

GU CHENG'S NOVEL *YING'ER* AND THE *BIBLE**

Marián GÁLIK

Institute of Oriental and African Studies, Slovak Academy of Sciences,
Klemensova 19, 813 64 Bratislava, Slovakia

The aim of this study is to show some important and less known facts from the last year of the contemporary writer Gu Cheng and to analyse the relations between *Bible* and his novel *Ying'er* from comparative point of view.

We may be quite sure that Gu Cheng [1] (1956–1993), the well-known Chinese contemporary poet, read the Bible and was acquainted with it. He certainly had some knowledge of other works, philosophical, religious and literary and critical, where the biblical topoi were discussed. The *Bible* was among the last books he read in his short life before he killed his wife and committed suicide. This reading certainly did not remain without an impact (positive or negative) in his literary work, philosophical opinion and in his *Weltanschauung*.

1

I had the opportunity to discuss the religious and biblical topic with Gu Cheng in Professor Wolfgang Kubin's apartment in Berlin, Wartenburg Street 7, on Good Friday, April 16, 1992. At these solemn moments, Gu Cheng inspired by my remark concerning the importance of Jesus Christ's death for the Christian world, praised his "blood sacrifice", following the explanation by Wang Guowei [2] (1877–1927) in his *Renjian cihua* [3] *Talks on Ci in the Human World*: "Nietzsche said, 'Of all that is written I love only that which the writer wrote with his blood.' Li Yu's tz'u can truly be said to have been written with blood." Li Yu in this way "expressed the concept of responsibility for the evils of mankind, a concept that is reminiscent of the Buddha and Jesus".¹ Dur-

* This paper was originally read in Chinese at the international conference entitled: Religion and Chinese Fiction, organized by Professor Chan Wing-ming, Hong Kong Baptist University, February 5–7, 1996.

¹ Wang Guowei's *Jen-chien tz'u-hua. A Study of Chinese Literary Criticism*. Transl. by Adele A. Rickett. Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press 1977, p. 45.

ing our meeting, Gu Cheng admitted that he revered Li Yu [4] (937–978] as the great Chinese poet most of all and Buddha and Jesus in second place, putting them on an equal footing on a high pedestal. Gu Cheng said to me: “I know something about Jesus Christ, his teachings, his life and death. But I am not Christian, I am Chinese. I look with intercultural eyes... Even if Li Yu killed nobody and never shed a drop of his blood for other people, for both Li Yu and Jesus was common the spirit of self-sacrifice. This spirit connected them with Buddha.”²

It is very probably that during our dialogue Gu Cheng had not even an idea of writing *Ying'er* [5].

Three days later, on Easter Monday, April 19, 1992 we met once again. On the way to Kubin's flat from the flea market at Potsdam Square near the State Library, we walked along Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's Park. I did not know much about Gu Cheng's unfinished poetic collection *Cheng* [6] *City*, but Gu Cheng and Xie Ye [7] (1958–1993), his wife, informed me, that the title of the latter is a pars pro toto for Peking, Gu Cheng's *guxiang* [8] birthplace and the character cheng is also his own name. In *Cheng* Gu Cheng used famous historical sites, monuments and scenic spots, such as lakes, streets and squares, gates of old Peking, and even Peking Library, to present his poetic autobiography. Just before crossing the Schöneberg Bridge, I remarked: “Maestro Gu, you speak so often about Jia Baoyu [9], comparing yourself to him. Why don't you write a *Chengloumeng* [10] *The Dream of Gu Cheng Chamber*?” I was alluding to Cao Xueqin's [11] (ca. 1724–1764) *Honglouloumeng* [12] *The Dream of the Red Chamber*.³

My remark about *The Dream of Gu Cheng Chamber* was received by Gu Cheng and Xie Ye without any comment. Perhaps both of them were embarrassed by the novelty of an idea, or maybe Gu Cheng already planned to write a book of “confession”, as *Ying'er* was called by them in its not yet finished stage.⁴ Gu Cheng and Xie Ye were sometimes extremely restrained in their judgements and overcautious not to betray their secrets. Probably *Ying'er* was Gu Cheng's most concealed work during his creative life. “In the middle of April 1993 Gu Cheng and Xie Yeh”, recollected Kubin in his extensive obituary, “moved into my flat in Kreuzberg, Berlin. At that time they began with narrow-minded secrecy, they wrote behind the closed doors, the note-book was always shut up or hidden from

² GÁLIK, M.: *Berliner Begegnungen mit dem Dichter Gu Cheng*. Minima sinica (Bonn), 1, 1993, pp. 55–56.

