## Contents

Acknowledgements i

Introduction ii
  Gregory B. Lee

On the Margins of the Chinese Discourse: Some Personal Thoughts on the Cultural Meaning of the Periphery 1
  Leo Ou-fan Lee

"I am a Prisoner in Exile": Wen Yiduo in the United States 19
  Wang-chi Wong

Zhou Zuoren: "At Home" in Tokyo 35
  Susan Daruvala

Contemporary Chinese Poetry, Exile and the Potential of Modernism 55
  Gregory B. Lee

Exile and Poetic Creativity 79
  C.H. Wang

*Fugitives*: Translation of a Play by Gao Xingjian 89
  Gregory B. Lee

Translations of Exile Poems by Duoduo 139
  Gregory B. Lee
Acknowledgements

The conference, "Chinese Writing and Exile" (May 10-11, 1991), from which this volume of essays is drawn was co-sponsored by the University of Chicago's Center for East Asian Studies and by the recently founded Chicago Humanities Institute, then under the directorship of Professor Norma Field whom I should like to thank for the encouragement and support she lent to the venture from its inception as a proposal through to its fruition. I am grateful also to Professor William Parish, then Director of the Center for East Asian Studies, who without hesitation lent the CEAS's support to the conference. I should also like to thank Achara Raz of the CEAS for her co-operation and willing assistance. Lorraine Brochu-Mudloff of the CHI greatly facilitated the conference with her gracious and admirable efficiency and excellent organizational skills, and her inspiring optimism. I should thank also the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations for supporting the participation of Professor C.H. Wang, who in addition to taking part in the conference proper also lectured on the Lisao; my thanks also to Eva Kaplan for help in organizing that event and to Professor Edward Shaughnessy for hosting it. I owe a debt of gratitude also to Professor William Sibley for his unstinting moral support, and not least for making possible the visit of Chen Maiping, and for kindly hosting a conference reception. Similarly, Professor Anthony Yu was most generous in giving time and encouragement to the planning of the conference and surrounding events, and no less valuable was his participation in the conference discussions. My thanks are due also to the students who ensured the smooth running of the conference, and especially to Daniel Cohen, Douglas Guthrie and Michael Rice. My deepest gratitude is owed to those who agreed to participate in the conference and brought their academic and personal experiences to bear in discussing the issues involved in Chinese writing and exile, namely: Professor Leo Ou-fan Lee, UCLA; Professor C.H. Wang, University of Washington; Dr. Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, who also presented a paper on the League of Left-Wing Writers to the CEAS; Chen Maiping, writer, and researcher and instructor at the University of Stockholm; Jane Zha, writer, resident in Chicago; and Susan Daruvala, University of Chicago.
For making this volume possible I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Committee on Chinese Studies and the Center for East Asian Studies and its past and current directors, professors William Parish, Bernard Silberman and Mary Brinton. I am indebted to Kathy Nerat and, especially, to Julie Penn at the Center for their advice, practical support, and truly endless patience. Finally, I should like to express my gratitude to Isabelle Lee for rekeying and transcribing the papers, and for helping out in many other ways.

I should also like to acknowledge the permission granted by *Dædalus* and Professor Leo Ou-fan Lee to reprint his contribution.

G.B.L.
Introduction

Gregory B. Lee

I think of the line by the poet Mark Strand, "no place to go, no reason to remain." These are the true sentiments of all those exiled abroad.

--Duoduo, March 1991

This collection of reflections on the nature of exile in the Chinese context originates from a conference entitled simply "Chinese Writing and Exile" which took place on May 10-11, 1991 at the Chicago Humanities Institute under the aegis of the Institute and the Center for East Asian Studies. Two of the participants in the conference, Chen Maiping and Jane Zha (Zha Jianying), both writers, made very illuminating and valuable presentations. Theirs were more informal contributions and so it has not been possible to reproduce them in this volume. I should like, however, to touch briefly on some of the points they made.

Jane Zha studied at Peking University at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, after which she came to do graduate work in the USA, and has lived here on and off for the last eight or nine years. She now writes in both English and Chinese. She was in Peking in the fateful Spring and Summer of 1989, and at the time of the conference had recently returned to China for a six-week visit. She spoke about the experience of going back and the "bleak mental landscape" and "conflicting political winds" she discovered there. Politics, she thought, were now distanced from the people, and the people distanced from the center. In a sense, Jane Zha felt her protracted absence from China had led her to miss out on the development of the cultural sphere. Nevertheless she also felt that keeping one's distance helps to resist the tendency to essentialism.

Chen Maiping, who has lived in Scandinavia for several years now, and is an editor of the magazine Jintian (TODAY), is a more recent exile from China. He pointed out how problematic and how "very
political" the term "exile" was for many recently exiled Chinese writers, since it connotes being compelled to leave the country, and often indicates involvement in political activities. Yet, some writers, like the Paris-based playwright Gao Xingjian, who left China several years before Tiananmen would consider themselves cultural exiles. Chen also told us that many thought that if they still "thought and wrote in Chinese" that also prevented them from becoming fully-fledged exiles. Chen Maiping also touched on the practical implications of exile. Writers in China had become accustomed to making a living from their writing, and now in exile that means of livelihood had been closed to them. The economic pressures on individual writers, said Chen, was mirrored by the economic dependency of magazines like TODAY, an outlet for exiled writers, which could not survive without subsidies. Chen Maiping also thought that translation, which gives writers a voice of sorts and sometimes provides some financial relief, might imply writing specifically for a non-Chinese readership which in turn might affect what is written. Chen Maiping, very poignantly likened the existence of Chinese exiled writers to that of living in a valley between east and west. He asked: "When the flood comes in, in which direction can they escape?"

Writers also miss their language. Language, Chen said, is an important consideration, since contemporary writers want to continue the revolution in Chinese language: "If you can deconstruct Chinese language, you can deconstruct Chinese Communist discourse and undermine it." Finally, Chen Maiping very sensitively described the personal sacrifices and pain of living abroad. For many writers obliged to remain outside China, it is not so much their readership that they miss, but their family and friends. Homesickness, Chen felt, was more of a personal homesickness for a writer like Bei Dao, than it had been for the 1930s poet Wen Yiduo, whose exilic experience is discussed in this volume by Dr. Wang-chi Wong. Homesickness, refusing to enter into the host society, Chen told us, is what exile means.

"Exile" very clearly means different things to different people. At the very least it describes the state of being away from home for a protracted period. The reasons for exile range from the flight from political repression or being banished for political reasons, to a perceived creative need to distance oneself from one's native environment. There are the expatriates who have voluntarily detached themselves from "home," and there are those who have no choice, those torn from their roots who wait longingly and painfully to
return home. "The exile," writes Andrew Gurr "is like a bird forced by chill weather at home to migrate but always poised to fly back. [The exile] is political in that he [or she] has suffered the chill of official displeasure in some form or other, or at least...feels unwelcome, and waits passively for the weather to change," and he adds "Joyce was an exile not only on his own testimony...but because although he could physically return home his books could not."

Over the two days of our conference on "Chinese Writing and Exile," political exile, creative exile, the émigré, the expatriate, the long wait to go home, and attempts to go home and to find home elsewhere, were all discussed. These facets of exile were perhaps even physically represented by all of the participants in the conference.

It is only appropriate that the first paper in this volume is that of Professor Leo Ou-fan Lee. Formerly Professor of Modern Chinese Literature here at the University of Chicago, in the department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, and Director of the Center For East Asian Studies, Professor Lee is now at UCLA. More than anyone over the last twenty years Professor Lee has worked to put Chinese literary and cultural studies on the academic map. Leo Lee was born in China, brought up in Taiwan, and was trained in the United States. His perspective, therefore, both on the phenomenon of Chinese cultural exile in general, but also on China's modern literary and cultural discourse, is very special.

Dr. Lawrence Wong (Wang-chi Wong) of the Chinese University of Hong Kong produced for this volume a meticulous piece of research on the experience of the celebrated poet, patriot and political figure, Wen Yiduo who studied in the United States, indeed spent some time in Chicago, and openly expressed his nostalgia for China and his disappointment with America and its culture. In particular his patriotic sentiments were fuelled by what the racist treatment to which his immigrant compatriots were subjected. Wen Yiduo reacted badly to his exilic experience and even contemplated suicide; Death in any case became an obsession, just as it would come to dominate the poetry of the contemporary poet Duoduo. Wang-chi Wong gained his doctorate at the University of London, and there is in his essay on Wen Yiduo an empathetic tone which seemingly draws on Dr. Wong's own experience as an overseas student.

For Zhou Zuoren, almost contemporaneous with Wen Yiduo, and the subject of Susan Daruvala's contribution, homesickness never seemed to be a problem. Never passionate about the nationalist and nation-

building project, Zhou, Daruvala stresses, attached importance to locality as the mediating space between "the people" and history." It was the similarity between his native Shaoxing and Tokyo, rather than the differences between China and Japan that Zhou saw, and it was in the local in literature that Zhou discerned the "antidote" to nationalism. Zhou, Daruvala argues, has a strong attachment to his native place, and it seems to his substitute native place in Tokyo. "Zhou's depiction of his exile worked against" the dominant representation of the nation, and his suspicions about the nationalist project "led him to reject the nation as a trope of belonging, and exile as a trope of alienation." Susan Daruvala's paper draws on research undertaken for her University of Chicago doctoral dissertation which she has recently completed.

Professor C.H. Wang, who teaches at the University of Washington, is not only an eminent scholar of classical Chinese literature and comparative literary studies, but also a contemporary poet with an international reputation; he writes under the pen name Yang Mu. These qualifications give Professor Wang a double perspective on Chinese writing and exile: that of the literary historian and scholar, and that of a practitioner who has spent twenty-five or so years separated from his native land of Taiwan. His presentation at the conference was full of vivacity, wit and insight, and I hope the edited transcription of his valuable contribution does justice to it. For the exile, C.H. Wang tells us, "poetry is a kind of consolation, poetry is an alternative way for you to express yourself," and indeed it seems that whether the experience of exile is the result of banishment or flight, or whether "voluntary" or self-imposed, there is always a sense of loss, of distance, which while perhaps producing a more intense aesthetic production, nevertheless involves pain and sometimes guilt, for which poetry can indeed only be a consolation. There is certainly an intensity in the exile poetry of Duoduo whose poetry I discuss in my own contribution to this volume. Like many other professors who have come to the University of Chicago over the decades, I came here from Europe. In a sense I too feel distanced from my native place, a voluntary exile, and yet perhaps even in England there was for me a sense of exile, not simply because many of my family were exiles from elsewhere in a land that ill assimilates the foreigner, but also as I argue in my essay, because exile is also experienced in the mind as a product of alienation, as a sense of being marginalized and excluded by a dominant ideology. Certainly, Duoduo was for a long time a marginalized figure in his own culture and country who despite his alienation mediated common experience. I am glad to say, that almost four years after Tiananmen and his flight from China and despite
having to continually move from one host country to another, Duoduo still actively produces Chinese poetry. The fear of drying up, then, has not been borne out. So as to underline the importance of continued cultural production, and since after all this volume is not simply about exile, but about the nexus between exile and writing, I thought it pertinent to append a selection of translations of Duoduo's most recent poems. For the same reason, I have appended my translation of a controversial play, *Taowang* (or *Fugitives*), written by the exiled playwright Gao Xingjian a few months after the massacre at Tiananmen in 1989. The play was performed at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, in June 1992.

I have endeavored to edit as lightly as possible; C.H. Wang's contribution was edited from a transcript of a tape recording and so involved a greater degree of license on my part. Professor Leo Ou-fan Lee's paper has also been published by *Dædalus*.2 The essays are printed here in the order in which they were presented at the conference. I hope that the experience of reading them will be as instructive and pleasurable as was the experience of hearing and discussing them.

2 *Dædalus* 120, 2 (Spring 1991), 207-226.
On the Margins of the Chinese Discourse:
Some Personal Thoughts on the Cultural
Meaning of the Periphery

Leo Ou-fan Lee

About seven years ago an interesting movement raged in the
literary circles of urban China. Known as xungen, or "searching for
roots", the movement was launched mostly by young writers who for one
reason or another felt the need to look for the source of their own
cultural origins—and hence their creativity—in areas other than the
political center as represented for over forty years by the Maoist
ideology of the Chinese Communist party. What makes this
"anticenter" movement politically provocative is the argument that
the strands of Chinese culture have been so severely ruptured by the
ideological campaigns of recent decades, and by the Cultural
Revolution in particular, that the younger generation has been cut off
from its cultural roots and must go in search of them. In an intriguing act
of symbolic reversal, their quest has led most of the movement’s writers
away from Beijing or other urban centers of political power into the
remote countryside. Some of these regions they identify as their
birthplaces, hence evoking an emotional feeling of nostalgia for their
native land typical of most writers of this genre. For others, it came
from their personal experience during the Cultural Revolution when as
urban youth they had been sent "up to the hills and down to the
countryside." But the spiritual process of discovering their roots is
nothing less than an Epiphany, which they seek to capture artistically
in their reinvented fictional landscape. The ancient myths and rituals
they have uncovered invariably impart a sense of grandeur and
vitality against which the official Communist ideology pales into
insignificance. From the angle of this new vision, the political
peripheries are culturally richer than the center, which is further
divested of its previous aura by de-Maoification.

The intellectual impetus of this literary movement has also
given rise to a broader movement of "cultural self-reflection" (wenhua
fansi), a critical reexamination of all aspects of Chinese culture and
history.1 In both cases, the dissatisfaction stems directly from a
profound sense of disillusionment with the Cultural Revolution which

1 See Leo Ou-fan Lee, "The Crisis of Culture," in Anthony J. Kane, ed., China
ironically reduced Chinese culture to rubble. It is out of this sense of void that these writers, artists, and intellectuals feel compelled to redefine their own culture as they seek to redefine themselves: How to find a meaning of being Chinese other than what the Party has defined for them?

