time, their editors refused to allow their relatively reputable journals to be transformed into low-grade pulp fiction rags, as happened with many local literary magazines. Their challenge was thus to remain quality literary journals while becoming more marketable.

sues, and included pieces of incisive cultural criticism by controversial young scholars such as Yu Jie and Mo Luo, whose works have frequently been banned by the government. The list of sections in the February 1999 issue of *Beijing Literature* gives a good sense of the broad cultural exploration promoted by the journal: there are regular columns entitled Voices (*shengyin*), Thought (*sixiang*), Today's Writing (*jinri xiezuo*), Contending Ideas (*baijia zhengyan*), Reinterpreting the Classics (*jiuwen xindu*), Memories (*jiyi*), and Observing the Century (*shiji guancha*). Among these, only Today's Writing presents short stories and fictional prose works; the other sections all concern themselves with intellectual debates, many of which have a strong undertone of criticism and challenge to Communist totalitarianism. For instance, a representative article in Voices is entitled "The Unpleasant Sound of the Owl" and discusses the role of intellectuals as cultural critics, especially critics of the power hierarchy. Likewise, three articles on the Czech dissident writer and statesman Vaclav Havel appear in the Thought section; they include a translation of Havel's 1978 essay "Power of the Powerless," which analyzes totalitarian regimes and the value of resisting them. An article controversially entitled "Who Misunderstood Marx?" appears in Contending Ideas; and a similarly suggestive piece entitled "Dangerous Minds and Free Speech" appears in the section "Reinterpreting the Classics."

Other journals experimented with a similar broader concept of literature that included nonfiction texts or hybridized genres (*kua wenti*), and sometimes even visual artworks and critical articles on painting and music. To give some examples, since 1999, *Yellow River* (Huanghe), in Shanxi Province and *Storyteller* (Xiaoshuo jia) in Tianjin have in succession refocused almost entirely on literary or cultural history and social criticism. They often dig out little-known historical facts and controversial issues to attract "intellectuals whose education is above secondary school level," according to the editors. Likewise, *Mountain Flower* from Guizhou and *Lotus* from Hunan have also ventured into areas beyond pure literature: the

front pages of *Mountain Flower* are now a gallery for contemporary avant-garde art work accompanied by a regular section on art criticism; and *Lotus* has begun to showcase Art Frontiers (*yishu qianyan*)—reports on the unofficial arts scene ranging from rock music and fringe plays to independent films.

These content changes are related to a new awareness among editors of the need to target particular social groups or promote specific kinds of writers. For instance, *Mountain Flower* claims to be the voice of the "young generation of writers born since the 1960s" (*wan sheng dai*), especially those from Nanjing, and *Lotus* has set up a section called Remodelling the Post-70s Generation (*chongsu qishi niandai hou*), headed by young female writers from Shanghai and Beijing. Both journals aim to appeal to young Generation X readers with their more lively and fashionable presentation.

One of the most interesting examples of successful targeting of specific readers is the recently remodeled *Writer* (Zuojia), a former elite literary journal from Changchun, which now aims exclusively to appeal to young urban professionals. Since the first issue of 2000, the journal's editors have altered their stated mission from "*Writer* for writers" to "*Writer* for readers and the market," and have created a fresh, "Yuppie" look for the journal, in blatant imitation of *The New Yorker* (Zong 2000). The journal's promotional slogan even brazenly announces that this is "the new *Writer*, a magazine which deserves the name *Chinese New Yorker*." Besides highly selective fiction and poetry in sections entitled Golden Short Stories (*jin duanpian*) and Poet's Space (*shiren kongjian*), the journal includes a new column on Material Life (*wuzhi shenghuo*), reporting on trendy places and recent parties in Shanghai, and various sections surveying the latest literary and artistic trends on the international scene, with catchy titles such as New Yorker Miscellany (*Niuyueke zahui*), On the Banks of the River Seine (*Sainahe pan*), and Non-Native Speaker (*fei muyu*). Reader's survey forms are also inserted between the pages for the editors to find out what kinds of articles and features the readers like and dislike, and what fea-

tures of the magazine attract them.