³ GÁLIK, M.: *Postscript. Reflections of a Reader and Friend*. In: GU CHENG and LEI MI [13] (Xie Ye): *Ying'er. The Kingdom of Daughters*. Transl. by Li Xia [14]. Stuttgart, Projekt Verlag and Huayi chubanshe [15] Publishers 1995, p. 277. Henceforth only Gu Cheng and Xie Ye for original *Ying'er* that appeared at mentioned publishers in Peking 1993, and Xie Ye for translation. This is used partly with slight corrections.

⁴ KUBIN, W.: *Splitter. Erinnerungen an Gu Cheng und Xie Ye*. Minima sinica, 1, 1994, p. 137. Also GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 97 and LI XIA, p. 86.

the view when I asked to call on the phone. When I wanted to see the sport news on the TV, they changed the room for writing. They did not have patience for any interruption. Later they told me that they are writing *The Confessions (Chanhuilu)* [16]. Gu Cheng who began to read the *Bible*, spoke about the evilness of his own personality and about self-hate.”⁵

Be it as it may, I suppose that the first part of the novel called *Ying'er meiyou la* [17] Ying'er Has Disappeared was written in Gu Cheng's flat Storkwinkel 12, near Rathaus Square, where he lived together with Xie Ye nearly the whole period after coming to Berlin on March 16, 1992 up to the half of April 1993. It is possible that Gu Cheng began to read the *Bible* here, if not even earlier, and not later in Kubin's flat, although I did not observe it during my visits to the Storkwinkel flat in April and July 1992. I found three traces in the first part and they might be taken over from the direct reading of the *Bible*.

Chronologically the first is the allusion to the story of deception of Eve by the serpent, which “was more subtle than any beast of the field which the **Lord God** had made”⁶ in the Garden of Eden. “Ying'er holds an apple in her hand”⁷ means the beginning of the temptation, where both, Gu Cheng and his lover Ying'er are like “two poisonous snakes betraying each other's treasure.”⁸ Ying'er after loving Gu Cheng for a comparatively short period, she left him, but he knew that he had deserved it for the considerable suffering he had inflicted on her. At least he admitted it in one of his clear moments.

The second one was concerned with the Prophet Daniel. It is to be found in another chapter, one of those that were the products of his half-mad mind. Here Gu Cheng asserts that there is no one good male existing in this world: “If Daniel was like that it would be fine. But it was not so.”⁹ Gu Cheng self-hate had many reasons. One of them was an inferiority complex because he was born as a boy, not as a girl. He did not like his son Samuel (*Muer*) just because of this. Maybe Gu Cheng knew the story of Susanne and the two lustful elders from deuterocanonic supplement to the *Book of Daniel*.¹⁰

The third was connected with the mentioning of the Last Supper from the *Gospels*. After the words by Gu Cheng addressed to Ying'er: “Let us die,” Ying'er at first agreed and said: “Let us. We can eat our last supper.”¹¹ Their last supper was not taken because Ying'er did not want to die. Last Supper for many

⁵ KUBIN, W.: op. cit., p. 177.

⁶ *Genesis*, 3, 1.

⁷ See GU CHENG and XIE YE, pp. 41 and 103, and LI XIA, pp. 37 and 91.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41 and 37.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22 and 19.

¹⁰ Deuterocanonic books of the *Old Testament* are acknowledged as a part of the canon by the Catholic Church.

¹¹ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 70 and LI XIA, p. 62.

readers, and for contemporary Chinese, too, alludes to Judas' kiss, where honeyed words hide treachery and induce opprobrious death.¹²

2

The second part of *Ying'er* begins with the chapter entitled: Shizi [22] The Cross. Here are the words:

I live opposite the church, facing the cross.
The church is there and the cross is there, but the
person who died on the cross is no longer there.
He wanted to walk around and not to go back to the cross.
My boredom with the whole story had already started.¹³

Gu Cheng saw this church and cross for the first time on March 22, 1992 early one afternoon just coming back from two old cemeteries at Kreuzberg (which in German means something similar to Golgotha, or Calvary), he visited together Xie Ye, Kubin and me.¹⁴ We all set together in the kitchen of the flat at Wartenburg Street 7 and discussed "Lin Daiyu's" poems from *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, especially these lines and their literary merits:

Awake, to whom can I describe my grief,
The infinite melancholy of cold mist and withered grass.¹⁵

Or:

We may fill a page with a sorrow and self-pity,
But who can express what the spirit of autumn means?¹⁶

Or:

Nought's left now but the waning frosty light.
By the steps, dew-drenched hibiscus blooms at dawn...¹⁷

¹² Cf. "Xifang zongjiao diangu xuanji" zhaideng [18] A Selection of "Allusive Phrases from Western Religions", Zongjiao [19], 1, 1980, p. 63 and ZHUO XINPING [20]: *Shengjing jianshang* [21] Appreciation of the Bible, Peking, Chinese Social Sciences Publishing House 1992, p. 314.

¹³ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 104 and LI XIA, p. 93.

¹⁴ GÁLIK, *Berliner Begegnungen*, pp. 33–34.