The literary value of these new work has been affirmed by most scholars as far superior to the spate of works produced under the official Maoist brand of socialist realism, for these young writers, influenced notably by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the South American Nobel prize winner, have woven layers of myth into the tapestry of reality through a more inventive use of language. Interestingly, none of them considers himself or herself to be "traditionalist"; rather they prefer the notions and techniques, however vague, of Western modernism. This new form of modernist art in the service of uncovering an ancient past again bespeaks an anticenter impulse. One detects even an artistic animosity against the Han culture which, as they see it, has been suffused with both feudal and current authoritarianisms of Confucian and Communist ideology; its hegemonic status fails to conceal its cultural atrophy.

Some of these writers are from minority origins, such as the Moslem Zhang Chengzhi and the Tibetan Zhaxi Dawa. But they nevertheless write in the majority language baihua, like their fellow Han writers, so the phenomenon is not one of minority rights or linguistic pluralism but rather a new discourse on the meaning of modern Chinese culture - a new dialogue initiated by a group of self-disenfranchised young intellectuals who wish, so to speak, to "decenter" the oppressive political culture of the Party. I have called it a dialogue both as it is defined by the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (in which a new language or a new genre interacts "dialogically" with the established literary conventions, especially in the polyphonic structures of the novel), and as a way to delineate the contours of their own psychological makeup. The process of searching for roots, as enacted in dictional terms, also becomes a quest for identities. In a typical work, such as Han Shaogong's story "The Homecoming" (Han comes from the "central" province of Hunan in the south - Chairman Mao's birthplace - which he turns into a "periphery

---

2 For a sampling of these stories, see Jeanne Tai, ed., Spring Bamboo: A Collection of Contemporary Chinese Short Stories (New York: Random House, 1989); see also my Introduction, xi-xii.

"landscape in his fiction), the "I" narrator, visiting a village for the first time, finds it vaguely familiar. He has, in reality never been there before, but the villagers seem to recognize him and call him by another name. "All this seems familiar, yet strange too," the narrator muses, "like a word you've been staring at for too long - now it looks right, now it doesn't."4 This identity confusion leads not merely to the narrator's mental search for a fictional double (a familiar ploy in modern Western fiction); of greater importance, it points to the presence of an "Other", not only another persona but an alternative realm that seems to convey a deeper meaning. One could also easily see traces of a "Peach Blossom Spring," an ancient Shangri-la immortalized by the poet Tao Yuanming. But Han Shaogong is definitely not invoking an ancient ideal. In this and in his other stories both realms clearly exist in the present and the ravages of the Cultural Revolution loom heavily in the foreground.

What does this all mean to a novelist like Han, a leader in the xun gen movement? In Han's novelette, "Ba-Ba-Ba," the protagonist is a mentally retarded boy whose entire vocabulary consists of two phrases - "Ba-Ba-Ba" (a child's sound for father) and the expletive "f... your mother!"5 Like the hero in Günter Grass's The Tin Drum, the boy seems to utter a curse, an inarticulate j'accuse against the brutalities of his surroundings without, however, gaining any full consciousness of the situation. One prominent critic, Liu Zaifu, sees him as a latter-day descendant of Ah Q, the protagonist in the famous story by the most celebrated modern writer Lu Xun, who constructed this nameless figure during the May Fourth period in order to probe the more perplexing question of the modern Chinese "national character." If Lu Xun reached a despairing conclusion some seventy years ago that Ah Q as a psychological prototype has no "soul" and hence no sense of individuality or selfhood, Han Shaogong's more contemporary verdict seems even more depressing: the boy not only becomes, like Ah Q, a victim of his historical environment but is in fact never given a chance to articulate his desires.

If the boy were able finally to have a voice, he would be like another boy figure in the film Yellow Earth (produced during the heyday of the searching for roots movement) who, after a long silence, finally bursts out singing a ditty about the Dragon King urinating and creating a flood - to the surprise of the revolutionary cadre who visits

4 Bakhtin 22.
5 Han Shaogong, Youhuo (Temptation), (Hunan: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1986). The collection includes both "Homecoming" (Guiqulai) and "Ba-Ba-Ba."
this patch of yellow earth to collect folk songs. The film's director, Chen Kaige, spent several months searching for a proper location for his film and discovered in northern Shaanxi what he thought to be the exact birthplace of the ancient Chinese civilization. The film's ironic reference to the present situation is even more pointed: the present-day dwellers of this ancient site, the peasants that the Communist cadre encounters, are both unbearably impoverished and mysteriously silent. To try to help the boy and his sister find a voice, the cadre begins by teaching them revolutionary songs from Yan'an, with tragic consequences: the sister, awakened and "liberated," wishes to join the departed cadre in the revolutionary headquarters on the other side of the river and is drowned in her journey.

The film, like Han Shaogong's stories, raises the question of the Other voice - a true voice of the people that seems muffled and suppressed by the sound and the fury of the Communist Revolution. Beneath the veneer of a revolutionary mode, Chen Kaige seeks through an original technique of evoking a "visual silence" to carry on a dialogue with this more "mysterious" realm which lies dormant under its impoverished socioeconomic reality. In Chen's film that dialogue is carried through songs. In Han's "Homecoming," the medium is words, words used in an archaic fashion by the villagers who seem to recognize the narrator who, in turn, finds their words odd compared with his familiar modern vernacular. What then do these folk songs and archaic words signify? On one level, they represent the xungen artists' affirmation of a vox populi that, in a sense, springs from the Chinese earth. On another level, the use of the modern Western ploy of a narrator in order to gain some deeper insight - a technique, incidentally, first used by Lu Xun - itself bespeaks an uncertainty, an indeterminateness about the true message of the people. If we bear in mind the somewhat ironic fact that most xungen writers come from urban centers, it is not surprising that they too are strangers to these peripheral regions which they wish to uncover as authentic "centers" of Chinese civilization; the Other as the primordial source of their culture thus seems unfamiliar and even exotically "foreign." Herein lies their paradox: like exiles returning home after a long absence, they find the homeland of their own culture foreign, and the journey to their roots becomes one of increasing "defamiliarization."

However, what matters in this new cultural discourse is not so much its intellectual content as the mode of its inquiry. Whether this younger generation has attained any new insight about its own culture (in scholarly terms) remains to be seen, but one of the movement's by-products is the emergence of an imaginary boundary between the familiar real world in which they live, which continues to be
dominated by the ideologies emanating from the Party center - be it Maoist Revolutionary canon or the Four Modernizations, or Four Insistences, championed by the post-Mao leadership - and the unfamiliar Other world they imagine to have existed, whether it be a relatively remote region such as Tibet or Heilongjiang or the ancient sites of Han or Chu cultures (northern Shaanxi in *Yellow Earth* or western Hunan in Han Shaogong's fiction). This imaginary boundary does not necessarily correspond to the official geographical boundary between center and periphery or the nationalistic boundary between Han and minority races. Yet by implication they raise new and profound questions about what it means to be a Chinese even inside China.

In intellectual terms, one consequence of the searching for roots movement is that it opens up the chasm between politics and culture. The impetus for cultural self-reflection has managed to stand on its head Mao's famous dictum to put "politics in command". This chasm is further widened by a generational gap between young and old, with the former expressing their cultural dissidence against the conservative orthodoxy of the older generations. These two broadening gaps have served further to separate society from the Party-controlled state. It is in the domains of society (if not "civil society") that the young leaders of cultural dissidence have launched their purposefully "apolitical" assaults against Party authoritarianism while attempting to carve out new spaces for their artistic creativity. In this connection, their works describing exotic peripheries become in turn a symbolic "presence," to reinforce as well as to demarcate new boundaries. What we are witnessing is a phenomenon unlike any other since the establishment of the People's Republic. The student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989 dramatized this split, and although the Party state has reasserted its power by military suppression, the gap between state and society can no longer be bridged. This post-Tiananmen state of affairs has led to new configurations of intellectual power and a rethinking of the issued of cultural identity, especially among those Chinese intellectuals compelled to leave China as voluntary or involuntary exiles.

II

This new state of affairs inside China has brought me, as something of a voluntary exile situated forever on the fringes of China, somewhat closer to the homeland I left some forty years ago. I find myself strangely in tune with the young writers of the searching for roots movement on the mainland, though I would define my own search
The word exile in Chinese is often associated with negative passive meanings - banishment as a form of punishment by government (fangzhu, liufang); seldom, if ever, does it connote the meaning of self-exile, or exile by voluntary choice as an act of protest by an individual. The closest equivalent in traditional China for voluntary self-exile is eremitism, or voluntary withdrawal from political service in order to maintain one's own integrity or for the more practical reason of survival in times of great upheaval such as the change of dynasties. Often, however, an elegant way of seeking eremitism from the political center of power was, in fact, a return to one's home region, to indulge in such cultural pursuits as art, literature, and scholarship. This stance, partly inspired by Daoism, formed a counterpoint to the Confucian ethos of sociopolitical engagement. But it did not, in my opinion, constitute exile in all its implications of alienation and dislocation. In modern Chinese the phrase, liuwang, literally "wandering in escape," comes perhaps closer to the dictionary definition of exile, prolonged separation from one's country or home, as by force of circumstances. The phrase often refers to circumstances of war or famine, connoting almost the state of a refugee. In premodern China, in fact, given the Middle Kingdom syndrome, it was all but unimaginable, even as punishment, to be exiled out of the country; rather, the faraway lands to which a criminal (and sometimes a guilty official) was banished were always on the peripheries of the nation's power center - for instance, Xinjiang in the northwest or Hainan Island in the far south. In post-1949 China, the well-known region of banishment was Beidahuang (literally, "the great norther wilderness") in Manchuria, where leading Party intellectuals castigated as rightists, men and women like the writer Ding Ling, spent years doing hard labor under miserable physical conditions. With hindsight, one may even consider the movement to send youths "downwards to the countryside" during the Cultural Revolution as a collective form of banishment or internal exile.

In modern Chinese history, education abroad is a largely twentieth-century phenomenon. Waves of Chinese intellectuals first went to Japan at the turn of the century. They were followed by students seeking education in Europe and the United States in the early 1920s. By the end of the Second World War, the Chinese student population in the United States was sizable, their ranks soon being swelled by massive numbers of college graduates from Taiwan coming to pursue graduate education. This has been a well-documented, familiar story. Equally familiar, but not adequately analyzed, is the concomitant phenomenon of voluntary exile resulting from the majority of Chinese students choosing not to return to their home country. For an
older generation of students abroad, this was certainly related to the watershed moment of 1949, when the triumph of the Communist Revolution and the establishment of the People's Republic presented them with a compelling choice. A great number, fired by patriotism, chose to return to serve the New China; even larger numbers chose, for one reason or another, to stay in their adopted country, in most cases, the United States. For younger generations of students from Taiwan, going abroad does not carry the same momentous trauma of choice. Still, it may entail other psychological consequences.

In an article written in English and published in 1976, the famed novelist from Taiwan Pai Hsien-yung (himself a self-exile now resident in America), characterizes such voluntary self-exiles as the "Wandering Chinese":

Deprived of his cultural heritage, the Wandering Chinese has become a spiritual exile: Taiwan and the motherland are incommensurable. He has to move on. Like Ulysses, he sets out on a journey across the ocean, but it is an endless journey, dark and without hope. The Rootless Man, therefore, is destined to become a perpetual wanderer...The Chinese Wanderer yearns for the "lost kingdom," for the cultural inheritance that has been denied him...He is a sad man. He is sad because he has been driven out of Eden, dispossessed, disherited, a spiritual orphan, burdened with a memory that carries the weight of 5,000 years.6

These depressing remarks are partially triggered by Pai's reading of a novel by another writer, Yu Lihua, who first applied the then fashionable term, "rootless generation" to Chinese students, intellectuals, and professionals who had chosen to stay abroad. Yu's popular work, Youjian zonglu (Again the Palm Trees), depicts such a person, a young professor who teaches elementary Chinese at an obscure American college (a Chinese version of Pnin, without the ironic touches of its master, Nabokov). The novel is a heavily sentimental account of his journey back to Taiwan, his "hunger for cultural identification," his incessant nostalgia for the lost mainland, and his final mental debacle, being unable to find spiritual anchorage in Taiwan. The journey exemplifies the familiar truism: You can't go home again.

Is the Wandering Chinese so spiritually dispossessed that he

---

or she is utterly incapable of either rediscovering or (as the *xungen* writers have done) reinventing his roots? I may perhaps offer my own experience as a case study. When I first came to the United States as a graduate student some thirty years ago, the term exile never occurred to me, nor did the term émigré. The phrase which obsessed me during my first twenty years in the United States was *identity crisis*, defined, not only in Erikson's terms as a psychological stage of youth in the human life cycle, but also as a matter of culture. Instead of feeling culturally deprived, I was more concerned about a self-perceived "threat" from the other side: was I becoming too Americanized, thereby losing my Chinese identity? My psychological confusion stemmed from a deep-seated ambivalence (perhaps even more acute than that of most of my contemporaries) toward the established forms of Chinese cultural practice at that time - a structure of conventional ethics and wisdom in the name of Confucianism with which I became profoundly disenchanted. This antitraditional frame of mind, curiously reminiscent of the familiar ideological stance of the May Fourth movement (which eventually became the subject of my first scholarly pursuit), made the other May Fourth position, total Westernization, a distinctly viable alternative to forge a new identity as my American sojourn became lengthened into permanent residence.

However, as the years went by and I came to middle age, I outgrew this identity confusion. I realized that my sense of being Chinese, though it has undergone several subtle ideological transformations, is so deeply rooted that it practically rules out the possibility of total Westernization. This has not led me to return to Chinese cultural conservatism; I continue to find certain of the intellectual "temptations" from the West - particularly from Central and Eastern Europe - irresistible. Such a psychological state is by no means uncommon among exiled Chinese in the United States, but it has not been fully articulated as an issue *beyond* the parameters of what is known as Chinese-American ethnic or minority discourse. Simply put, I would call this stance Chinese cosmopolitanism - a loose epithet, but one that embraces both a fundamental intellectual commitment to Chinese culture and a multicultural receptivity, which effectively cuts across all conventional national boundaries. It is, in other words, a purposefully marginal discourse, intended to recontextualize the margins.