These content changes in journals, together with the topical, attention-grabbing section headings replacing the previously uniform format of fiction, prose, poetry, and criticism, demonstrate that literary journals are now much more eager to stand out from the crowd. Their editors are also much more aware of the need to be reader-oriented in order to attract paying subscribers back from popular entertainment newspapers and magazines.

Besides developing a more attractive content, many editors also realized that they had to improve the basic appearance and packaging of their journals. Previously, "serious" literary journals seldom displayed any concern about their appearance. The format shared by virtually all journals was simple to the point of monotony, paper quality was poor, and there were hardly any pictures. But in the last few years, many journals have made great efforts to improve their packaging and printing, and to develop a more refined, even glossy, style in order to retain readers who might otherwise be tempted to subscribe to attractive-looking fashion and style magazines and sensational color tabloids. Besides the innovative cover designs and attention-grabbing headings already mentioned, many journals now use full-color printing on imported glossy paper, with plenty of eye-catching pictures and photos to liven up their look. *Master* (Dajia), published by Yunnan People's Publishing House since 1994, was one of the first to introduce this format revolution. It replaced the Chinese 16 mo (sextodecimo, the page size of a book/journal composed of printer's sheets folded into sixteen leaves or thirty-two pages) size that was uniform among literary journals with International 16 mo, and printed the journal on high-density paper. The format was also innovative, with large marginal spaces filled with notes and summaries, and with elegant and unique art design for both the cover and the body of the journal. Following the example of *Master*, other journals such as *Mountain Flower*, *Lotus*, and *Writer* have competed to "change their face" (fig. 9). *Writer* now begins and ends

Figure 9: Cover of the May 2001 issue of *Lotus*. On the cover is a model named Yang Qi.

with several beautifully presented full-page advertisements for Eastern and Western commodities, most of them expensive fashion accessories and luxury products that would appeal to upwardly mobile urban readers. The professional graphic design and glossy full-color printing could compete with even top imported fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, and the journal hires graphic artists and prints the journal in southern cities such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, where printing technology is more advanced.

Of course, such impressive changes could not occur without major external funding and the support of related businesses such as advertising and media companies. This is the third way in which the more progressive journals have attempted to adapt to the market. Much of the success of *Writer*'s transformation, for instance, is due to its new model of synergistic alliance with business that will likely be imitated by other journals in the near future. In the case of *Writer*, the editors developed a partnership with Panorama Cultural Development Corp. Ltd. (Quanjing wenhua fazhan youxian gongsi), an advertising company in Shanghai. Panorama uses its specialist expertise and business contacts to look after the graphic design and the later-stage production of the journal, and acts as the journal's advertising agent, leaving the editors free to focus on content. This cooperation has obviously improved the quality of the advertisement section and the journal's overall look. Yet the partner company also takes charge of retail distribution in southern China, where it is based. Although the journal is still distributed primarily through the postal system, people can now obtain *Writer* directly from various retail outlets, such as supermarkets, grocery stores, bookstores, and magazine stands at railway stations and airports.

Borrowing from more popular publishing and cultural enterprises, literary journal editors have also drastically improved their methods of self-promotion. In particular, they have invented or imitated various hyping techniques and publicity gimmicks to market their journals and create excitement among potential readers (*guanggao xiaoying*). For instance, one

of the problems many literary journals face today is a lack of quality manuscripts because of their relatively low manuscript fees compared to book publishing or TV screenwriting. As a result, some journals have set up literary competitions with huge awards to attract famous writers, whose works will in turn help to attract more readers. Following the lead of *Master*, which called for manuscripts for the Red River Literary Award in 1995–1996, sponsored by Red River Tobacco Company, and gave the largest ever literary award (100,000 yuan) to Mo Yan's novel *Big Breasts and Plump Buttocks* (Fengru feitun), many other journals have competed to give away "monster awards" (*ju jiang*) or high manuscript payments. Likewise, as far back as 1993, *Guangzhou Literature and Art* (Guangzhou wenyi) raised the rates of its regular manuscript payments to 100 yuan per thousand characters, more than three times the national average of 30 yuan (fig.10). This was obviously a device to make it the highest-paying journal in the country, and therefore much more attractive to the best writers (Jiang Xun 1993). Even the prestigious *Contemporary*, a journal affiliated with People's Literature Publishing House, began in 2000 to advertise a Contemporary Literary Award of 100,000 yuan. This so-called "relay award" (*lali sai*) will be given annually to the writer whose work has been published in *Contemporary* and who is judged to have defeated all five other candidates selected in a bi-monthly contest. Behind their claims that such literary prizes and high payments for manuscripts are intended "to show the value of quality literature," it is clear that journals and their sponsors are in fact taking advantage of the enormous publicity surrounding these gimmicks to advertise for their sponsoring companies while attracting both writers and readers to the journal. Indeed, perhaps the most blatant illustration of the connection between such contests and journal fund-raising is *Beijing Literature*'s Enterprise Stars Competition described here. There the quality of the literature obviously takes second place to the amount of support offered by the enterprises in question.