¹⁵ CAO XUEQIN and GAO E [23]: *Hongloumeng*. Vol. 1. Peking, People's Literature Publishing House 1982, p. 528 and *A Dream of the Red Mansions*. Vol. 1. Transl. by Yang Hsien-yi [24] and Gladys Yang [25]. Peking, Foreign Languages Press 1978, pp. 562.

¹⁶ CAO XUEQIN and GAO E, Vol. 1, p. 525 and Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, Vol. 1, p. 561 (slightly corrected by me).

¹⁷ CAO XUEQIN and GAO E, Vol. 2, p. 1090 and Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, Vol. 2, p. 625.

In the meantime Kubin prepared his delicious sharp *miantiaoer* [26] soup, asking us to eat and speak. Kubin likes to listen to other people. Therefore his reports about Chinese contemporary writers are full of important information.

The cross delineated above reminded me (with a little imagination) during my six months' stay there, a work of a Zenist artist, but which was probably suggesting nothing to Gu Cheng on that gloomy, quite cold early spring Sunday.

After April 15, 1993 the whole *état d'âme* of Gu Cheng changed and also his attitude to the cross and everything connected with it, preceding or following it, went through a radical metamorphosis.

Gu Cheng was an avid and quick reader. After our conversation on religious matters on Good Friday 1992, some time later as mentioned above, Gu Cheng for some reasons, read, or better to say, browsed in a hurry, some books from the *Bible*, being interested mostly in Jesus Christ and in his history, and then in some of his predecessors or successors according to Christian conviction: Abraham, then St. Joseph and Peter, and of course, St. Mary, Jesus' Mother.

Why did just Jesus Christ arrest Gu Cheng's interest almost exclusively? I personally think that there were some weighty reasons for this attention. Even in modern Chinese literature after the May Fourth Movement of 1919, Jesus Christ was always the main protagonist among all representatives of the Christian faith.¹⁸ Maybe, it was also caused by Gu Cheng's inner demands: to know something more about the founder of Christianity and co-founder of the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian civilization. Maybe, it was also *genius loci* peculiar for the back courtyard of Wartenburg Street 7. The everyday possibility to look at the sign of Christian faith on the opposite wall, at people coming in and going out of the church during the Sundays and evenings, certainly had some impact on him. Even if the words he told me in relation to Jesus, Buddha and Li Yu, were really impressive, Gu Cheng felt that his knowledge, especially where Jesus Christ was concerned, was rather inadequate in comparison with the other two. Gu Cheng observed that Ying'er's father was fond of Wang Guowei, Fr. Nietzsche (1844–1900) and A. Schopenhauer (1788–1860), and maybe it served as a stimulus for his interest especially in the first of them, who, among others, wrote about Jesus or his teaching.¹⁹

Another important source, not mentioned as yet, as far as I know, was *La commedia divina* by Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). Among many mostly Germanistic books, left in the sitting room at Kubin's flat by Raoul David Findeisen, there were also three volumes in Chinese, one of them being a prose translation of the *Divine Comedy*. Gu Cheng read it, whether quickly or partly, April 12–19, 1992, and in our discussion on April 24, 1992, this time in the flat

¹⁸ See the excellent monograph by L.S. ROBINSON: *Double-Edged Sword. Christianity & 20th Century Chinese Fiction*. Hong Kong, Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre 1986.

¹⁹ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 236 and LI XIA, p. 207.

on Storkwinkel 12, he used his own apprehension of the last two sentences of the 33rd Canto of the *Divine Comedy*, where the highest form of love in the feminine form is highlighted in the words:

In even motion by the Love impell'd,
That moves the sun in Heaven and all other stars.²⁰

By the way, Dante was one of Gu Cheng's favourite writers before the year 1984.²¹

I am quite sure that when Gu Cheng discussed with me the problem of *nüerxing* [31] maidenhood,²² he had in mind not only the young girls from Daguan Yuan [34] Grand View Garden of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, but also his intimate girl friend Li Ying [35], i.e. Ying'er. And not only that! When at the end of our dialogue, Gu Cheng remembered Jia Baoyu, the main hero of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, boy friend of Lin Daiyu [36], he mentioned also just those lines in the above quotation by Dante, of course, in his own rendition: "In the moment when Jia Baoyu left this human world of ours, he turned his steps towards light (*guang*) [37]. Dante also ascended to the highest sphere of the Universe observing the stars fairly moving by the force of Love and the things on this world where we temporarily live..."²³ Here it is extremely interesting that Gu Cheng in his crazy associative thinking combined his own "heaven" with Ying'er, Cao Xueqin's wordly Buddhho-Taoist heaven of Jia Baoyu in the Grand View Garden and Dante's 32nd and 33rd Cantos with "girls" of the Paradise of *Old and New Testament*: Eve, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Ruth, Judith, Virgin Mary and Dante's own idealized lover – Beatrice.²⁴