My emotional affinity with the Wandering Chinese and the *xungen* writers lies, of course, in a shared self-perception of marginality, except that my marginality has a double edge vis-a-vis the centers of both China and America. On the peripheries of both countries, I feel compelled to engage actively in a dialogue with both
cultures. Perhaps it was this perceived need for intellectual engagement that saved me from feeling totally "lost" between two continents, like the protagonist of *Again the Palm Trees*.

The one novel that most vividly dramatizes this double dialogue is Hualing Nieh's *Mulberry Green and Peach Red* (*Sanqing yu taohong*, translated into English as *Two Women of China*)\(^7\), discussed by Pai Hsien-yung as providing an example of the Wandering Chinese syndrome. In this novel, written in high-modernist style, the two personas - divided selves - of the same protagonist address her dual marginal fate. As Peach Red narrates her recent journey as an exile in America in a series of letters to the American immigration officer, her former self, Mulberry Green, confronts a much larger historical experience of modern China - her move from central China to Taiwan (and, as Peach Red, to America). This torturer double journey infuses the novel with tremendous psychological power. Its prevailing pathos comes from an author equally committed to - and troubled by - both cultures "from the margins." Through a purposeful schizophrenic split of the two contrasting personalities, the author has not only described a heightened case of identity confusion but has located a special angle from which to decipher - and in a way to deconstruct - the master narrative of modern Chinese history. In doing so, the novel gives new meaning to being a self-exiled Chinese on the peripheries.

In the double frame of the novel, it is precisely Peach Red's tormented and anxiety-ridden outcry about her exiled existence on the edge of American society that compels her alter ego, Mulberry Green, to encompass the entire historical span of her personal past. In other words, it is her newly acquired American side - and the need to explain why she is in America - that forces her Chinese side to be engaged in a search for meaning through her personal journey in Chinese history.

That journey, in both geographical and symbolic terms, is also a journey of chaos and fragmentation in which the protagonist invariably finds herself escaping from an endangered center. The beginning of the novel - set in wartime China (1945) - finds Mulberry Green as a young girl of sixteen who has just escaped from home only to join up with a boat full of refugees fleeing from the Japanese. The second part has her trapped in and then escaping from the besieged city of Peking in 1949, before the impending entrance of the Communists. In the third part of the novel, the setting shifts to Taipei, a peripheral city in the eyes of mainland refugees which became the new political center of the evacuated

---

Leo Ou-fan Lee

Kuomintang in Taiwan. Here Mulberry Green, her husband, and her daughter are locked in an attic which, according to one critic, "is highly symbolic of the island itself." In addition to suffering from claustrophobia and temporal disjunction, they are being hunted by the police on charges of embezzlement of government money.

Only after Mulberry Green reaches the end of her journey to the periphery as she arrives in America is she able to recall her past experience in China. At the same time she rejects this old "historical" self by assuming a new name and identity, Peach Red. The most harrowing part of the novel concerns the escapades of Peach Red as she is hunted down by the US immigration officers. Her identity confusion takes the form of both schizophrenia and nymphomania as she sleeps her way from man to man across the continental United States. Her rejection of Mulberry Green, the Chinese side of herself plunges her into a state of "moral and sexual anarchy" which, according to Pai Hsien-yung, may be also "representative of the macrocosmic disorder of an entire nation" - China. Peach Red's fragmented psyche is a reflection of her own confusion as an exile and of the historical fragmentation of her past experiences in China. Pai considers the novel an allegorical tale because it evokes the fate of the prototypical Chinese exile who, as a Wandering Chinese, becomes "eternally terrified, eternally uncertain, eternally on the run," because "this physical uprooting means also the spiritual dislocation."

Unlike Nieh's emotionally disturbed Peach Red, I now realize, after more than twenty years of identity confusion, that the journey of exile need not be utterly traumatic, dark, and without hope. On the contrary, it is only on this marginal ground that I fell psychologically secure and even culturally privileged. By virtue of my self-chosen marginality I can never fully identify myself with any center. Thus, I do not feel any compelling need to search for my roots. I believe that the aimless anguish of Peach Red stems from the anxiety of loss and an inability to anchor her new identity on the margins of American society and culture. The feeling of self-torment, perhaps representing the negative side of a bicultural marginal person, can be turned into a positive character strength. Hualing Nieh's most recent work - a large-scale historical romance entitled, *Qianshan wai shui changliu (Beyond the Myriad Mountains Flows the River)* in which a young girl of an interracial marriage arrives in America in search of her American roots

---

8 Pai 211.
9 Pai 212.
10 Pai 212.
- presents a more affirmative tone which embraces the values of both cultures and replaces the nihilistic mood of *Two Women of China*. I would also argue that even the *xungen* writers' search for roots stems from a psychological need for a center no matter how much they wish to embrace the culture of the peripheries. Total freedom from such a centrist orientation should be both the privilege and the prerogative of a truly "peripheral" writer, a literary exile who chooses to be "unbounded" by his or her homeland.

The fact of the matter is often to the contrary: exiled writers, within their own communities or ghettos in their adopted country, tend to reproduce narrow facsimiles of the same habits and ways of thinking that they brought from their homeland. According to Joseph Brodsky, the Soviet poet in exile, this signifies the exile writer's peculiar vanity to retain his past - a desperate wish not to be forgotten by the homeland. My attitude toward exile writers is perhaps more charitable because I can easily understand the reasons for this misplaced obsession, especially among Chinese writers whose "obsession with China" has been something of a moral burden. It is an obsession that privileges China's problems as uniquely Chinese which lay absolute claim to the loyalty of Chinese in all parts of the world. This omniscient nationalism, easily capitalized upon by every Chinese government to legitimize itself at the center, has so dominated the literary imaginations of modern Chinese everywhere that it is virtually impossible to imagine a Joseph Brodsky who writes in both his native language and the language of his adopted country in order to create an art that transcends national boundaries. When one thinks of some notable examples produced by Chinese exiles in the United States in addition to Hualing Nieh and Yu Lihua - Pai Hsien-yung's own collection of fiction, *Niuyue ke* (New Yorkers), and the post-Cultural Revolution writings of Ch'en Jo-hsi, for instance - emotional attachment to the homeland seems like an "unbroken chain." In the last two or three years a new subgenre has crept into mainland Chinese writing, following in the footsteps of exile writers from Taiwan: *liuxuesheng wenxue* (literature of Chinese students abroad) in which both author and subject are in America but the language remains Chinese and the work is published in mainland Chinese journals. Again the stories take place, as in real life, in the Chinese communities; American culture and characters make only an occasional,

---

peripheral appearance. Needless to say, the Chinese characters' obsessions continue to be with China.

This excessive obsession with their homeland has deprived Chinese writers abroad of their rare privilege of being truly on the periphery. In my view, only by being on the true periphery of China - that is, overseas - can they hope to rise above it, because a true peripheral perspective affords them a distance sufficiently removed from the center of the obsessions so that they can subject the obsession itself to artistic treatment. This can be done by turning this perspective into a new form of fantasy or mythology, as is the case in the work of the Jewish-Polish writer Isaac Singer (who lived mostly in New York) or it can be turned into a kind of philosophical, metafictional discourse as Thomas Mann did when he created his version of Doktor Faustus while an exile in southern California. The most recent example would be the Indian-English writer Salman Rushdie (now in hiding in England) whose controversial novel, The Satanic Verses, subjects an entire religious tradition to an elaborate, postmodernist satire. The boundaries are again not so much geographical as intellectual and psychological.

III

These (somewhat idle and diverse) meditations on the meaning of being an exile have been triggered, ironically, by my association with a number of Chinese intellectuals and writers who left China partly as a result of the Tiananmen incident. In reflecting critically upon the cultural activities and discourses that they had initiated or helped to promote in China - including the search for roots movement - they were struck by a notable lack of peripheral thinking, because for several years they had been at the center of a cultural movement that exerted great impact on urban intellectual society. For all its implications of breaking up the Party's monolithic hold on creative culture, the movement has not entirely changed their "centrist" frame of mind - the elitist belief that they can ultimately influence the reformist leaders in the Party to their way of thinking.

No longer at the center of action (and in a sense the failure of the student demonstrations signaled the failure of hasty action) these

12 An excellent example of this new genre is a short story by Zha Jianying "Xiangxiu laohe qiao de anhunqu" (Requiem for Rosa and Joe), Renmin wenxue (People's literature), (3) (1989). In this story the peripheral existence of an old American couple assumes central symbolic significance in the meaningless life of a young Chinese woman exiled in New York.
writers are turning inward to matters of thought and psyche. They are beginning to reflect actively on the internal ravages caused by the Cultural Revolution - the impact of the Maoist revolution on their individual souls. They have invented a number of metaphors in order to describe a situation for which their old language seems inadequate. The hegemony of the "official talk" has created "a prison-house of a language" which has "subjugated the soul." After repeated political campaigns in which they were ordered to "surrender their hearts" (jiaoxin) to Chairman Mao and the Party, they have no heart left - they have almost no inner resources with which to fortify their sense of self and to justify their individual existences, much less their dignity as human beings. The first step toward a reconstruction of the self has led them to the writings of Václav Havel in order to reaffirm what Havel has called "human identity" and the individual will to "live in truth." In a way, the elitist agenda of the Chinese intellectuals offers a sharp contrast to Havel's nonelitist philosophy of "small-scale work" starting from the "everyday, thankless and never ending struggle of human beings to live more freely, truthfully and in quiet dignity."\(^{13}\) Beginning from this mundane baseline, Havel's movement built up great momentum which shook the entire Czech society and finally led his "Charter 77" group to power - a journey, so to speak, from the periphery to the center.

Havel's emphasis on everyday life derived from the post-Enlightenment tradition in the West which began to place a high premium on the quality of life defined with the axis of bourgeois marriage and family. Concomitant with it is the well-known valorization of individual privacy which forms the precondition for what the Czech intellectuals would call internal exile - the voluntary act of individuals to keep a private mental space which is immune from the power influence of the state. But the mentality of internal exile embraces a more activist ethos than the negative freedom of the right to privacy: it is a state of mind created willfully by an individual to resist pressures from the outside. To that extent it becomes a value like freedom. Coming from a tradition in which voluntary self-exile hardly existed (except as eremetic withdrawal), it is understandable that the concept of internal exile was initially baffling to my newly arrived colleagues from China. At the same time they found it appealing because, I suspect, it fills a certain psychological gap by suggesting an alternative form of individual resistance to a far stronger central power than that which Havel confronted. Internal exile does not mean

---

physical banishment to the peripheries of the country but rather to turn inward - the construction of a sanctuary of the soul that stands in a peripheral position vis-a-vis the omnipotent center.

Is it possible, then, to internalize the xungen movement by conducting a search for the roots of Chinese culture in the abode of an exile's soul? In trying to answer this question, I am reminded of Josef Skvorecky, a self-exiled Czech writer now living in Canada who wrote about Bohemia in an article for a recent issue of Daedalus: "I love her soul, which is in her culture. And that is in exile with me. That is my loyalty ....That has always been the loyalty of exiles. Only tyrants stress geographical patriotism." Skvorecky also quotes these lines from the nineteenth-century Slovak poet Jan Kollar:

Do not give the holy name of homeland  
To the country where we live.  
The true homeland we carry in our hearts,  
And that cannot be oppressed or stolen from us.

These words carry a timely resonance not only to perennial self-exiles like myself but also to those Chinese intellectuals who left their homeland because of the Tiananmen massacre. For the first time, nation and state become separate entities in their midst: it is the Chinese nation, instead of the state, that remains the central object of their loyalty - their motherland. In this regard, their thinking corresponds closely with that of their fellow intellectuals inside China, and offers an amazing parallel to the situation of Central and Eastern European nations before 1989. In the memorable words of Leszek Kolakowski (an eminent self-exile from Poland), "the split between the State, which people feel is not theirs, though it claims to be their owner, and the motherland, of which they are guardians, has reduced them to an ambitious status of half-exiles."

It is this new self-awareness of being "half-exiles" that has led Chinese intellectuals from the People's Republic to reexamine their current situation in an international context of cultural exile and cultural migration. Here they are confronted for the first time with the familiar twentieth-century phenomenon of the "intellectual in exile" which, according to Kolakowski, can indeed "boast an impressive

15 Skvorecky 132.  
spiritual pedigree" in the Western traditions. In fact, Kolakowski considers exile to be "the normal and inescapable lot of mankind on earth" and finds the myth of exile not only in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition but in all religions: "The fundamental message embedded in religious worship is: our home is elsewhere." Echoing essentially the same view, the young Chinese scholar Liu Xiaofeng, now studying theology in Switzerland, published recently a learned article entitled "Exile Discourse and Ideology" (Liuwang huayu yu yishixingtai) in which he juxtaposes the "homeless discourse" of exile and the "home discourse" of authoritarian regimes and finds that somehow in this century the former has been invariably associated with "the knowledge-value discourse called socialism." Liu singles out, in particular, the year 1922 when the new Soviet regime suddenly arrested and then exiled some 120 leading Russian scholars, writers, and scientists, thus marking the first massive intellectual migration (followed by the exodus of Jewish and other European intellectuals to America during the Nazi era and that of the East Europeans in the 1950s and 1960s). The post-Tiananmen exodus of Chinese intellectuals seems to complete this twentieth-century picture.

