ABSTRACT

Wang Meng (王蒙) is one of the most creative and accomplished Chinese authors in the modern literary world. After the fall of the Gang of Four, he produced a large number of novels. Of all his novels, Butterflies (Hu Tie) (《蝴蝶》) is the most representative one.

Butterflies successfully reflects the difficulties brought upon the people by the faulty class struggles and extreme leftist policies of the Chinese government. The scope of this work includes the question of whether the cadre is the master or servant of the people. In Butterflies, the main character, Zhang Si Yuan (张思远), and his loss and subsequent recovery of his personal philosophy and character are depicted.

As for his writing skills, the author displays a special artistic flair which is much different from that of the run of the mill. Wang Meng goes against the traditional structure of the novel. He does not use the plot and characters to develop the story, nor does he adhere to the chronological principle of organisation. He does, however, emphasize the discoveries of the inner thoughts of the characters. With his ingenious use of the language and creative imagination, he depicts the psychological developments within the characters.

The name Wang Meng may not be familiar to many readers in Asian countries, mainly due to the lack of patronage of his novels and to the lack of interest in the study of his literary works. The main purpose of the present academic exercise is to revive interest in his most representative novel Butterflies as the starting point for examining his literary writings. With this study, it is hoped that Wang Meng will gain his rightful status as a fine modern novelist in China's literary World.