Everything is transitory. Even Gu Cheng's concept of "maidenhood". The Twelve Beauties of Jinling (*Jinling shier chai*) [38] are always changing manifestations of natural spirit. Once they are like faded and fallen roses, at another time they are similar to eternal spring reigning forever on this earth.²⁵

Speaking about Lin Daiyu's companions and alluding to the informed readers to *Mater Dei* and saintly women, Gu Cheng had certainly in mind his

²⁰ Cf. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Hell, Purgatory, Paradise*. Transl. by Henry F. Cary. 56th printing. New York, P.F. Collier & Son Corporation 1965, p. 426 and *Shenqu* [27]. 2nd printing. Taipei, Yuanjing chuban shiye gongsi [28] Publishers 1972, p. 563. The name of translator is not given.

²¹ GU CHENG: *Shihua lu* [29] Poetic Records. In: GU CHENG: *Hei yanjing* [30] Black Eyes. Peking, People's Literature Publishing House 1986, p. 202.

²² GU CHENG and GÁLIK, M.: "*Fushide*", "*Hongloumeng*", *nüerxing* [32] "Faust", "The Dream of the Red Chamber", Maidenhood. Shanghai wenxue [33] Shanghai Literature, 1, 1993, pp. 65–68.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁴ See Dante's *Paradise*, Canto 32, p. 419.

²⁵ GU CHENG and GÁLIK: *op. cit.*, p. 68.

Ying'er, although she was his and Xie Ye's great secret during the first months of their Berlin stay. Ying'er was a part of a "far-away dreamy scenery".²⁶

3

"Far-away dreamy scenery", either of the Grand View Garden, or of the highest sphere of Paradise, or in the unspecified elevator of a building in New Zealand,²⁷ is present in Gu Cheng's mind, even if he is pondering over the cross in the back courtyard in Berlin. A part of this scenery is always Ying'er, another *pars pro toto* of Gu Cheng. She is present even in his thought about the Son of God who descended from the cross and went for a walk. "She is still here, in my dreams, but her face is blurred,"²⁸ wrote Gu Cheng. He did not like blurred things. For him, at least for the time being, probably at the beginning of his stay at Wartenburg Street, a box with Ying'er's letters was enough.

Certainly one of Gu Cheng's last letters to Ying'er, if not the last but one, was written in March 1993, only some weeks, or more than fourteen days before moving to the bare cross.²⁹ "Thinking about it now, being able to see you would be like a dream," wrote Gu Cheng to his already lost love. "I am too extreme. Writing the book has opened me up page by page, to know that I have been mad for a long time."³⁰ The first chapters of the second part entitled *Yingzi shou shang you yige pingguo* [39] *Ying'er Has an Apple in Her Hand*, namely those connected with the Bible or its stories, are a mixture of parody, irony, allusions and Gu Cheng's blurred visions connected with his half-mad reasoning and concerned with himself and Ying'er. Sceneries of Golgotha and others connected with the life of Jesus Christ make the background for the metafictional elaboration of the plot. The motif of water seems to be most important and Gu Cheng is obsessed with it. The second chapter of the second part called *Xin yue* [40] *New Testament* begins in the following way:

"I am thirsty, he said on the cross the other day. In fact, the scenery looks quite good from above. From below people can see him like a big tree before a storm, or half a lamb steak hanging from a wooden rack. People on the rack have all stopped talking, but he still says he is thirsty. People down below pass him water via a sponge, but they think for a while before they withdraw it because someone says water is expensive. In any case he is not useful anymore. In fact, they simply don't like to watch him sucking water from the sponge. Other people suggest that such a great person would not be thirsty. When people like him say they are thirsty, they are just making fun. People like him can drink wa-

²⁶ Loc. cit.

²⁷ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 104 and LI XIA, p. 93.

²⁸ Loc. cit.

²⁹ Loc. cit.

³⁰ This letter was dated April 25, 199... (i.e. 1993). See *ibid.*, pp. 98 and 87.

ter directly from the clouds and no matter how much they drink, they will not pass water.”³¹

This part of Jesus’ crucifixion was one of the most important moments of the story. Gu Cheng partly understands it when he says that from this time on “the schemes of the devil will be exposed”,³² but he also suspects that it is not as it is written in books, the *Gospels* are meant. Gu Cheng is frustrated, Jesus Christ is alienated, Gu Cheng makes poor jokes of his readers, many of whom read the *Scriptures* probably more attentively than him; Jesus Christ is allegedly sick of watching the scenery below him and has nothing to do during one hour and three quarters when nailed on the cross. He is thirsty all the time, from his birth till his death. Water is good, beautiful, can make reflections. It was not created by God, it existed always. Gu Cheng had probably thought about the first words of the *Genesis*, according to which “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”³³ or the thesis by Thales of Miletus, according to which water is the original substance (*arché*) of all existing things. Even God made a few steps on the water. He had in mind Jesus Christ from *St. Matthew*, 14, 22–33, where he, after John the Baptist was beheaded in Herod’s prison, and Jesus’s disciples were on the ship, he “went unto them, walking on the sea.” Water can even be a mad girl. In this case Gu Cheng pondered over Ying’er. They met at the water near Peking for the first time. Allegedly he asked water from her and she somehow gave it to him. And then he knew that she was his and he would get thirstier drinking her water. He did not specify this kind of water. Here is clear allusion to their contemporary and later sexual relations.