Figure 10: Inside cover of *Guangzhou Literature and Art* (Dec. 2000)—an ad promoting the journal's move into the twenty-first century.

Another common promotional technique is for editors to claim that

they have "discovered" hot new authors and the latest exciting trends in writing. For example, during the brief period from 1994 to 1995, *Beijing Literature* promoted New Experience Fiction (*xin tiyan xiaoshuo*), *Shanghai Literature* advocated so-called New Urban Fiction (*xin shimin xiaoshuo*), *Zhong Mountain* raved about New State Literature (*xin zhuangtai wenxue*), *Spring Breeze* (Chunfeng) coined the term Journalistic Fiction (*xinwen xiaoshuo*), and *Fiction World* (Xiaoshuo lin) claimed to be introducing a new genre of TV Fiction (*TV xiaoshuo*). Vaguely defined and loosely coalesced, these vivid-sounding labels were much more effective for promoting the journals, making them appear on the cutting edge of fashion, than for encapsulating actual changes in literary styles.

Finally, a publicity gimmick favored by virtually all these journals is, not surprisingly, to make a big splash in the media about all their radical format and content changes in the hope of piquing the curiosity of new readers. Many of the "reports" and "news stories" about these changes are actually written by the journal editors themselves and then published in other magazines or newspapers. This practice is known as "soft advertising," and is also a common phenomenon in book promotion today. It has resulted in the dramatic expansion of newspaper supplement sections and book review papers. To give just one example, the first issue of *Lotus* in 2000 contained an entire section citing fulsome media praise, drawn from twenty-seven newspapers and magazines of the previous year, for the recent format changes made to *Lotus*. In just two weeks at the end of June and beginning of July, over a dozen articles were published in major newspapers such as *Guangming Daily* (Guangming ribao), *China Reading Weekly* (Zhonghua dushu bao), *Literature Press* (Wenxue bao), *Chinese Cultural Press* (Zhongguo wenhua bao), and *Chinese Book Business Review* (Zhongguo tushu shangbao), many of them with virtually identical wording.

Conclusion: Extinct Dinosaurs or Soaring Birds?

How effective will these various format and content changes be in saving literary journals from extinction? Much seems to depend on how "literature"—a concept that itself keeps changing—sells in the new cultural market, as well as the amount of leeway journal editors are allowed in pushing through their reforms. Whereas journals such as *Foshan Art and Literature*, a popular Guangdong literary magazine with a circulation of some 500,000 in the last few years, are able to control all aspects of their businesses, from management to artistic conception, printing, and distribution, other journals closer to the central government, such as *Beijing Literature*, must take care not to overstep boundaries, even when desperate to stem the tide of their losses.[12] After *Beijing Literature's* fifth issue of 1999 was recalled and all copies confiscated, because of a radical article extolling democracy, the editorial board had to engage in self-criticism, a bitter reminder that they were still living in the nation's capital "at the feet of the emperor" (*zai tianzi jiao xia*). In subsequent issues, some of the journal's more radical sections, such as Voices and Thought, disappeared.