It is widely known that the European intellectual migrations exerted a powerful cultural impact on the countries of their resettlement. At the same time, a reverse impact - that of the diasporas on the homeland - has also taken place, especially when mutual communication is possible (such as between Jewish communities abroad and in Israel). Even in the case of East European countries before 1989, outside émigrés had always maintained contact with semiexiles inside through underground or unofficial channels to help create a powerful counterculture opposed to official ideology. Since 1989 many exiles have returned to assume key government positions or otherwise participate in the political transformation from the post-totalitarian systems to democracy. But the phenomenon of Chinese intellectual migration and its possible contribution to both the homeland and their adopted country is somewhat more complicated by the existence since 1949 of two rival regimes in two separate territories. Contending loyalties have tended to splinter overseas Chinese populations. It is only during the most recent decades, as mainland China and Taiwan resumed unofficial contact and Hong Kong emerged as an intermediary zone with a pressing future (its formal "return to the motherland" in

17 Kolakowski 57.
18 Liu Xiaofeng, "Liuwang huayu yu yishixingtai" (Exile Discourse and Ideology), Ershiyi shiji (Twenty-first century) (1) (October 1990) 115.
1997), that a different configuration of relations—and a different perspective on the problem of center and periphery—has become possible.

IV

In his classic essay titled "Center and Periphery," Edward Shils defined the center not as a spatial location but as a central zone of symbols, values, and beliefs which govern a society.19

The existence of a central value system rests, in a fundamental way, on the need which human beings have for incorporating into something which transcends and transfigures their concrete individual existence. They have a need to be in contact with symbols of an order which is larger in its dimensions than their own bodies and more central in the ultimate structure of reality than is their routine everyday life.20

It would seem that this consensus model has the opposite implication when compared with Havel's ideas, and the symbols of a larger order could easily be construed as ideology, which Havel calls "a specious way of relating to the world .... As the repository of something 'supra-personal' and objective, it enables people to deceive their conscience and conceal their true position and their inglorious modus vivendi, both from the world and from themselves."21 However, Shils's set of values corresponds to ideology only in Mannheim's sense; he is careful to differentiate his concept from the specious and "supertranscendent" ideologies (utopias in Mannheim's formulation) "which are explicit, articulated, and hostile to the existing order" such as Bolshevism, National Socialism, and Fascism.22 Thus, it would seem that they are in basic agreement about the utopian excesses of ideology—in Havel's case, of an ideology in the service of a posttotalitarian system. Both men stress the need of human individuals to be "in personal communion" with one another once they

20 Shils 7.
21 Havel 42.
22 Shils 5.
have "reached a certain level of individuation."²³

Still, in a fundamental way, the consensus model - which emphasizes the necessity of an established center and (despite tensions) its beneficial incorporation of either rebellious individuals or the mass population on the peripheries of a society through the process of modernization - remains suspicious. Havel has vividly described the frightening, anonymous power of the inhuman automatized systems found in both post-totalitarian and capitalist countries. In the case of post-Tiananmen China, the political scene clearly manifests the symptoms of an emergent post-totalitarian system in which control no longer comes from charisma (Maoism, for example) but from a central authority wielding anonymous power. What is to be done - even for those who, as Shils perceptively puts it, "have a very intense and active connection with the center, with the symbols of the central value system, but whose connection is passionately negative"?²⁴ The *xungen* writers have offered one alternative solution, by reinventing new centers on the peripheries. But even this reinvention has already split open the Maoist model of a popular consensus: it has "relativized" the significance of one center and paved the way for cultural pluralism.

In fact, the statement by Han Shaogong, one of the leading *xungen* writers, already intimated such a pluralism. He has argued that the orthodox Han-Chinese culture is merely a dead "crust" resting on the "hot and turbulent" seedbed of a mixture of several unorthodox ethnic cultures, and it can only be revitalized if it is able to absorb the magma of these unorthodox cultures.²⁵ In Han's view the search for roots is not a search for lost purity but rather an attempt to uncover the vital pluralism of this cultural hybrid. To rephrase Han's point further, it is clear that in Chinese history unorthodoxy is to be found in the center, whereas heterodoxy is to be found in the peripheries.

To render Han's argument in a different way, it celebrates the unorthodox cosmopolitanism which he has found in China's cultural past and contrasts it with the monolithic orthodoxy of present-day Chinese culture. The argument is not novel - the culture of the Tang dynasty comes readily to mind as a shining example of ancient

²³ Shils 7.
²⁴ Shils 8-9.
Leo Ou-fan Lee  
cosmopolitanism. But its relevance to the contemporary world increases when the boundaries of the periphery extend to areas beyond the China coast. The prosperity of the Four Dragons may be used as an argument for the continuing influence of Confucianism. But I would rather see it as a continuation of a littoral vitality begun in the early nineteenth century, when new initiatives often originated from coastal reformers (with a mixed cultural background such as the journalist-entrepreneur Wang Tao) which then became legitimized as policy by the hinterland center.\textsuperscript{26} In the late twentieth century, this littoral zone has expanded to include two powerful new centers, Taiwan and Hong Kong, whose economic supremacy over the mainland is also changing the cultural map of China. What Wei-ming Tu conceptualizes as the three Chinese cultural "universes"\textsuperscript{27} makes increasing sense as the old national argument, based on territorial and ideological grounds, of a single China represented by a single government gradually loses its relevance. With increased influence from such central littoral regions, it is not unlikely that the more prosperous parts of China - the coastal cities on the lower Yangtze River and in the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong - will become part of the economic system dominated by Hong Kong and Taiwan. At the same time, what is known as the Pacific Rim has become increasingly internationalized as a large region of intermingling economies and cultures - both ancient and modern, Asian and Western. In this transnational and cosmopolitan framework, the old spatial matrix of center and periphery no longer has much validity. Even the notions of exile will have to be redefined. As we cast our gaze across the Pacific ocean toward the future, perhaps Chinese of all regions and communities may take comfort in the vision that their boundaries will no longer close them off but instead crisscross each other to form interlocking networks in which there is no single center.

\textsuperscript{26} In Chinese studies, the notion of reform as a "littoral" initiative acting upon the "hinterland" was first developed by Paul A. Cohen in \textit{Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reform in Late Ch'ing China} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), chap. 1.

\textsuperscript{27} See Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center," \textit{Daedalus} 120 (2) (Spring, 1991) 1-32.
"I am a Prisoner in Exile": Wen Yiduo in the United States

Wang-chi Wong

I

In his foreword to Professor Y.C. Wong's book Chinese Intellectuals and the West, Professor Martin Wilbur pointed out that one of the most striking phenomena in the recent history of China was the large number of Chinese youth who went abroad to study.1 Certainly, the returned students had a tremendous impact on the Chinese society, in virtually all respects: socially, politically and culturally. As Professor Wilbur suggested, "without taking into account this phenomenon of Western education, modern China is incomprehensible."2 The present paper will look at this phenomenon from one particular angle: the exile experience of students abroad and how such experience affected their writings. To narrow down the scope further, I will take a case study approach and look only at the Crescent Moon poet (Xinyue shiren), Wen Yiduo who studied in the United States for some years in the early twenties. His experience in the USA appalled him; the title of the present paper "I am a prisoner-in-exile" is taken from a line of a poem he wrote shortly after his arrival in Chicago. Shortly before leaving the United States he wrote to his friend Liang Shiqiu: "Living abroad is like being exiled to a frontier region."3 In this paper, I will try to trace the footsteps of Wen's life as an exile, dig out the causes of his discontent and suffering, and see what impact such exile experience may have made on him and his poetic production.

Wen Yiduo graduated from the Qinghua School (Qinghua xuexiao), the predecessor of the Qinghua University, before leaving to study in the United States. In 1908, the American Congress passed a resolution to return the Boxer Indemnity funds to China, on the condition that the money be used for education, building schools and sending students abroad. Qing Hua was set up with this fund as a preparatory school for students destined to study in the United States,

2 Y. C. Wong v.
and students graduated from the School were given a five year scholarship for study in America. Indeed, Qinghua at that time was not under the education department, but rather the foreign office of the Chinese government. The whole running of the school was essentially modelled on American colleges. "The American consulate was to be consulted first" in all major affairs of the school; and the administration and teaching had to be "in accord with American customs and habits."

Wen Yiduo entered Qinghua in 1913, at the age of fifteen. While most students graduated in eight years, four in the junior section and four in the senior, he spent altogether ten years there; he failed in English and had to repeat the first year, and in his final year, he fought against the school regulations and was penalized by being deferred for one year. He came to the States in 1922, first enrolled in the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, transferred to Colorado a year later and then to New York a year after that. In 1925, after three years in the United States, he set sail for home, without having earned a degree.

At first glance, it might seem unreasonable that Wen Yiduo should have found life in America unbearable. Why should there have been any problem of adaptation? After ten years in Qinghua, whose American connection has been demonstrated earlier, surely he should have at least acquired some, if not a thorough understanding of American culture and society? There was certainly no language problem either, as he had been able to write up a dissertation in English before going abroad. Financially he was secure since he was the recipient of a generous scholarship. He had many friends in the States; schoolmates from Qinghua as well as some Americans he became acquainted with after his arrival. So what were the causes of his unhappiness?

II

Homesickness, common to all overseas students, was

---

4 Liang Shiqiu, Qinghua banian [Eight Years of Qinghua] (Taipei: Congguang wenyi chubanshe, 1962) 2.
6 In a letter to his parents he said that there were over twenty Qinghua graduates studying in Chicago. Letter to parents, October 1922, Wen Yiduo shuxin xuanji [Wen Yiduo's Selected Letters] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1986) 81.
unquestionably one of the major sources of pain for the poet. At the time he set sail for America, Wen had been married for less than half a year and his wife was pregnant. Though the marriage was an arranged one, it appears that both parties were happy with it. His father, though, was aristocratic and feudalistic, as demonstrated by his withholding Wen's private letters to his wife and even the news of the birth of his daughter.

In at least two letters written to his friends in Qinghua, he said that without leaving the country one could never know the taste of homesickness. In a poem attached to a letter to Liang Shiqiu, he simply could not help complaining about his loneliness and homesickness, with an apparent air of despair, he wrote:

The autumn falls deep, I fall sick;  
I am overcome by the season.  
Like a cat by the side of the stove,  
I wrap myself up in a big overcoat the whole day,  
curled up in the rocking  
chair...rocking...rocking...rocking,  
thinking of the motherland,  
thinking of the family,  
thinking of the alma mater,  
thinking of old friends,  
thinking of the good old times that I so miss.7

In another poem, "The Sun Rhyme" (Taiyang yin), Wen asked the Sun, since it came from the East, for the news of his motherland. He even wished that he could ride on the Sun so that every day, when the Sun revolved around the Earth, he could see his native land.

Homesickness may well have led Wen to over-idealize his country and may have helped to turn him against anything non-Chinese. In the letters and poems written during the years in the States, Wen praised time and again the greatness and flawlessness of his homeland, and there were frequent overstatements. A typical example can be found in the poem called "Remember the Chrysanthemum" (Yiju). In associating the flower with traditional Chinese literati and hermits like Tao Yuanming, and in associating it with the Double Ninth Festival, Wen took the chrysanthemum a symbol of the motherland. "You are a flower that has a history, a tradition;/the famous flower of the four thousand year-old China." Thinking of the flower and his country engendered in him high hopes.

7 Selected Letters 85.
The last two lines of the poem read:

I must praise these flowers of my motherland!
I must praise my motherland which is as beautiful as these flowers!

On the other hand, he complained that "the wind and cloud here [in America] bears a pale colour; the songs of birds here are extremely sorrowful."

It would seem then that Wen was simply compelled by a strong sentimental feeling, and his love for his home country was emotional; an emotion born merely of the homesickness of an overseas student. If this were the case, he would be no different from any other overseas student. But aside from, what I interpret as, a profound attachment to his home country, there was a strong antipathy towards things non-Chinese, which I would say was not entirely irrational. When Wen said that he was homesick, he was not referring to "home" in its narrow sense. He was not solely occupied by personal considerations. Once in a letter he made this point very clear:

I hope you will not be mistaken and think that I am missing "home" in its narrow sense. No! What I miss is the mountains and rivers of China, the grass and woods of China, the birds and animals of China, the houses of China—the people of China. 8

Wen, indeed, was not unused to leading an independent life away from his family. At the age of eleven, he had been sent to Wuchang for his elementary education. During the ten years at Qinghua, he mainly lived in the school dormitory, and spent only two summer months a year with the family. Nowhere did he ever mention that he was homesick when he was at Qinghua. His homesickness certainly did not merely derive therefore from being away from home. This time, he was away from his home country, his motherland, China.

Long before he went abroad, Wen Yiduo nurtured a profound love for China. Though he studied at the much Americanized Qinghua, he had a deep interest in traditional Chinese literature and culture. At the age of five, he started to read old Chinese classics, such as the Four Books and the Hanshu [History of the Han] at home under a private tutor. At Qinghua, he once formed a study group with his fellow schoolmates to advocate the learning and study of Chinese

8 Letter to Wu Qingchao, September 24, 1922, Selected Letters 61.
classical literature. He wrote his diaries and reading reports in elegant and lucid classical Chinese. He was particularly fond of classical poetry. He once drew up a two-year plan to read and study in depth Chinese classical poetry systematically, from the late Qin to the pre-Tang period. Before he tried his hand at vernacular poetry, he had published over a dozen poems in the classical language in the school's publications. He was proud of the Chinese script, which in his eyes constituted an important branch of art, admired and envied by people of other cultures. All this shows that Wen had a deep understanding and affection for Chinese culture and Chinese literature when he was in China.

For this reason, he found the attitude of many schoolmates during Chinese classes abhorrent. Many students at Qinghua thought that, since they were going to study in the United States after graduation, it was only important to excel in English. They made no attempt to improve their Chinese, and during Chinese classes, they behaved abominably and disregarded classroom order completely. But in English classes, it was this same group of people who upheld honesty and integrity. Wen said furiously, "The moment they step outside the English classes, they remove their masks worn only to deceive the foreigners, and expose their true nature!"