The last story happened in summer 1986, three years after his marriage with Xie Ye. It was slightly similar to the Samaritan woman and Jesus in *St. John*, 4, 1–30. Jesus on his way from Judea to Galilee came to the town of Sychar in Samaria and sat down at the Jacob’s well. There came a Samaritan woman (*Mulier Samaritana*) to draw water and Jesus asked her to give him to drink. The woman who later became one of the representative of the Eternal Feminine in Goethe’s *Faust*, was astonished, since the orthodox Jews never asked anything like that from Samaritans. Jesus said to her: “If thou knewest the gift of God, and what it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” And then he added: “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water spring up into everlasting life.”

³¹ Ibid., p. 107 and 95.

³² Loc. cit.

³³ *Genesis*, 1, 2. It happened during the conference in Changping [41] on “*menglong shi*” [42] “misty poetry”. Cf. WEN XIN [43]: *Gu Cheng jueming zhimi*. “Ying’er” *jiemi* [44] A Riddle of Gu Cheng’s Death. Solution of “Ying’er’s” Enigma. Peking, Huayi Publishing House 1994, pp. 22–24.

It is better to assert that Gu Cheng did not ask Ying'er for water. They both threw the stones on the water surface and the stones became alive when bouncing. She was better than him in this "magical skill".³⁴

Gu Cheng's associative devices go even further. Slowly Jesus Christ changes into Gu Cheng himself and it is him who is walking on the Gennesaret sea, or the thirsty man hanging on the cross. The last terrible moments of Crucifixion, just like sublime or touching sceneries on the stormy sea or at the Jacob's well, were only the opportunities for Gu Cheng's self-expression. This self-expression is not like self-expression of the writers of the May Fourth Movement generation, for example of Yu Dafu [45] (1896–1945) or Guo Moruo [46] (1892–1978). They usually tried to delineate their *neixinde yaoqiu* [47] inner demands.³⁵ Gu Cheng by his self-expression at first parodied the old stories and then negated them by his own inner conviction. After so many words used in connection with the water motif, he said that he was not thirsty at all because in his heart "there was a large lake abundant in water and roaming waves",³⁶ or that his wife (Xie Ye or Ying'er) who compared him to some of the characters from the *Bible* made a mistake when asserting something like that; "I am not the man from that book. I never asked you to draw water for me and a big herd of my camels. I've never owned a big herd of camels. I go to work by bicycle, a native of Peking. It's true I am from the East. But there are many countries in the East. Not everyman from the East is Abraham."³⁷ This is a rather simple kind of parodic irony. Here Gu Cheng also made a small mistake, as sometimes when writing about the biblical subjects: it was not Abraham who asked Rebekah to draw water for him and camels, but his servant Eliezer of Damascus.³⁸

Nevertheless, Gu Cheng plays with the idea to be at least one of the biblical characters, namely Jesus Christ. At the end of the chapter under analysis, he is walking "everywhere" and "clothed", and asks people to touch the openings of his wounds.³⁹ This also applies to Ying'er whose role is peculiar woman of Samaria. When Gu Cheng met her she "did have lake water in her eyes or she had just melted water from snow".⁴⁰ The *Bible*, especially some parts of the *New Testament*, are for Gu Cheng the sources of his postmodernist literary images comparable to the narcissist metafictional products of contemporary Western authors.

³⁴ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 109 and LI XIA, p. 96.

³⁵ About the "inner demands" of post-1919 Chinese writers see more in: GÁLIK, M.: *The Genesis of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism (1917–1930)*. Bratislava–London, Veda–Curzon Press 1980, pp. 69, 79, 121–122, 124, 126–127 and 129.

³⁶ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 109 and LI XIA, p. 97.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 110 and 97.

³⁸ *Genesis*, 15, 2.

³⁹ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 110 and LI XIA, p. 97.

⁴⁰ Loc. cit.

