

ing panel, particularly Layton's remarks, seem to have raised a few major issues which the volume itself does not sufficiently emphasize. For instance, the question of what Klein has to communicate to a reader who happens to be non-Jewish, non-Montrealer and non-Canadian. Nonetheless, *The A. M. Klein Symposium* represents an achievement even if for the simple fact of having indicated that with respect to Klein's contribution much more needs to be said.

Ofelia Cohn-Sfetcu

W. J. F. JENNER, ED.
Modern Chinese Stories.
New York: Oxford University
Press, 1974. Pp. 271. \$3.25.

Few anthologies of Chinese stories in English translation have enjoyed such a popular reception as *Modern Chinese Stories*, selected and edited by W. J. F. Jenner. First published in 1970, the volume was reprinted in 1974. The current upsurge of global interest in modern China certainly has something to do with this, since contemporary Chinese literature contains some of the richest and poignant description of Chinese life and society, and as a means of enhancing Western understanding of China, the Chinese fiction has much to offer. More significantly, the volume is rich in human interest and the translation is absolutely first rate by any standards. Also, it is the most comprehensive collection to date. It includes nineteen authors and twenty stories, tales, and unfinished novelette, which are selected not only from works by the well-known pioneer writers like Lu Xun (or Lu Hsun), Mao Dun, and Lao She, but also from works by emerging writers in the fifties and the sixties. Thus it illustrates the continuing growth in the art of story writing in China, and at the same time provides interesting contrasts between works published before and after the liberation.

Most of the stories are set in the rural area and they are mainly concerned with the simple country folk. Within this limit, they depict a variety of human situations,

ranging from the painful life of the poor peasants, youth and love in the remote village, to the trials and difficulties encountered by men and women connected with the co-ops and the communes in their formative years. The Chinese woman is the recurring theme of the volume, and from Lu Xun's "The New-Year Sacrifice" and Rou Shi's "Slaves' Mother" to Zhao Shuli's "Meng Xiangying Stands Up" and Fang Shumin's "The Moon on a Frosty Morning," the reader follows her fate from one of passive suffering and soul-destroying submission to one of rebellion and mastery of her own destiny. Together these rural stories, arranged in chronological order, dramatically reflect the changing way of life in the Chinese countryside during the last fifty years.

Several stories deal with the altruism of man and man's dedication to his calling in a socialist state. The social and political messages of these pieces are obvious, and they help the reader, whether he agrees with them or not, to understand the kind of society the Chinese revolution is creating. However, a marked difference between the stories written before and after the liberation, as revealed in this volume, is one of atmosphere more than subject matter. There is something unmistakably gloomy and sombre about the earlier stories that impel an acute sense of man's alienation and helplessness in an oppressive, dehumanized environment. This is especially true in the works of Lu Xun and Rou Shi. The postliberation pieces, which also portray the hardships of life and the conflicts of men, are filled with an air of high purposefulness in keeping with the mood of building a new society. Perhaps because of this, the satirical element which is a predominant trait in the earlier works is hardly noticeable in the recent stories.

The plots of these stories, as a whole, are straightforward, and the narrative techniques are far from involved. But there is something vigorous and refreshing about them. And for anyone who is too familiar with the stories of escapism and sensualism, this volume should provide a welcome change.

With the exception of the works by Lu Xun and the two recent tales, all the other stories in the volume are translated by W. J. F. Jenner, who has lived and worked in China. Mr. Jenner, now a lecturer in

Chinese Studies at Leeds University, has also written a perceptive introduction on the current state of Chinese literature, and his biographical sketch of the writer that precedes each story is most useful to the general reader.

Swan P. Chong

**ROBERT and ROCHELLE
BONAZZI, ED.**

New Departures in Fiction:

Making a Break

Austin: Latitudes Press, 1975.

Pp. 243. \$4.50.

New Departures in Fiction is a collection of short stories, literary sketches, genre pictures, and fragmentary narratives by eleven contemporary American writers. Most of these works are of an experimental nature, but a few are neither modernistic, nor original in any way.

Among the pieces written by Brian Swann one finds purely lyrical sketches ("Stumbling," "Epiphanies") as well as abstract and extremely subjective ones ("Senario for a Farce," "Garden of Adonis"). In spite of the elegiac tone of his writings, Brian Swann is at times witty, ironic, and even grotesque. His "Home" is a poetic description of a hate-love relationship which ties a young man to his parents' home and brings him back to visit them in spite of a depressing paralysis of communication. This short story testifies to the author's superb narrative talents.

Charles Baxter's "Verdi in America" is an original story marked by a pleasant style and a great sense of humor. Verdi's imaginary trip to America, his stay with Dvorak at Spillville, Iowa, and his working on an American opera entitled "Wilderness," are depicted with wit and ingenuity.

From a narrative point of view, Henry H. Roth is undoubtedly a very talented storyteller. His "Cruz" stories ("Jose," "Rapping with Felicia," and "Victor's Damn Luck") depict the hopes, dreams, and adventures of three Puerto Rican brothers, and reflect—in a neonaturalistic manner—the tragicomic aspects of life in the slums. If it were not for the excessive use of obscene language, especially in the second story, these three episodes would have been remarkable.

In his four stories, especially in "The New Era" and "Making a break," Stephen Dixon clearly demonstrates his craftsmanship as a narrative writer; he is original, witty, and entertaining.

Among the not-very-impressive authors one finds Gomer Rees. His short pieces are unpoetic poems in prose; they add nothing new, inspiring, or controversial. Nina Khiney's "Two Tales" are mere *Fingerübungen* (the kind of music you play on the piano till someone finds your missing music book). Marvin Cohen's experimental sketches are parabolic ("The Transforming . . ."), surrealistic ("Pursued Like a Criminal"), and at times extremely abstract ("Hiding . . ."). He is too intellectual (read: overly serious) to be entertaining or even amusing. Elizabeth Tingon's "An Island" is a harmless little thing; it has nothing to offer, neither in content nor form.

Aside from the fact that some aspects of these "new departures" do not appeal to us, one has to admit that this collection includes a considerable number of highly rewarding pieces. Readers and writers interested in modernistic and experimental fiction would appreciate this collection. No doubt that soliciting, reading (sometimes deciphering), and selecting these untraditional and antitraditional writings is a very toilsome and expensive venture which requires taste, patience, and intrepidity. Robert and Rochelle Bonazzi (as well as Latitude Press) should be commended on this valuable collection.

S. Elkhadem

BIBHUTIBHUSHAN BANERJI
Pather Panchali: Song of the Road
Translated from Bengali by T. W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherji,
Bloomington: Indiana University
Press, 1975. Pp. 316. \$3.95.

To evoke sympathy untainted with patronizing condescension, to project peasant life without any romantic aura, to portray the innocence and wonder of childhood without overlooking children's many venial sins—these are the qualities that have made Bibhutibhushan Banerji's *Pather Panchali* one of the great novels of this century, and brought world recognition to Satyajit Ray, who produced and directed a film version of it. The essentially