Wen Yiduo loved, above all, China as a nation. This strong patriotism developed long before his trip to America, in 1919 during the May Fourth Movement. Wen himself recalled that "during the May Fourth period, I was influenced by patriotic and liberal thinking. I learned to know that we Chinese should unite together for national salvation." On the evening of the Fourth of May, after he had learned from a schoolmate of the mass rally of over three thousand students in the city, he copied the patriotic "Manjianghong," by the Sung general Yue Fei, and posted it on the door of the mess-hall. It stirred up the patriotic feelings of his fellow schoolmates and swung

---

9 Guo Daohui, Sun Dunheng, "Qinghua xuesheng shidai de Wen Yiduo" [The Student Life of Wen Yiduo at Qinghua], Wen Yiduo jinian wenji [Essays in Memorial of Wen Yiduo] 431.
10 Wen Yiduo's diary, February 10, 1919.
12 Wen Yiduo, "Zhongwen ketang ti zhixu yiban" [The General Situation of Order in Chinese Classes], Qinghua zhoukan 214 (April 1, 1921) 21.
them into joining hands with students of other schools in the fight against warlord rule and foreign imperialism. Wen was first elected the secretary of the Qinghua delegation and later representative of Qinghua at the All-China Student Federation meetings. He spent his time mostly drafting and copying propaganda leaflets. Such was his dedication to the movement that he devoted the whole summer to it and did not go home for the vacation.

This strong patriotic consciousness was further expressed in a long poem written during this time, "The Lantern Parade" (Tidenghui). Upon the surrender of Germany in the First World War, the people of Beijing held a lantern parade in celebration, as China considered itself one of the victorious countries. Wen, nevertheless, cautioned his compatriots not to be overjoyed at this moment, as the country was still suffering from civil wars and the invasion of foreign imperialists.

As for his aversion for America, again, it developed during his years in Qinghua. While it is certain that Wen benefitted much from his education in Qinghua, nevertheless, what he experienced at Qinghua reinforced his opposition to certain facets of Western culture. The article "The Americanized Qinghua," mentioned above, was written shortly before his graduation, and was a result of his ten year observation of the situation at the school. He was discontent with the Americanization of Qinghua, as he felt that there was nothing in American culture that deserved assimilation. He argued:

What in fact is American culture? From the little I observe at the Americanized Qinghua, I can say that, in short, it is materialistic; more specifically, it is economistic, experimental, mediocre, superficial, vain, impulsive, and extravagant.14

In the article, Wen showed a strong distaste for the materialistic nature of American culture. In conclusion, he urged the return of Eastern civilization, which, in his eyes, was the spirit of China and the ideal way of life.

With such strong patriotic feelings and attachment to traditional Chinese culture and literature, it was inevitable that he should find the life in the United States unacceptable. However, it was not the case that Wen was unaware of China's own inadequacies. Shortly after his arrival, in a letter to his friends in Qinghua, he criticized the Chinese students in the United States:

14Qinghua zhoukan 247 (May 12, 1922) 3-4.
I am a Prisoner in Exile

Student politics here is worse than at Qinghua. There are many groups and factions, and they cannot tolerate people of other groups. It [the student community] is split and divided, and there is no way to find an end to this. Someone put it well: everywhere you can see a mini-China, a disintegrated China....The Chinese students here, as far as I can see, are dejected and decadent. Most of them just lark about, going out with girlfriends....Some of the better ones occasionally touch on more serious matters. But all they can do is to merely wear a worried frown, nothing more. In short, everyone is dispirited.15

Wen also recorded that the things he saw in Chicago in the first couple of weeks had led him to modify his opinion on American culture. After visiting the museums and going to movies, he came to admit that "the level of aesthetic appreciation of the Americans is much higher than ours." He even wondered how the Americans could develop so well in the field of science and technology as well as in art, while "for several thousand years, we Orientals have not done well in technology, and our art is not good either. Where has all our energy gone?" From these observations, he drew a distinction between eastern and western cultures. "The Westerners take accomplishment as success in life while the Easterners consider it successful if they can have a stable and easy life."16

Wen found many Americans extremely friendly and interesting, in contrast to the Chinese students he encountered in Chicago. Because of his profound knowledge of Chinese literature and culture, his friends would introduce him to any American who wished to know about China.17 He was therefore able to meet many people, especially those who were interested in Chinese culture. Among them were Professor Winter, who later became a professor at Qinghua and Beijing universities;18 the American poets Eunice Titejens,19 Harriet Monroe,

15 Letter to Wu Qingchao, Gu yuxiu, Zhai Yifu and Liang Shiqiu, August 14, 1922, Selected Letters 45.
16 Letter to Wu Qingchao, Gu yuxiu, Zhai Yifu and Liang Shiqiu. Selected Letters 45.
17 Letter to parents, Selected Letters 98.
18 Selected Letters 98; 101-102.
19 Selected Letters 107-108; 110-111.
Wang-chi Wong

Carl Sandberg\textsuperscript{20} and Amy Lowell.\textsuperscript{21} Wen showed great respect for these people and enjoyed their company very much. He reported to his family that he was luckier than other Chinese students, as they stayed by themselves, not knowing how to associate with Americans, and he alone was the exception. At that time, then, there was not the slightest sign of Wen being prejudiced against America, and yet Wen's student life in the United States was a far from happy one. There is no doubt that he liked his school, the Art Institute of Chicago; he mentioned a number of times to his family and friends that it was among the best in the States, and he did extremely well in school.\textsuperscript{22} Yet after only a week, he concluded that he had had enough of life in Chicago.\textsuperscript{23} In a letter written in January 1923, after he had finished just one semester, he wrote to his family:

\begin{quote}
America is not a place I can stay long. No pen can tell what a Chinese youth, who has a mind of his own, feels like living in America. Just wait till the end of the year after next when I come back to spend the New Year with you. I'll cry my heart out to ease my grief and to tell you more. I have my own country, one that has a history and culture of over five thousand years. In what ways are we inferior to the Americans? Is it because we cannot produce guns and cannons for massacring people that we are not as brilliant and superior as they are? In short, there is no way in a few sentences to tell how they despise us.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

What repelled Wen so much? In the letters written during his years in the States, Wen frequently touched on the question of American culture, and as mentioned earlier, when he was at Qinghua Wen was severely critical of the materialistic nature of American culture, and once in Chicago he wrote to his friends of his first impressions of the city:

\begin{quote}
Chicago is the second largest city in America. I only have to tell you one thing, then you will realize how
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{20} Selected Letters 80-81.
\textsuperscript{21} Selected Letters 126-127.
\textsuperscript{22} Selected Letters 91.
\textsuperscript{23} Selected Letters 46.
\textsuperscript{24} Selected Letters 117.
numerous the factories are here. All the houses on Michigan Avenue are blackened by the coal ash and soot from the factories. We went there for a short while, and our collar turned black immediately.25

Sending poems to his friends, he commented: "It is really not easy to write poems in this environment. As I send them to you, please smell them and see if there is an odor of coal."26

He considered the highly developed materialism and industrialization of western society not only a hindrance to his poetic writing, but also harmful to himself and to nature. In the poem "A Lonely Swan," he thought of himself as a lonely swan that had lost its companions in "the territory of the eagle":

Ah! It is the territory of the eagle, the fierce and ferocious despot! It's sharp and powerful talons have torn apart the face of nature and built up a nest of money and wealth. There are only machines built of iron and steel that are drunken with the blood of the weak, giving out the black smoke of crime to darken my sky and hide the sun and the moon, making you lose your way during your flight, and there is nowhere you can take rest.27

To Wen Yiduo, materialistic western civilization was inferior to the eastern civilization. In a letter to his younger brother, he talked about the difference in art appreciation in the two hemispheres; he had changed his previous attitude that the level of aesthetic appreciation of Westerners was higher:

The Chinese look down upon visual arts, because we consider them formal, sensual and superficial. We emphasize the heart. Therefore we have such sayings as "the five colors disturb our eyes, the five noises disturb our ears." This concept is too lofty for Westerners (Westerners with a materialistic culture) to

25 Selected Letters 45.
26 Selected Letters 47.
27 "The Lonely Swan" (Guyan), Complete Works III, ding 92.
Wang-chi Wong

understand.28

At this time Wen, though receiving training in the subject, did not hold a high opinion of western art, and even wondered why he should have studied western art, as it was not as he thought it not as good as Chinese art.29 He told Liang Shiqiu that he did not want to design the cover of his poetry collection, Red Candle, as he would unconsciously add to the design a western flavor, which he thought was not good for the book.30

This is about all we know of his criticism of western culture during his stay in America. Wen Yiduo’s attitude towards western civilization and culture is, to be sure, highly partial. But Liang Shiqiu has commented pertinently:

Yiduo’s homesickness was extraordinary, all of a sudden, he, with the temperament of a pure Chinese poet, found himself in a barbarian world where materialistic culture was so well developed.31

Then what about his personal encounters in the States? Would the people he met and the things he saw constitute a major cause of discontent? We have seen that Wen expressed his sadness over the Chinese being looked down upon by the Americans. In his letters, he mentioned only one specific case in which American universities were seen as biased in their selection of students to study in Paris and Rome; whilst Wen Yiduo was awarded the most distinguished prize, he was not heartened by it since there was no hope of his being sent to Europe, because the quota was reserved for Americans only. "From this, we can tell how deep is the American’s anti-foreign feeling; and how unbearable it is to live here," Wen complained.32

Apart from this one complaint, he said little. This is probably because of the usual practice when writing home of "reporting the pleasant and hiding the unpleasant." But Liang Shiqiu, who lived together with Wen Yiduo for about a year in Colorado, reported two more incidents. One concerned a Qinghua schoolmate, Chen Zhangtong, who was not attended to in a barber shop, because the barbers would not

28 Selected Letters 126.
29 Selected Letters 126.
30 Selected Letters 100.
31 Liang Shiqiu 19.
32 Selected Letters 159.
serve Chinese. The other related to the graduation ceremony at Colorado University: no American girls were willing to walk side by side with Chinese male graduates on to the stage. This racist attitude of many Americans of the time inevitably had a profound impact on the poet.

III

I will now examine the effect of this exilic experience on Wen Yiduo, discussing first his behavior in response to exile.

In many cases, the first thing that comes to a lonely and desperate mind is death. Wen Yiduo's case was no exception, not in the sense that he had considered attempting suicide, but that he frequently talked about death. In his letters, he often mentioned the deaths of his friends. Shortly after his arrival in Chicago, he wrote to his friends in Qinghua that two graduates of the school were killed, one in a road accident. From these deaths, he thought of "such big issues as the meaning of life and death," and these questions were driving him insane. In another letter, he told his friends that he was feeling weak. "I always feel that Death is putting his skinny hands around my throat; I do not know on what day he will strangle me to death." More vigorous still, he expressed high respect for a Mr Sun, a Chinese student from Shandong, who drowned himself in the lake for not doing well in school. He called Sun a martyr and considered his act courageous and upright; and wished that all Chinese could have this kind of courage and uprightness. He wrote to Liang Shiqiu:

This martyr realized that it was no good to live on, and he had the determination to kill himself. Now that he has killed himself. I admire him, I admire him, I admire him, I have to say a million times I admire him. Shiqiu, you should admire him too.

Wen Yiduo did not follow in the footsteps of this "martyr." He was more positive about life. The following lines showed most clearly his attitude towards death:

33 Liang Shiqiu 47-48.
34 Selected Letters 62.
35 Selected Letters 110.
36 Selected Letters 150.
37 Selected Letters 153.
Alas! There is nothing to fear about death! But I, like you [Wu Qingchao], have a positive attitude towards life. I want to enjoy; I want to create. Creation is about to begin, and I have not yet known the taste of enjoyment. How would I resign myself to taking away my life to the unknown world of death?38

Though frustrated and upset at times, he usually reacted in a positive manner. One way of sublimating his frustrations was to work hard. His years in the United States were, in terms of writing poetry, highly productive. He also took part in the drama activities of the Chinese student groups; he was mainly responsible for the set design. A more important result of his years in the United States was his joining a nationalist group, the Dajiang (Great River) Association. Dajiang was a nationalist organization formed by a group of Qinghua graduates—mainly graduates of the classes of 1921-23—in the summer of 1924, at the Drexel Hotel, Chicago.39 According to its constitution, the association upheld a nationalism that was "for the free development of Chinese politics by the Chinese people, for free choice for China's economy, and for the free evolution of Chinese culture."

40 Internally, they advocated reforms, and externally, they would fight against the aggression of foreign powers. While studies on Wen in the PRC try hard to diminish the relationship between Wen and Dajiang, because of the latter's opposition to the Communists, it is an undeniable fact that Wen was once very active in the nationalist movement.41 He was actively involved in the publication of the organization's journal. Apart from contributing to the journal, he also helped in editing as well as inviting people to contribute. Even after his return to China, he was still an active member of the organization. On 10 March 1926, he attended a mass rally organized by several nationalist bodies.42

But nevertheless, Wen was no politician and he did not seem to have a real and thorough understanding of the notion of nationalism. Nowhere in his writings, not even in private correspondence, is any

38 Selected Letters 110.
39 Liang Shiqiu 49-50.
41 Liu Huan 123.
42 For more on the Dajiang association and Wen's participation in its activities, see K.Y. Hsu, Wen I-to (Boston: Twayne, 1980) 77-80.
discussion of nationalism from a theoretical point of view to be found. It can safely be said that his commitment to the political program of the Dajiang Association and his participation in its activities was a result of his exile experience in the United States. The comments made by Liang Shiqiu, who was also one of the principal promoters of the Dajiang Association, on Wen's original interest in the patriotic gathering of the Qinghua graduates is illuminating:

Yiduo had never studied politics and economics. But he was a man of sentiment. He could not tolerate the corrupt and chaotic situation he saw at home, nor could he bear the humiliation and discrimination he experienced abroad. Therefore he showed great interest in these gatherings. 43

IV

As mentioned earlier, Wen's years in the United States were prodigious in terms of poetic production: over ninety poems were written, and these constituted a considerable portion of his total poetic output. So what of the impact of Wen's exile experience on his writing.