In the chapter *Shangkou* [48] *Wounds*, or *Openings of the Wounds*, Gu Cheng slightly follows the well-known episodes of Christ's scourging, crowning with thorns and crucifixion. Gu Cheng after the inner monologue in relation to Ying'er says: "But you are gone. It is like when you are in habit of holding a cup in your hand and now the hand is missing. It is like losing your heart in surgery. Blood is still flowing out of my heart, but there is no way for my blood to return to my body... I am a wound all over. I am no longer a whole person. The longer I live, the deeper are the scars of the knife."⁴¹

If after coming to Berlin a box with Ying'er's letters was a source of consolation for Gu Cheng, during his stay in the Wartenburg flat, it was not so. "Far-away dreamy scenery" was slowly changing into a depressive situation and he felt that he had to express himself in this way: "This is for you to read because I can't find you, and the letters I find in the letter box are my own... I now write all this because I can see only you, see you in all things... I don't really believe you are still somewhere, alive and able to read every character I write. Between us, there is always the gulf of death and the sea. I don't quite believe that the sun shining on me may shine on you, your hair and the street where you lived. I don't quite believe that you can still speak Chinese, the language that enabled us to live together. I don't believe your heart can still see me. But I still write, day and night. Write with disbelief."⁴²

Gu Cheng wanted to have Ying'er at his side in life and death. He alluded to death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and after recollecting his and Ying'er's love life, proceeded in his deliberations as follows: "You are gone, but you are still alive. I did not know whether it was you, or it wasn't. I was hoping it wouldn't be you, because my *you* wouldn't do such things, because it knows my soul, because it had to walk such a long distance to find the flower-like tomb. We were to be buried together in the soil of life, silent, not resting, singing and complaining. We should live in this happy death. *We don't need resurrection or broken up, fragmented nightmares* (stressed by me, M.G.). We lived enough, it is time to rest."⁴³

In his imagination or meditation Gu Cheng through the nearly whole *Passio Christi*, was hoping for his and Ying'er's salvation. Death was part and parcel of it, at least since the time of their dialogue concerned with the Last Supper on the Waiheke Island, but not the resurrection. Gu Cheng did not believe in the last, he seemed to believe in the metempsychosis.⁴⁴ Broken up, fragmented

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 112 and 100.

⁴² Ibid., p. 111 and 99.

⁴³ Loc.cit.

⁴⁴ SUIZI ZHANG-KUBIN: *Das ziellose Ich. Gespräch mit Gu Cheng*. Minima sinica, 1, 1993, pp. 21–22.

nightmares *zhili posuide emeng* [49] were caused by Gu Cheng's at first schizophrenic and later paranoid symptoms of which he was a victim in the last years of his life.

The next chapter *Pangwan* [50] *At the Dusk*, at first glance does not seem to have any connection with the *New Testament*. But if we look at it in relation to the preceding chapter, then its affinity with three hours of Christ's suffering on the cross is evident, which according to *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke* took place between 12 and 15 p.m. with the beginning of the darkness at the noon. Here Gu Cheng analyses his own half-madness and the darkness of his mind, probably very conspicuous, although always carefully hidden, in summer 1993 when he wrote the following sentences: "I know I am already insane on a certain level, and I can show people the sane part. The minute you leave me (addressed to Xie Ye, M.G.), I relapse into madness (*fengbing*) [51]. It makes me run wild everywhere, to stare at every street, every window, every tree. It happened twice when you went out only for a short while. I am no longer a human being. I don't have the slightest rationality. I have only a thin shell, a smile, some words to say to people as if sitting at the window of a booking office. The rest (*qitade bufen*) [52] is completely mad."⁴⁵

In his private life and his dialogues or conversations with friends, including me, Gu Cheng would never admit the irrational compounds in his psyche. What is smile concerned, he was very fond of, if he had the appropriate mood. Just look at one of the photos in the *Ying'er* published at the Huayi chubanshe, where he is dedicating me his first collection of poems Black Eyes, on the scarlet couch opposite the table where he and Xie Ye wrote a great part of the novel. Gu Cheng enjoyed very much to speak and discuss with friends, even if the content of the discourse was sometimes very shallow, and I had to leave the room since I regarded it as waste of time. His own remark about the booking office was not right. What could be regarded as the product of his half or completely mad soul, he would never say. He was a master in hide-and-seek. He knew how not to betray his secrets, including the schizophrenic-paranoid state of his mind.

We do not know whether Gu Cheng took "every night dangerous drugs" that should be applied to prevent the decay of his psyche. Although he visited a medical doctor once in Shanghai,⁴⁶ he never asked for the help of a psychiatrist. But when he wrote in the analyzed chapter that he was a dead man who can't rest, who became already putrid and mad, he was right in his own way. His words addressed to Xie Ye: "Staying alive is an interest (*xingqu*) [57], it is not a

⁴⁵ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 114 and LI XIA, p. 103.