Thus, even as Zhong Renfa, current president and editor-in-chief of *Writer*, brags about *Writer*'s soaring sales figures,[13] Li Jingze, a veteran editor at *People's Literature*, declares sarcastically, "this is just the last leap before the fall" (*miewang qian de changhuang yi tiao*), and doubts whether such figures can be sustained beyond the initial stages of curiosity for a new product. Having witnessed so many waves of prosperity and decline in the past two decades, Li paints a gloomy picture of the future of literary journals in the market: "Where will the market economy bring literary journals? To their deathbed! In the end, at most two or three literary journals will manage to survive. A huge dinosaur is expiring" (Li 1999).

Yet perhaps Li's prediction is too pessimistic, at least for journals such as *Beijing Literature* that are still bravely struggling to adapt to the new realities. After its run-in with the government, and after serious discussions about how to jump-start its stalled circulation, the journal has appar-

[12] Although claiming to be the "No. 1 Literature and Art magazine in circulation," there is controversy about whether *Foshan Art and Literature* can be counted as a literary magazine at all because of its "popular" taste and hybrid genres. But this controversy itself demonstrates that the idea of the "literary journal" is undergoing a significant conceptual shift, and has become a very loosely defined, perhaps indefinable, genre.

[13] Following its much-publicized changes, the journal's circulation jumped from 8,000 to 18,000 in just the first three months of 2000, despite its "handsome" price hike from 6.00 to 14.80 yuan.

ently now found an acceptable middle path between the demands of politics and the market. It has once again made literature rather than cultural criticism its focus, but is redoubling its efforts to appeal to a broader readership. These efforts are reflected in the new format of 2001, most notably in sections such as Popular Fiction (*haokan xiaoshuo*) and Best-selling Writers (*zuojia renqi bang*). The former follows on the heels of a successful year-long forum entitled How to Make Fiction Readable (*xiaoshuo ruhe cai neng haokan*), which invited writers, critics, and readers to give their opinions on ways to produce more appealing literary works. And the latter section obviously is intended to capitalize on the pull of popular writers by publishing their recent work and making them the focus of opinion pieces. The new format also includes a series of short pieces under the heading Extraordinary Writings from the Internet (*wangluo qiwen*), consisting of humorous and entertaining comments on a wide range of topics, from Chinese football to public figures, freshly "downloaded" from the Internet, a popular new medium.[14]

At the same time, *Beijing Literature* has not abandoned its controversial stance on contemporary political issues. Although careful to avoid the kinds of sensitive national topics that would lead to government reprisals, the journal has attempted to revive the reputation of its "reportage," a genre overwhelmed since the late 1980s by the shameless promotional hype of "enterprise literature." The new Reportage section in the journal imitates the form of recent high-quality investigative reports in newspapers such as Guangzhou's *Southern Weekend* (Nanfang zhoumo) and programs such as "Focus and Investigation" (Jiaodian fangtan) on Chinese Central TV, both of which have attracted a loyal following for their coverage of pressing social problems. For example, *Beijing Literature's* first issue of 2001 includes a feature article with the promising title "Inspection: The Latest Report on Upright Party Secretary Jiang Ruifeng's Anti-Corruption Measures" (Xiafang: heilian shuji Jiang Ruifeng fan fubai zui xin baogao). Recently it has also published a series of investigative reports on

[14] While on the subject of the Internet, I should mention a new initiative announced by some thirty journals to collaborate in putting their complete contents on the web. This is a further example of literary journals attempting to modernize their approach and appeal to new readers. See the Chinese Literary Journals Internet Alliance website at http://www.nethong.com.

the reform of high school education. Because such issues, although controversial, are in accord with the government's stated policies, there is little risk that the journal will be penalized for dealing with them, as it was with its earlier veiled attacks on the current leadership.

Another technique that *Beijing Literature* has borrowed from competitors is to pay more attention to its readers. It now puts a Reader's Satisfaction Survey on the last page of every issue (fig. 11), and there is a regular column entitled Paper Exchange (*zhishang jiaoliu*) where readers' letters are published, with many commenting on the form and content of the journal itself. There is also a so-called Hotline (*re xian*) on the first page of the journal, where readers can direct questions to the journal's contributors and receive a response.