We can roughly divide the poems he wrote in the States into three categories. The first category consists mainly of love poems, the forty-two poems collected in Red Candle under the section "Red Beans." The second group are those in the section "The Lonely Swan," a total of nineteen poems. The last one consisted of those written just before he left the USA, and were published mainly in Dajiang, the organ of the Dajiang Association.

The love poems in "Red Beans" depict the soul of a romantic and sentimental lover who was separated from the partner. Though there was no direct reference to his wife, it is obvious enough that she was the heroine, and almost the entire forty-two poems are addressed to her alone. The poems were highly personal, describing how in different ways lovesickness, caused by separation, had tortured the young lovers.

The second group of poems, the Lonely Swan, in Wen's own words, "involved a bigger and higher problem." This time, the objects of longing were not just one single person, but the friends, the home, the entire country. Though not as personal as the first group of poems, the poet or the I is still evident in these poems. In many cases, the poet seemed to identify strongly with the "I" of the poem, addressing

43 Liang Shiqiu 49.
himself directly to the reader. "I am a young and strong prisoner in exile/though I do not know what crime I've committed"; "I realize that I am away from home/expelled from the land of love"; "it is not that I do not know how to smile,/but that the tears roll down first." He even mentioned that he was sentenced to a five year term of imprisonment—the duration of his scholarship in the USA.

A number of recurrent metaphors were employed in these poems. The most striking being the prison analogy. Apart from the five year imprisonment mentioned just now, the entire poem "I am a prisoner in exile" was based on this image. In another, "The rotten fruit," "my heart" was kept in prison in the shell of the fruit-pip, awaiting release. For an overseas student who missed home so badly, the significance of this prison image needs no elaboration.

The poet also frequently spoke of the immense darkness before him. In "I am a Prisoner-in-Exile," the prisoner was forced to enter complete darkness, an endless dark road. In "A Sunny Morning," though it was a fine and bright day, the heart of the lonely drifter, where the sun could never reach, was pitch dark. In a poem dedicated to Liang Shiqiu, the poet was stranded in a city of darkness, under the oppressive rule of Terror. Again, this was the world of darkness that the poet faced "in reality".

A large number of poems in this group are pessimistic and dispirited. But on the other hand, some poems were cheerful and optimistic. More than once, the poet stressed that he was a lover of brightness. The lonely swan was called "the follower of the sun" and "the follower of brightness." In "The Sun Rhyme," he looked towards the sun as his homeland. Amidst the dark and vast Pacific Ocean, he took a star in the sky for the lighthouse in the sea of life. In this group "Remembering the Chrysanthemum" is typical. It expresses a strong love of country. A variety of colors, all bright colors -- the yellow of gold, the white of jade, the green of spring wine and the purple of the autumn mountain -- were used to describe chrysanthemum, the flower of the motherland.

In general, this group of poems exhibit a strong patriotic sentiment. But in terms of intensity, they were not to be compared with those in the third group, the poems written shortly before he left the USA, when he had established a connection with the nationalistic body Dajiange Association. These poems include the famous "Laundry Song" and some that have not been included in the original Wen Yiduo quanj [Complete Works], such as "A Patriotic Heart," "I am a Chinese," "The Songs of the Seven Sons" and "Sorrow under the Great Wall."

"A Patriotic Heart" and "I am a Chinese" are very similar to
"Remembering the Chrysanthemum," in that they all show a strong pride for the homeland. While "Remembering the Chrysanthemum" just mentions briefly that the flower/country has a history of four thousand years, "I am a Chinese" details the long history of China, listing the names of the ancient emperors such as Huangdi, Yao and Shun; the ancient sages such as Confucius and Zhuangzi. The poem also incorporates the myths and legends concerning the building up of the civilization and the country. At a time when China was suffering from foreign aggression and being looked down upon, it took great courage to cry out loudly the following lines:

The great race! The great race!
We are the originators of Oriental culture;
Our life is the life of the world.
I am a Chinese, I am a Chinese!

These poems represent the positive side of this batch of poems. But like those in the second group, some of these poems in this group are not as cheerful. "Laundry Song" was a realization of Wen's intention to write "a series of sketches in blank verse to depict the humiliation of Chinese here." At the beginning of the poem, Wen added a note to explain that since laundry work was the most common occupation of the Chinese in the United States, Chinese students were often asked, "Is your father a laundryman?" This poem was regarded by Liang Shiqiu as representative of Wen's patriotic poems.

Attention should also be given to another peculiar poem, "The Song of the Seven Sons." The seven sons were seven territories that had been ceded or leased to foreign imperialists. Each stanza of the seven stanzas was a song sung by one of these sons, and the last line of every stanza read "Mother! I want to come back, Mother!" Wen's stated intention in writing this poem was to urge the people to struggle for a return of these territories to China.

V

Not only did Wen Yiduo find the life of an overseas student in the United States that of an exile, he also showed no gratitude for the American government's good will in returning the Boxer Indemnity and setting up scholarships for Chinese students. In one of the sections of the Dajiang Association's declaration, there were the following lines:

Unenlightened education leaves an evil influence worse than lack of education; but westernized education is
still worse than unenlightened education... It is true that nowadays among the students who have studied abroad there are many who were supported by western missions... But in reality these educated students with their westernized habits, speech, writing, views, and thought, are the very ones who imperil China's future because they have forgotten their cultural origins... There is more than one way to carry out cultural aggression. Under the pretext of returning the indemnity funds, certain foreign powers have sought to control the educational and publishing enterprises in China. 44

While it may be true that many who studied or lived abroad for some time risked forgetting their cultural origins, should we necessarily doubt the intentions of the American government in their returning of the indemnity? Even Wen Yiduo himself once admitted that the American government was friendly to China. 45 But to better understand Wen's feelings and to conclude, I should like to quote a few lines, again from Wen's letter to Liang Shiqiu just before he set sail for home, in which he talked about the things that had happened to some of his Qinghua friends:

I have not yet booked the boat ticket. It is still too early. Living abroad is like being exiled to a frontier region. The best thing is to go home as early as possible. During these few months, Wu Zongzhuan died; Zhang Jiemin, Li Zhichang have gone mad; Xiang Zhejun was arrested and put into jail; Huang Zhuofan, Meng Xianmin, Zhang Fuquan, Sun Zengqing have either run away from debts or issued unhonored checks, and Qiu Guang rode a bicycle around the school campus in the nude! 46

Given the circumstances, should we accuse Wen of ingratitude?

44 Cited in Hsu 85.
45 Selected Letters 42.
46 Cited in Liang Shiqiu 59.
Zhou Zuoren: "At home" in Tokyo

Susan Daruvala

Exile, with its connotations of alienation and suffering, is not a concept which is very easily applied to Zhou Zuoren. He did not join figures such as his brother Lu Xun, or Gu Jiegang and Hu Shi in the diaspora of university professors from Beijing in 1926, after the massacre of students, although he shared their grief and shock. He did not even enter into the internal exile of those who fled from the coasts of China to the interior as war with Japan exploded in 1937. Instead, he stayed in Beijing (then Beiping), and collaborated with the Japanese. This action, ironically, brought him the kind of exile to which James Joyce once referred; for his books were proscribed on both sides of the straits of Taiwan, with the result that almost two generations of Chinese grew up barely aware of his work.

If we go back further into Zhou's past, to the five years he spent as a student in Tokyo between 1906 and 1911, we find that far from being endured as exile, these were among the happiest years of his life, and he came to count Tokyo as his "second home".\(^1\)

In countless articles written in the 1920s, 1930s and even later, he expressed admiration for Japanese literature and art, and for the high regard given to simplicity and naturalness in Japanese culture and everyday life. Tokyo was also the place where he encountered the works of Western thinkers like Havelock Ellis, James Frazer and Andrew Lang, and turned his sensitivity to local cultures into a lifelong fascination with myth and its place in the human psyche and human society. Shortly before leaving Tokyo, with his Japanese wife, he wrote a poem in which he said, "I have travelled far from home, / But do not long to return / A long-term guest, / I love this once-alien place."\(^2\)

The history of exile must be as long as that of human

---

1 "Huai Dongjing" [Fond Thoughts of Tokyo], Zhou Zuoren daibiaozuo xuan [Selected Representative Works of Zhou Zuoren], (Shanghai ?] 1937; reprint Hong Kong: Tong wen shudian, 1975) 95.

2 The poem is quoted in Zhou's "Riben zhi zai renshi" [Getting to know Japan again], Yao wei ji [Taste of Medicine], (Beijing: Xinmin ying shuju, 1942) 231. For Zhou's recollections of his student days in Tokyo see his two-volume memoirs: Zhitang huixiang lu [Zhitang's Memoirs] (Hong Kong: San yu tushu wenju gongsi, 1970) I, 172-240.
settlements, for exile is, essentially, the state of being removed from a familiar community, or locus of belonging, and planted somewhere else. The modern experience of exile occurs in relation to the modern nation state and its power, or lack of it, whether within its borders, or across them. Of course, the borders of the nation state, which give it its institutional facticity, do not always coincide with those of the nation as it is written, imagined and desired. And if writing is one of the ways of representing the nation, then the depiction of exile is also a way of expressing the nation, and its relation to the self.

Guo Moruo once claimed that "the modern Chinese literary world had mainly been constructed by students returned from Japan". This claim takes on some significance when it is recalled that it was China's disastrous defeat in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5 that prompted the Qing government to start sending students to Japan to study modern sciences and technology. It was the same war that prompted the noted translator and reform-minded intellectual Yan Fu to call for a renovation of the people as the first step to strengthening China, and Liang Qichao, a promoter of cultural and political reform, to start publishing his current affairs journal, Shiwu Bao, with its supplement of translated Western fiction. Yan Fu's call marks the beginning of an ideological discourse of the nation as "the people", which continues up to the present. The people, in this discourse, could not achieve their potential as citizens of a modern Chinese nation unless they were shown the way through the redemptive agency of the state. Liang Qichao's advocacy of the value of fiction as a means of renovating the masses, derived from the example of Meiji Japan, fastened the task of redemption to the intellectuals. Given this

---

4 In preparing this paper I have been much indebted to the discussion of exile and nationalism in Timothy Brennan, "The national longing for form", Homi K. Bhaba, ed. Nation and Narration, 60-61 and passim.
Zhou Zouren: "At home"

combination of factors, it is small wonder that the May Fourth movement, which inherited the reformist didacticism of Yan Fu and Liang, should have been built by students returned from Japan.

These three elements--the desire for a modern state expressed in the language of technological and institutional modernization, the desire for a modern nation, constituted of an as yet unrealized new people, and the exile in Japan of their potential reformers, the intellectuals--are very familiar in the representation of nation and exile in the writing of the May Fourth era and in the 1920s. Typically, exile is shown as a wounding experience. In the fiction writer Yu Dafu's "Sinking," the protagonist's desire for sexual completion and guilt at his own personal inadequacies are intertwined with a desire for a strong rich China and resentment at its poor condition. Although the ironic distance between the narrative and the protagonist's words in the story point to many ambiguities which do not concern us here, the text is dealing with "China" as an object of desire.\(^7\) Just as well-known is Zhou brother, Lu Xun's account of the slide show in the Sendai medical school, which prompted him to give up medicine for literature, in order to spiritually transform his benighted fellow countrymen.\(^8\) Lu Xun's subsequent bitter realization that literature could not awaken the masses suffocating in the "iron house" of Chinese culture, forced him to carry the loneliness and alienation of exile with him even when he was back in China. For him, it would seem, the reformist vision of the new nation built on the strong, healthy bodies and minds of a renovated people had turned out to be a failure.

The great power of these two pieces of writing comes from their depiction of the unresolved, painful nature of the early twentieth-century intellectual's relationship to China, and from the sense of moral inadequacy or despair this relationship engenders.

Zhou Zuoren's depiction of his exile in Tokyo and, more

---

8 See Lu Xun, "Zi xu" [Preface], *Nahan [A Call to Arms], Lu Xun Quanji* [Complete Works of Lu Xun] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1981) I, 416-19. The incident involving a slide show of the execution of a Chinese in China by the Japanese military, is also recounted in Lu Xun's memoir of his teacher Mr Fujino. Here, the incident is the final straw in a string of humiliations meted out to him because, as he comments ironically, "China is a weak country, therefore the Chinese must be an inferior people". See "Tengye Xiansheng" [Mr Fujino], *Zhaohua Xishi* [Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk], *Lu Xun Quanji* II, 306.
important, his creation of a radically different literary world, shaped in many ways by his fondness for Japanese culture and the interests he nourished in Japan, can be counterpointed to the dominant representation of the nation in modern Chinese writing. The main difference is that he defines himself, or strictly speaking, the self presented in his texts, not in relation to the desired modern nation-state China, but in relation to two localities: his home in Zhejiang, and Tokyo. Secondly, the localities in his writing are embedded in a history which flows into the present, and they are apprehended through their material and moral cultures. Thirdly, having avoided presenting a self which relates to the desired nation, Zhou is able to present a self that operates within an indigenous theory of literature that is opposed to contemporary didacticism. What is more, he formulates a Chinese literary history in which periods of openness to outside influence and individualism are equated with cultural confidence.