⁴⁶ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 115 and LI XIA, p. 103. See also WU FEI [53]: *Gu Chengde ai yu si* [54] Gu Cheng's Love and Death. In: Chen Zishan [55] (ed.): *Shiren Gu Cheng zhi si* [56] Death of the Poet Gu Cheng, Shanghai, People's Publishing House 1993, p. 23. Medical doctor diagnosed Gu Cheng's illness as hysteria. Gu Cheng evidently informed him unsufficiently about his psychic condition.

faculty (*benneng*) [58]. Lei, it is so. When you are no longer interested in life, then it is time to die.”⁴⁷ He was permanently dying during the second half of his life. He had to die to keep him from dying.

Gu Cheng pondered over death (or dying) on the summer streets of Berlin in 1993 and what he did not betray to his readers, also in the garden of the nursery school behind the church in the courtyard of the Wartenburg Street 7. Little German and Turkish boys and girls (Kreuzberg is Turkish Haarlem in Berlin) were allegedly happy to look at the “uncle” with jeansy hat. They smiled at him when he helped to pick up the ball for them. Nobody knew, as he mentioned, what was going on in the head of this seemingly jovial and ludicrous stranger, who was taking a nap on the benches usually occupied by their teachers.⁴⁸

It is likewise problematic whether the chapter *Ding yue* [59] Making a Testament has connection with the “new testament” from the Last Supper, or from Mao Zedong he mentioned once in similar context during our first meeting in the Kreuzberg cemeteries on March 22, 1992.

In *Ying’er* more heaven (*shangtian*) [60] than God (*Shangdi*) [61] is the most basic power of the universe. “There is nothing more frightening than to go on living,”⁴⁹ is an assertion that is only a continuation of the story depicted in *At Dusk*. Gu Cheng was angry with this world, he hated life, the world, or at least its masculine species, and also himself.⁵⁰ Here, like at the Waiheke Island, *Ying’er* is a heroine. The villain is her elderly English lover. Gu Cheng is very unhappy that he doesn’t know her hiding place in the ocean of human beings. He cannot really die, he treasures his death for the future. He would like “to see her in the end, no matter whether it was to be her soul or her body.”⁵¹ The death he has in mind, possibly in relation with *Ying’er* or with *Xie Ye* (or with both) is “beautiful like colours and should be used to paint a picture.”⁵² He never saw *Ying’er* again, he killed *Xie Ye* with an axe and hanged himself at the end. These deaths, caused by his hands, were most horrible and ugly.

According to Gu Cheng’s admission, heaven has punished him when asking him to write this book. Heaven in Gu Cheng’s understanding presents here (but not in all of his work) a kind of divinity mainly within the framework of fate. Maybe my words about the *Dream of Gu Cheng Chamber* were superfluous. At first he allegedly refused to write it down. He could, of course, write his “confessions” in another way, more axiologically valuable and socially broader, similar to that of Cao Xueqin. Gu Cheng who for a long time did not make a testament with heaven (or his own conception of God, since both often run parallel

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 115 and 104.

⁴⁸ Cf. KUBIN, W.: op. cit., p. 138.

⁴⁹ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 118 and LI XIA, p. 105.

⁵⁰ Cf. KUBIN, W.: op. cit., pp. 137–139.

⁵¹ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 118 and LI XIA, p. 105.

⁵² Ibid., p. 118 and 106.

in his *Weltanschauung*) made a compromise: he agreed to write this book on the condition that he will be rewarded for this deed according to his wish (*ruyuan yichang*) [62].⁵³ We do not know what was precisely his inner demand expressed in front of heaven and God before writing *Ying'er*. Very probably it was Ying'er herself, their reunion after his and Xie Ye's coming back to New Zealand, which for ever remained unfulfilled.

*

After the chapter just analysed Gu Cheng lost all interest in the *Bible*, and if by chance *Bible* is mentioned there, it has nothing to do with him but, for instance, with Ying'er's joking about an old priest who read it, but allegedly did not believe in it.⁵⁴ During the weekend May 14–16, 1993, Gu Cheng said to Kubin that his real Bible was probably a simplified Chinese edition of *Souvenirs entomologiques* by Jean Henri Fabre (1823–1915). He criticized the Chinese translation of the *Bible*. According to him both the texts of the *Old* and of the *New Testament* are badly translated.⁵⁵ This opinion is debatable if we take into account better experts in the *Bible* and even in Chinese or world literature than Gu Cheng.⁵⁶

On the other hand it is necessary to stress that the *Bible* is a *Kronzeuge* in *Ying'er*, although not one Gu Cheng agrees with. Except of those living friends and relatives described in the novel, Jesus Christ was his most frequent companion, even his double, with whom he was in intensive confrontation. His story, of course, was not that of Saul-Paul.⁵⁷ Other great writers or their works, Chinese and foreign, are mentioned or alluded to only in a hurry, for instance, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte (1816–1855),⁵⁸ short stories by Anton P. Chekhov (1860–1904)⁵⁹ and Pu Songling [68] (1649–1715),⁶⁰ the novels by Wu Cheng'en [69] (ca. 1500–1582)⁶¹ and Cao Xueqin.⁶² Cao Xueqin's novel, as I tried to show

⁵³ Loc. cit. Cf. also p. 202 and pp. 175–176.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 186 and 163.