Finally, *Beijing Literature*'s editorial board now seems to be adopting a much more businesslike and sensible attitude toward its contributors

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（可以复制）

一、您对本期的总体评价如何（请在选项打"✓"）。

A、好　B、一般　C、差　D、总体打分______(100分制)

文字说明：______________________

二、您喜欢的和不喜欢的栏目是哪一个（请在选项打"✓"或"×"）

A、现实中国
B、作家人气榜
C、好看小说
D、新人自荐
E、真情写作
F、文化观察
G、网络奇文
H、纸上交流
I、阅读参考
J、热线

三、您最喜欢哪篇文章？

1、
2、
3、
4、
5、
6、
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A、性别___　年龄___　文化程度_____　居住地__________　职业______

五、您阅读《北京文学》的途径（请在选项打"✓"）

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Figure 11: A reader satisfaction survey in the January 2001 issue of *Beijing Literature*.

and sponsors. It promises that all submissions from writers will receive a response within one or two months, with comments and suggestions for revision from the editors. And in July 2001, the journal ran a notice inviting applications from distribution agents and retailers, a tacit admission that the journal needs to rationalize its marketing and distribution efforts to keep pace with its competitors.

One might conclude, therefore, that far from dealing a deathblow to the journal's efforts at reform, *Beijing Literature*'s problems have caused its editors to adopt a much more effective business model without sacrificing its reputation as a site for meaningful and incisive social commentary. We must wait to see whether these changes will result in corresponding improvements in the journal's subscription figures.

As is clear from my discussion, the influence of commercialization on literary journals in China has up to now been complex and often unpredictable, with both positive and negative results. Whereas many formerly "pure" elite literary journals have been forced to downgrade themselves into popular, tabloid-like magazines, others have actually managed to thrive in the new environment, attracting respectable numbers of regular readers. One thing is abundantly clear: no literary journal can afford to ignore the changes brought about by the new cultural market in China and still hope to survive in the long term. Almost without exception, journals have already had to incorporate major changes, to both their institutional and their business frameworks, and perhaps even more significantly, to their conception of what constitutes "pure" or "serious" literature. At the same time, as the example of *Beijing Literature* demonstrates, most have also had to adjust their soaring marketing visions to take account of their continuing duty toward the ideals of socialism.

Only time will tell whether the old "dinosaur" of the socialist literary journal system can complete its evolution into a thriving competitor in the cultural marketplace. Nevertheless, we can be sure that in the coming years, the concept of literature itself will be constantly reinvented, just as it has

been over the past decade, in response to the far-reaching social transformations taking place in today's China.

Glossary

baijia zhengyan	百家爭言
baozhuang chaozuo	包裝炒作
baogao wenxue	報告文學
Beijing wenxue	北京文學
bi hui	筆會
cehua bianji	策劃編輯
chanye hua	產業化
chengbao	承包
chongsu qishi niandai hou	重塑七十年代後
Chun feng	春風
chun wenxue qikan	純文學期刊
chuangzuo hanshou ban	創作函授班
Dajia	大家
da jingjie	大境界
da wenxue	大文學
daxing wenxue kanwu	大型文學刊物
Dazhong dianying	大眾電影
Dangdai	當代
dang zheng jiguan	黨政機關
di er qudao	第二渠道
ditan wenxue	地攤文學
"Dongtian de tonghua"	冬天的童話
Duzhe	讀者
duannai	斷奶
dongshi hui	董事會
duo ye zhu wen	多業助文
fei muyu	非母語
Fengru feitun	豐乳肥臀
Foshan wenyi	佛山文藝
Furong	芙蓉
gai ban	改版
gaigao hui	改稿會
Gushi hui	故事會
guanggao xiaoying	廣告效應
Han Shaogong	韓少功
Hao Ran	浩然
haokan xiaoshuo	好看小說