Although there is plenty of evidence that Zhou shared the functional May Fourth goal for literature of "serving life," he abandoned it after 1922. The break is clearly demarcated with the publication of his essay collection In My Own Garden in 1923. From now on, Zhou said in the title essay, his "garden" was literature and he was going to grow what he liked in it. If the flowers he grew there benefitted anyone in any way, that was fine, but that was not his aim. Having rejected didacticism, he developed a vision of the intellectual as one who combined freely chosen scholarly interests and personal aesthetic and emotional response. Zhou refused to see this intellectual as standing outside society with any kind of message. All he wanted, he said in 1923, was an imaginary friend capable of understanding an ordinary person's feelings, and fifteen years later he hoped only that sometimes a reader might feel some small degree of affinity with him, the writer, as a fellow human being. Zhou made

---

11 "Wenyi piping zahua" [Random comments on literary and artistic criticism], Tan long ji [Talking About Dragons] (Shanghai: Kaiming shuju, 1927) 1-9.
12 "Ziji de yuandi jiu xu" [Early preface to In My Own Garden], Tan long ji, 49-52; "Jie yuan dou" [Beans to tie affinities], Gua dou ji [Melons and Beans]
the reader's response to the writer one of the most important planks in his literary theory. What made a literary work great, in his view, was the extent to which the writer was able to convey his own "natural hue," or bense, to the reader.13

In invoking the concept of bense, Zhou was drawing on its late Ming usage as a term denoting the inexpressible individual stamp found on a real work of art, what comes through of the author in a text when all the "powder and paint" of literary artifice and received opinion have been removed.14 In the late Ming, this involved issues of the relationship of the self to the text, and through the text to the tradition as codified and canonized at the time.15 It is convenient to see bense as one strand in a complex discourse on the individual, which was continued in Qing times and on which Zhou drew freely in his writing. What it implied in the author was a sincerity and truthfulness, which enabled him to convey both the truth of his individual feelings and ideas and the truth of the situation or things he was writing about. Or perhaps it would be better to say that the writer was able to convey both the quality of his awareness and the quality of that of which he was aware. It also implied non-artificiality in language, but not lack of refinement or subtlety. Zhou described bense as something virtually impossible for a writer to achieve, and yet it was what he urged writers to strive for.16

Another quality Zhou sought in writing was quwei, a similarly

---

(Shanghai: Yuzhou feng she, 1937) 250-255.
14 On the Ming development of the concept of bense see Ching-i Tu, "Neo-Confucianism and Literary Criticism in Ming China: The Case of T'ang Shun-chih (1507-1560)", Tamkang Review XV, 1-4, 547-560. For a useful historical analysis of the concept see Gong Pengcheng, Sishi bense yu miaowu ["Natural Hue" and "Marvelous Enlightenment" in the History of Poetry], Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu congkan 15 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1986) 94-135.
16 As he states, "I have been writing for thirty years, and have recently begun to understand simplicity ...but bense is like gazing at a distant road and not being able to see it". Bense thus appears to be as much an issue of self-cultivation as of literary technique. See "Bense", Feng yu tan 38.
Susan Daruvala

multi-layered aesthetic category. Zhou's usage of *quwei* seems to encompass several senses. *Quwei* can refer to subjective, personal predilections, and also the predilections or tastes of a time or place before they have frozen into an authorized, hegemonical view. It can also refer to that special quality in writing which sparks the reader's interest, sympathy, curiosity, amusement, in a word, engagement with the text. As will be seen below, *quwei* becomes very important in the discussion of "local flavor" in literature. What Chaves describes as "the ineffable essence at the heart of things" provides a ground for these variations of meaning.

In Zhou's view, the best vehicle for the representation of an author's individuality was the essay. As early as 1921, he called for the development of an essay form which would serve as a vehicle for "those thoughts which can neither be turned into stories nor are suitable for poems," although in character they could be indistinguishable from fiction and poetry. The essay was thus the genre he worked in, much preferring it to what he called the "artificiality" of the novel or drama. Although resolutely unpolemical, and often on some obscure subject, his essays touched on many contemporary issues, such as the position of women.

---

17 The concepts of *qu* and *wei* (for which the immediate modern equivalents are "interest" and "taste" respectively) were both important in Song dynasty poetics, and thus came to be reinvoked and reformulated in the late Ming debates about the individual and the tradition upon which Zhou drew in his writing. I have found most useful Jonathan Chaves definition of *qu* as "the ineffable essence at the heart of things ...it is also a quality in the mind or soul of one who perceives *qu* in the outer world". See Jonathan Chaves, "The Panoply of Images: A Reconsideration of the Literary Theory of the Kung-an School," Bush and Murck 345.

18 "Wenyi piping zahua", *Tan long ji* 6-8.

19 "Chun zai tang zawen" [Miscellaneous writings of Chun zai tang (Yu Yue 1821-1906)], *Yao wei ji* 104-112.

20 Chaves 345.

21 "Meiwen" [Belles lettres], *Tan hu ji* [Speaking of Tigers], (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1928) 41-42. A translation can be found in Pollard, *A Chinese Look at Literature* 105-6.

22 "Riji yu chidu" [Diaries and letters], *Yu tian di shu* [A Rainy Day Book] (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1925) 11-16.

23 For a general discussion of Zhou's essays see Ernst P. Wolff, *Chou Tso-jen*, Twayne's World Authors Series (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971) 32-76, which also contains a bibliography. For a fuller bibliographic study see Zhou
progressive views caused him to be blacklisted and some of his writings to be banned by the warlord governments in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{24} The broadminded, humanistic, intellectual image Zhou projected through the skillful mixture of quiet humor, erudition and social conscience in his essays functioned as an alternative to other contemporary representations of the intellectual.

We can begin to explore his representation of the nation by asking why Zhou found his exile in Tokyo so congenial, when for so many of his contemporaries, including his elder brother Lu Xun, it was so painful. There are common-sense answers to this question, that Zhou himself sometimes gave: being the younger brother, he was to a large extent protected from the problems of exile life, as Lu Xun did most of their talking and negotiating; and he had not had to endure the xenophobia of the Russo-Japanese war and suffer the harassment that Lu Xun had been subjected to.\textsuperscript{25} But there were other, more central reasons. Zhou explained it as a matter of personal temperament:

\begin{quote}
I grew up in the southeastern riverlands where life is plain and frugal. In winter we have no heating and the cold weather blows right through the bedclothes, and we eat very salty pickled fish, and very salty pickled vegetables at our meals throughout the year. With this kind of training, naturally, Tokyo could not fail to suit me.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

Although Zhou says this was a matter of temperament, he does not refer to his personal tastes, but invokes his place of origin, the implication being that his temperament had been formed and molded by the chilly weather and salty food of home. This seems to give his attachment to Tokyo a double meaning: he is not just boasting, in the manner of the well-adjusted exile, that he managed to get used to the food and weather, he is suggesting that Tokyo and his home shared other similarities to which he could not help but respond favorably.

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{25} Zhitang huixiang lu 188.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{26} Zhitang huixiang lu 179.
\end{flushleft}
because his temperament had been formed by his home; nineteenth-century writers from Zhou's Shaoxing area had contrasted their supposed simplicity and purity of intellectual style with the "frippery" of nearby centres like Hangzhou and Suzhou, so Zhou's characterization of his home as plain and frugal was nothing new.  

Zhou made a clear distinction between Tokyo and Japan, pointing out that he had had very little opportunity to travel outside the capital. Moreover the Japanese literature he most admired was that of Edo, the precursor to modern Tokyo.  

By putting his love for Japan under the rubric of "home," Zhou could counter charges that he was seduced by the alien. But at a deeper level, given the immense constitutive importance of Zhou's home in his (textual) self-identity, the fact that his love for Tokyo was grounded in its supposed similarities to Shaoxing served to reinforce his own sense of self, for now there were two localities through which he could refine and expand his tastes and values, without being made to feel fundamentally changed. Thus, in his writing, Tokyo is experienced in a way which permitted cultural confidence. The important point here is that this cultural confidence was enabled by the fact that Zhou used his Tokyo experience to define himself as belonging to a locality rather than in terms of his citizenship of a modern nation state. This should not be taken to mean, of course, that he ever defined himself politically, or even socially in this way. But there is no denying that throughout his work Zhou's authorial presence is constantly buttressed by references to his place of origin.  

The idea that there is a relationship between temperament, the geographical features and customs of a locality and cultural attributes with an implicit moral dimension, such as frugality, and that these can be seen in art, existed very early on in Chinese thinking. It is first seen in the Confucian canonical text, the Zuozhuan, in an incident which recorded for the year 543 BCE, in which a prince of Wu went on a friendly mission to the court of Lu, and listened to a performance of songs. The prince was able to identify the period and geographical origin of each song according to the moral character it supposedly expressed.  

---

29 James Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975) 63. The episode is included in Burton Watson, The Tso Chuan:
Zhou Zouren: "At home"

literature at the beginning of the third century, in Cao Pi's "Lunwen" (Discourse on Literature). Cao Pi considered the factors that went to make up the underlying spirit or qi of a work to be individual genius based on temperament, personal style as an expression of this genius, and regional style, the manifestation of the qi of the writer's locality. So, describing the writing of a contemporary he says that it has the qi of the people of the writer's homeplace, who were reputed to be sluggish.30

Zhou Zuoren may be seen as invoking this literary tradition, which remained perennial, in the preface to his second essay collection, Yu tian di shu, in which Zhou claims to have made two discoveries about himself.31 The first is that though he hates moralists, he is himself a moralist, and therefore all his essays, ultimately, are attempts to establish a new kind of morality. The second is that he cannot rid himself of his East Zhejiang (Zhedong) temperament. He writes, "although our family has only lived there for fourteen generations, the four hundred years of influence from the fengtu (social customs and natural conditions) there has been very strong."32 Therefore, he says, he cannot avoid sounding like a typical Shaoxing lawyer (Shaoxing shiye) and reprimanding others. There is some humor and self-mockery in this, as Shaoxing had been nationally renowned for the slipperiness as well as the sharp tongues of its legal bureaucrats for several hundred years.33

Zhou's insistence that his temperament was formed by his native place, and that both informed his work is explicated more fully in a key text first published in a Zhejiang newspaper in 1923.34 First, Zhou takes it as obvious that there are differences between literature produced in, say, northern France and Provence, and that this is a good thing. Then he claims that the reason for current dissatisfaction with the new literature is that it is "too abstract, works to a prescribed concept and doesn't express our own individuality". The remedy is to "break free of these self-imposed shackles". Next, Zhou posits that for the preceding three centuries two authorial styles, the one graceful yet

---


32 "Zixu er" [Second Preface], Yu tian di shu 4-5.

33 Cole 9-11.

34 "Difang yu wenyi" [Locality and art], Tan long ji 11-16.
profound, and the other sharp and trenchant, had been typical of Zhejiang writers.\textsuperscript{35} The fact that few of the writers he mentioned had been members of scholarly or literary schools had enabled them to keep their individuality, Zhou said, for schools tended to lay down rules which could create a common mode of thinking or writing, but discouraged change or artistic value. It was to refuse the dangers of "a fixed, new outlook on life and a fixed literary form" that Zhou declared his intention of writing whatever he pleased, in whatever style, provided it was "my own real heartbeat, formed by the fusion of heritage and environment and not created according to preconceived doctrine".

In Europe, it was Vico who first brought out the notion of cultural style, and Herder who developed it into a full-blown theory of belonging, according to which a man could only be truly creative if he belonged to a milieu and a culture shaped by an external environment and biological needs.\textsuperscript{36} Herder's views, which have thoroughly permeated Western thinking, were developed in reaction to Enlightenment ideas which denied the unity of man and society.\textsuperscript{37} Herder must be mentioned here not to form an analogy or contrast with Cao Pi, but because the legacy of his ideas can be seen in May Fourth debates about populism and the duty of the writer to express himself and his society. They can also be seen in the development of 19th century anthropology which rejected historical determinism, and instead posited a psychic unity of mankind, and the relativity of cultures.\textsuperscript{38} Frazer, mentioned above as one of the thinkers Zhou first came to read in Tokyo, wrote in the anthropological tradition. Although now disregarded by anthropologists, by bringing together a vast compendium of myths, Frazer opened the way for literature to explore how societies try to balance the irrational drives of human sexuality and the rational need for the survival of the group.\textsuperscript{39} It has

\textsuperscript{35} David Pollard has suggested that Zhou saw himself and Lu Xun as represented by these two types. See his "Lu Xun's Zawen" in Leo Ou-fan Lee (ed) \textit{Lu Xun and His Legacy} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 87-89.


\textsuperscript{37} Berlin 199.


\textsuperscript{39} For a contemporary anthropologist's evaluation of Fraser see Stanley J.
been argued that with his concern with sexuality, Fraser charted the same sort of territory in anthropological terms that Freud did.\textsuperscript{40}

Looking at the way Zhou uses the idea of the formative influence of locality on a writer's work and interests, we can see him invoking Cao Pi's aesthetics of belonging, but illuminating it with Frazer's kind of modern understanding of the psychic life of a community. In an early essay, Zhou Zuoren said that he was against localism \textit{(difangzhuyi)} in all spheres of life except the artistic.\textsuperscript{41} It was the strength of the local (defined in terms of \textit{fengtu}) in a work which was important and gave it character. This was not the same, he made clear, as the forced, literalist depiction of rural or local life found in some contemporary literature, or the "false literature" of traditional patriotism. What he regretted was the tendency to throw local flavor out of writing in the name of cosmopolitanism. For Zhou there was no contradiction between cosmopolitanism—the consciousness of being a member of the world—and consciousness of belonging to a locality. He saw them as mutually related, just in the same way that the individual is related to humanity. Far from diminishing the importance of the local, cosmopolitanism made it more necessary.

Commenting on the book entitled \textit{Old Dreams} by his Shaoxing contemporary Liu Dabai, Zhou continued:

\begin{quote}
I'm afraid I cannot say that his poems contain very much local flavor. I wish he could have written more about his real dreams, old and new, that he could have written more clearly about the mountains at Pingshui, of the color of the water on Baima Lake, and of the sounds of the main-street markets.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

From the reference to dreams, the key to the psyche, we see that in Zhou's representation of locality there is room for the mythic dimension of society, in contrast to the stress in didactic, realist fiction on social and economic relationships. By bringing together mountains, water and the noise of the markets, Zhou also shows concern for human

\textsuperscript{40} Vickery 71.
\textsuperscript{41} "Jiu Meng" [Old Dreams], \textit{Ziji di Yuandi} 151-154.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ziji di Yuandi} 153.
activity within a natural setting which seems to enfold it.