⁵⁵ KUBIN, W.: op. cit., p. 138.

⁵⁶ Cf. the opinions of ZHOU ZUOREN [63] (1885–1967) in *Shengshu yu Zhongguo wenxue* [64] Bible and Chinese Literature. In: *Zhongguo bijiao wenxue yanjiu ziliao, 1919–1949* [65]. Peking, Peking University Press 1989, pp. 382–385 and ZHU WEIZHI [66] (1905–): *Zhongguo wenxuede zongjiao beijing* [67] Religious Background of Chinese Literature, ibid., pp. 397–399. It is, of course, possible that Gu Cheng read another translation of the Bible into Chinese and not the Mandarin Union Version as Zhou and Zhu.

⁵⁷ The Acts, 9, 1–31 and 13, 9.

⁵⁸ GU CHENG and XIE YE, p. 19 and LI XIA, p. 17.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 179 and 158.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 95 and 83.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 25 and 21. The Monkey is alluding to Sun Wukong [70], one of the main protagonists of the novel.

⁶² Ibid., p. 183 and 161.

elsewhere, had the greatest impact on Gu Cheng's life and of *Ying'er*.⁶³ If there was one sole most influential book in his life and work, it was surely *The Dream of the Red Chamber*.

It is a pity that Gu Cheng did not know himself deeply enough. *Si se noverit* (cf. Ovidius Naso's wording in relation to Narcissus),⁶⁴ he would read the *Bible*, and especially its *New Testament*, and the words attributed to Jesus Christ, with greater attention. Gu Cheng was almost as proud of himself as Nietzsche.⁶⁵ Gu Cheng did not understand Christ's teaching of the need to be humble, to love himself in harmony with loving others. After rejecting God (Jesus Christ inclusive) as the highest paradigm of Goodness, he took the side of God's opponent – the Devil, as the most plausible ethical and philosophical alternative. An author able to write a series of poems entitled *Gui jin cheng* [71] Devils Enter City, or Devils Enter Gu Cheng, or the *Prologue* and *Epilogue* to *Ying'er*, had to take the side of the Devil in the struggle between Good and Evil.⁶⁶ Gu Cheng's highlighting of violent features in Sun Wukong, or The Monkey in the novel *Xiyouji* [72] *Pilgrimage to the West*, and Mao Zedong's "sweeping out monsters and demons" (*niugui sheshen*) [73] during the Cultural Revolution, as seen in the *Ying'er* elsewhere in the last year (or more) of his life,⁶⁷ and the "blood sacrifice" of Xie Ye a few minutes before his suicide, demonstrate his misunderstanding of Christ's "descending from the cross". This Christ's "walking around" certainly will not have such an impact as Nietzsche's "death of God" in the world's cultural history, but it was a part of Gu Cheng's and Xie Ye's personal tragedy.

It is likewise a pity that in using the biblical sources Gu Cheng was not able to follow the high art standard of his older contemporary Wang Meng [74] (1934–) and his *Shizijia shang* [75] *On the Cross*,⁶⁸ just to mention one work of modern Chinese literature concerned with the impact of this most influential book of the world literature.

⁶³ GÁLIK, M.: *Postscript*, pp. 280-290.

⁶⁴ *Metamorphoseon. Libri XV*. In: *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Opera*. Vol. 2. Vindobonae, J.V. Degen 1803, p. 112.

⁶⁵ I never wrote in the *Postscript* to *Ying'er*: "Gu Cheng proudly compared himself to Nietzsche" (p. 295). This wording comes from the English speaking reader of my text before its publication.

⁶⁶ See GÁLIK, M.: *Gu Cheng and Xie Ye: Two Chinese Poets Who Died Too Early*. Asian and African Studies (Bratislava), 3, 1994, 2, pp. 134–137.

⁶⁷ GÁLIK, M.: *Postscript*, pp. 291–292.

⁶⁸ Zhongshan [76], 3, 1988, pp. 45–58, translated into English by Janice Wickeri under the title: *On the Cross*, Renditions, 37, Spring 1992, pp. 43–68. Cf. also GÁLIK, M.: *Wang Meng's Mythopoeic Vision of Golgotha and Apocalypse*, Annali (Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples), 52, 1992, 1, pp. 61–82 and his *Parody and Absurd Laughter in Wang Meng's Apocalypse. Musings over the Metamorphosis of the Biblical Vision in Contemporary Chinese Literature*. In: SCHMIDT-GLINTZER, H. (ed.): *Das andere China*. Festschrift für Wolfgang Bauer. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz 1995, pp. 449–461.