He Chengwei 何承偉
"Hong liu" 紅流
Hunan wenxue 湖南文學
Hua cheng 花城
jihua jingji 計劃經濟
jiyi 記憶
Jiating 家庭
Jiang Zidan 蔣子丹
"Jiaodian fangtan" 焦點放談
Jiefangjun wenyi 解放軍文藝
jin duapian 金短篇
Jingu chuanqi 今古傳奇
jinri xiezuo 今日寫作
jingji datai, wenxue changxi 經濟搭台, 文學唱戲
jingji xiaoyi 經濟效益
Jingjiao luyou bei 京郊旅游杯
jingying yishi 經營意識
Jiumuwang bei 九牧王杯
jiuwen xindu 舊文新讀
ju jiang 巨獎
lali sai 拉力賽
kua wenti 跨文體
Kunlun 崑崙
lishi hui 理事會
Li Jingze 李敬澤
Li Tuo 李陀
lianyin wenxue 聯姻文學
Lin Jinlan 林斤瀾
Mengya 萌芽
miewang qian de changhuang yi tiao 滅亡前的猖惶一跳
minjian yuwen 民間語文
Mo Luo 摩羅
Mo Yan 莫言
Mu yu 母語
Nanfang zhoumo 南方週末
Niuyueke zahui 紐約客雜燴
Nü you 女友
peixun ban 培訓班
qiye wenxue 企業文學

qiye zhi xing	企業之星
Qiao Yu	喬雨
Qingchun	青春
Quanjing wenhua fazhan youxian gongsi	全景文化發展有限公司
re xian	熱線
Renmin wenxue	人民文學
"Ren yao zhi jian"	人妖之間
Sainahe pan	塞納河畔
Shan hua	山花
Shanghai wenxue	上海文學
"Shanghen"	傷痕
shangshan xiaxiang zhishi qingnian	上山下鄉知識青年
shehui jishi	社會記實
shehui xiaoyi	社會效益
Shenhua bei	神華杯
shengyin	聲音
shichanghua	市場化
shichang jingji	市場經濟
shichang yishi	市場意識
shiji guancha	世紀觀察
shiren kongjian	詩人空間
shiye danwei	事業單位
Shiyue	十月
Shouhuo	收穫
shu hao	書號
shu shang	書商
shuang gui zhi	雙軌制
sixiang	思想
tizhi gaige	體制改革
Tian ya	天涯
Tianjin wenxue	天津文學
tongsu duwu	通俗讀物
tuo gou	脱鉤
wan sheng dai	晚生代
wangluo qiwen	网絡奇文
wenhua chanye	文化產業
wenhua shiye	文化事業
wenlian	文聯
wen qi lian yin	文企聯姻

Wenxue bao 文學報
wenxue tizhi 文學體制
Wenyi bao 文藝報
wenyi getihu 文藝個體戶
wuxing ziben 無形資本
wuzhi shenghuo 物質生活
"Xiafang: heilian shuji Jiang Ruifeng fan fubai zui xin baogao" 下訪: 黑臉書記姜瑞峰反腐敗最新報告
xiangban qiye 鄉辦企業
xiaoshuo ruhe cai neng haokan 小說如何才能好看
Xiaoshuo yuebao 小說月報
Xiaoshuo xuankan 小說選刊
xie ban 協辦
xin shimin xiaoshuo 新市民小說
xin tiyan xiaoshuo 新體驗小說
xinwen xiaoshuo 新聞小說
xin zhuangtai wenxue 新狀態文學
yansu wenxue qikan 嚴肅文學期刊
"Yi ge dongtian de tonghua" 一個冬天的童話
yishu qianyan 藝術前沿
yi wen yang wen 以文養文
Yu hua 雨花
Yu Jie 余杰
Yu Luojin 遇羅錦
zai tianzi jiao xia 在天子腳下
zanzhuzhe 贊助者
zhishang jiaoliu 紙上交流
Zhong shan 鐘山
Zhongguo tushu shang bao 中國圖書商報
Zhongguo zuojia xiehui 中國作家協會
Zhonghua dushu bao 中華讀書報
Zhonghua quanguo wenxue yishu jie lianhe hui 中華全國文學藝術界聯合會
Zhongpian xiaoshuo xuankan 中篇小說選刊
zhuanye zuojia 專業作家
Zhuomuniao 啄木鳥
zi ban faxing 自辦發行
zi fu ying kui 自負盈虧
Zong Renfa 宗仁發

Zuojia	作家
zuojia renqi bang	作家人气榜
Zuojiang wenyi	左江文藝
zuo xie	作協

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