How, then, can locality be fitted into the wider world? And where does it mesh with past and future? We can approach this question through the second reason Zhou gave for his love of Tokyo. This was his "delight in the past". At that time, he explains, he was a believer in the "national revolution" (minzu geming), which opposed the Qing dynasty, on ethnically-based nationalist grounds. Japan was exhilarating because it stood witness to the glories of pre-Qing Chinese material and literary culture: Japanese clothes, furniture, shop signs, calligraphic techniques, expressed a legacy of Chinese craftsmanship and aesthetics, and Japanese literature sometimes had a "freshness and directness" that Chinese writing had had in the Wei-Jin period (220-420). In the ideology of the national revolution, the fact that these things existed in Japan but no longer in China prompted action rather than nostalgia. It signified not that China had lost its cultural vitality but that this vitality had been unjustly repressed by alien dynasties like the Qing. The moral imperative was to free this vitality. Although Zhou must have rethought whatever beliefs he may have had about the political form of the anti-Qing national revolution, he did retain a view of Chinese history which saw modern Chinese life as beginning in the Song dynasty (960-1279). In his writing, this translates into the equation of contemporary discourse—which he characterized as pompous, empty, and ultimately harmful theorizing—with what he saw as the long-winded and equally empty debates of the Song metaphysicians and their successors. This contrasts sharply with the May Fourth consciousness that modernity had begun in the twentieth century and brought with it a radically new discourse.

The intellectual force behind the concept of national revolution was Zhang Binglin, with whom Zhou Zuoren and Lu Xun studied classical Chinese philology in Tokyo. Zhang Binglin was both chief propagandist of Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance, and an immensely erudite scholar trained in the tradition of evidential studies, which, as Elman has shown, replaced philosophical

---

43 Zhitang huixiang lu 179.
44 Zhou Zuoren, "Huai Dongjing," Zhou Zuoren daibiaozuo xuan 95.
45 See for example, "Dun yin za lu" [Miscellaneous records of Dun Yin (Feng Ban 1614-1701)], Feng yu tan 39-44.
speculation with philological research in the study of the classics.47 Zhang provided textual evidence from the Chinese classical tradition to oppose the constitutional reformers such as Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, who wanted to keep the emperor and make Confucianism into the state religion.48 Zhang's weapon in the revolution was history. He believed that the greatness of Confucius was that he had given the Chinese people their history, and he believed that nationalism was nourished by history. History he defined broadly as the "people, institutions, geography and customs recorded in the historical texts." To those who considered that this kind of subject matter was too banal, Zhang retorted that since China was the place where "we ourselves sleep, eat and rest," the "people, institutions, geography and customs [are] our living necessities, just like food, drink and clothing."49 This suggests a history where the past flows into the present, or at least, where the present succeeds the past at a rate which can be measured against the lives of people and communities, not as massive rupture.

The people have become a very important component of the nation, in Zhang's formulation, but in a direction which is the opposite of Yan Fu's. In Yan Fu's discourse, the people were an undiscovered and desired constituent of a modern nation, who were to be imbued with modernity by the outside agency of the state, and later, of course, the intellectuals. But in Zhang's view the people embodied a national past which, provided the obstacle of alien Manchu rule was removed, could come into full cultural flower again. Love of the people and esteem of the nation and its history went together, and so the revolutionary leader was also a scholar. But where were the people to be encountered? Judging from the stress on institutional continuity implicit in Zhang's thinking, the meeting place for the people and the elite, the site for the uncovering of history must be the locality.

I believe that Zhou Zuoren shared the understanding of the locality as a site of history that I have imputed to Zhang. By locating


the people in the locality, their continuity with history is ensured, and in some ways mediated by the locality. The locality also mediates the relationship between the scholar and the people, because it contains them both, since they both share a common origin there. Implicitly, in terms of this understanding, the locality functions to contain and interpret class struggle within a familiar, even familistic arena. Class is not denied as a fact of life, but is rejected as a privileged category in the recovery of the nation or the self-construction of the individual. Some idea of Zhou's attitude to the issue of class in the May Fourth period can be gauged from his enthusiasm for the ideals of the utopian Japanese "New Village" movement set up by the writer Mushakoji Sanetsu (1885-1976) in 1918 in Hyuuga. Zhou was impressed and excited by the Tolstoyan attempt of the movement's participants to achieve socialist ideals in their own lives and their internationalist "love of humanity," which transcended the narrower ideal of love for one's compatriots. He found this comforting to "those who awaited revolution and at the same time harbored misgivings."

Recalling that Zhou had called for the local in literature as an antidote to the sterile new orthodoxy--i.e. the rhetoric of nation-building--he saw gaining ground everywhere, we must ask how, in fact, the local did articulate with the idea of the nation in his writing. The answer to this question will throw some light on the issue of class in Zhou's writing. In the article on locality and literature quoted earlier, after calling for "a return to the soil," Zhou said:

Perhaps some may suspect that what I am talking about is close to traditionalism, or to that subject so dear to Chinese, the national essence [literally, national essence-ism: guosui zhuyi]. I reply, absolutely not. I believe the so-called national essence can be divided into two parts. The living part is in our blood and veins, this is the inheritance of "flavor" and we are powerless to get rid of it or keep it, so naturally it is expressed in all our speech and actions, with no need to be protected and preserved. The dead part is the morality and customs of the past which are unsuitable for the present, which there is no point in preserving

---

Zhou Zouren: "At home"

and which cannot be preserved. 51

This statement nowhere mentions any class or social category, such as the folk. By locating the "living" part of the national essence "in our veins" and equating it with the heritage of bense—the "ineffable essence at the heart of things"—nation and locality are linked at the level of the unaffiliated "we." This "we" stands for the individual moving through the speech and actions of daily life, for, as Zhou said elsewhere, "the history of people is actually the continuum of day-to-day human affairs." 52 The individual in the locality thus becomes the basic unit of the nation, which therefore cannot be hypostatized as the emanation of any social group. As the individual is contemporary, it also follows that "national essence" cannot belong to any particular period, so it becomes infinitely flexible and adaptable. 53 It need not fear dilution or contamination by outside influences, only imitation, (of any source, Chinese or non-Chinese), as imitation destroyed art. 54 In another early essay, Zhou criticized the contemporary belief that literature could be divided into "good," meaning twentieth century and popular, and "bad," meaning nineteenth century and aristocratic. Literature was too changing and continuous to be divided so arbitrarily, he said, while admitting to differences in the attitudes expressed in elite and popular literature. But a combination of elite refinement and reflection and popular this-worldliness would give rise to a genuine "people's literature." 55

These views enabled Zhou Zuoren to move unconstrainedly back and forth between the Qing dynasty and his own time. One function of his continual exploration, recovery and re-presentation of Qing dynasty literati writing was to attenuate the break with literati culture experienced with the abolition of the imperial examination system. The reader, led through the notes, jottings, prefaces and other miscellaneous writings Zhou quoted from so freely, discovers opinions and personalities which can provide interest today, in a language which is patently not dead, because the reader is reading it. 56 Some of

51 "Difang yu wenyi," Tan long ji 16.
52 "Qing jia lu" [Records of Qing Jia (Gu Zongzhi)], Ye du chao [Notes from Night Reading], (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1934) 132-133.
53 "Guocui yu ouhua" [National essence and Europeanization], Ziji di yuandi 9-12.
54 Ziji de yuandi 9-12.
56 Zhou even suggested that the personal essays of the Qing scholar Yu Yue
the writers Zhou quoted had been unconventional figures—literati who had refused office, Taoist recluses and others, many of whom, if not actually from Shaoxing or Zhejiang were from the Lower Yangtze area. Zhou consistently highlighted their independent-mindedness coupled with a generosity of spirit that transcended sectarianism. Moreover, it was often on the basis of their records of local material culture that Zhou constructed his own lyrical evocations of it.

The kind of relationship to his locality and its history that I am trying to establish in Zhou Zuoren's writing can be contrasted to mainstream May Fourth writing, that of Lu Xun, for example, which saw the intellectual as totally alienated from his native place. In this writing, the intellectual is constrained by the perception of the people as the raw material out of which a modern nation is supposed to be wrought. But, himself deprived of confidence in Chinese culture by the universalism of western science, and the urgency of the supposed Darwinian struggle of nations, he cannot see any continuity between past and present, or between the locality and its customs and himself. He becomes the outsider, and this is a source of considerable suffering.

Zhou Zuoren's representation of the identity of the intellectual as being partly determined by embeddedness in history and culture mediated by the locality was paralleled by his theories of literature and language. Here again, we will be able to locate Zhou's ideas had a European flavor, and that reading them would be very helpful for those who wanted to improve their own style. See "Chun zai tang zawan," Yao wei ji 112.

In this context, it is interesting that one of Zhou Zuoren's major contributions to the study of folklore was to report the legends surrounding the character of Xu Wenchang (1521-1593), a Shaoxing literatus who had become a ribald, anti-establishment folk hero. The legends, which turned out to have counterparts all over China, provided the folklore movement with plenty of material with which to analyze popular attitudes to authority. They could also be read as providing an alternative image of the literatus, one closer to "the folk," than the hidebound, traditional scholar of May Fourth rhetoric. Chang-tai Hung 83-93.

See for instance, "Guanyu Fu Qingzhu" [About Fu Qingzhu] Feng yu tan 1-7. An example is "Mai tang" [Candy selling], Yao wei ji 126-131. It is translated in Wolff 92-95.

In real life, Lu Xun tried to avoid identifying himself as a native of Shaoxing, preferring to say just that he was from Zhejiang. Zhitang huixiang lu 304-305.

See Wah-kwan Cheng 90-97, for a discussion of Yan Fu's acceptance of the "western way," embodied by science, as superior to Chinese civilization.
within the discourse of Zhang Binglin's nationalist scholarship. When Zhang taught philology to Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren and a handful of others in Tokyo, he was giving them the linguistic means to break away from the constitutionalist reformers. The reformers, men like Yan Fu, Kang Youwei and Lin Shu, wrote in a *guwen* (classical Chinese) heavily influenced by the Tongcheng school of writing, in which substance was bent to style. In the translations of Lin Shu and Yen Fu, for example, Dickens and Huxley spoke in a fluent Confucian rhetoric. It was through learning the terse Wei-Jin style of *guwen* that the Zhou brothers became able to make translations from foreign languages that reflected their content, and not the political aims of the translators. Subsequently both Zhou and Lu Xun developed writing styles which reflected the legacy of Wei-Jin clarity and concision. 62

As could be expected, the Tongcheng school was roundly condemned by all the May Fourth intellectuals for providing the language of Confucian privilege and reaction, and Zhou was no exception. 63 However, he rejected the dominant May Fourth belief that there was a historical, linear progression towards the use of *baihua* (the vernacular), preferring to see a very complex, organic relationship between elite and popular uses of *guwen* and vernacular languages. Whereas May Fourth discourse typically equated progress and modernity with *baihua*, and reaction and parochialism with *guwen*, Zhou formulated his history of Chinese literature between altogether different polarities. In a series of lectures given in 1932 on the origins of the new literature, Zhou described Chinese literature as historically oscillating between the use of "literature to convey the way" (*wenyi zaidao*) and "literature to express the feelings" (*shi yan zhi*). 64 Zhou considered the *zaidao* use of literature to be inherently wrong, as it ignored the true function of art as expression. 65 Although the use of *zaidao* went back to Han Yu (768-824), Zhou said, even when neo-Confucianists had written about the Way, they had remained literary men. But the Tongcheng school, which had emerged in the early Qing, was more sinister: its adherents had sought to combine neo-Confucian moral teachings and classical literary forms, and they regarded

---

62 Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Tradition and Modernity in the Writings of Lu Xun," *Lu Xun and His Legacy* 27.
63 Pollard 140.
65 Yuanliu 34-40.
themselves not as writers, but as "uniting in their persons moral philosophy, textual scholarship and literary style."66 In other words, the Tongcheng writers had become moralists, writing had become propaganda, and literature an impossibility.

The importance and originality of Zhou's argument becomes clear when he places the celebrated May Fourth pioneers Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu in a direct line of descent from Wu Rulun, Yan Fu and Lin Shu. All of them had sought to use literature to introduce foreign ideas and scientific thought, and this leads him to the conclusion that "the beginning of the present literary movement was in reality touched off by people from within the Tongcheng school."67

It is the opposition between Wei-Jin clarity and freedom of expression, and the heavy didacticism traced back to Han Yu in Zhou Zuoren's typology of writing that gives another level of meaning to his representation of nation. For Han Yu's life's work was to redefine the meaning of what it was to be Chinese in the wake of the An Lushan rebellion. The Tang dynasty, the ruling family of which was of mixed Sinic and Turkish origin, had tried to maintain a policy of equality between its Chinese (Hua) and non-Chinese (Hu) populations, and initially between military and civilian values. In a way, the cultural flowering of the Tang can be seen as a culmination of the several centuries of literary and artistic experimentation in a multi-cultural setting. But after the rebellion, Han Yu worked for a political restoration in which only the monarchy and the bureaucracy shared power, and in which though the nation might be multi-racial, it could not be multi-cultural, only Hua. The exclusivist definition of Hua was one Han Yu and like-minded thinkers provided by superimposing invented lineages on whatever texts from earlier Chinese traditions suited their goal. The cultural guardians of the redefined nation were to operate through a redefined Confucian sagehood. These two aims mandated the creation of a unified literary style, a goal elaborated subsequently by neo-Confucians and expressed as "literature serving the way."68

What we see with Han Yu is the beginning of a long and sophisticated history of representing the nation in a modern sense. This accords with the assertion of historians that the roots of Chinese nationalism can be found in the emergence of patriotism during the Song

---

66 Yuanliu 79.
67 Yuanliu 83.
dynasty. It was in the context of the harsh depredations of the Jin invasions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that a concept of loyalty to the embattled Chinese state (guo), began replacing confidence in a universalist "all under heaven" (tianxia).69

Zhou's rejection of the didacticism he sees in contemporary literature and which he traces back to Han Yu, is thus another element in his critique of contemporary representations of the nation. If in the 1920s the nation consisted of the inchoate masses who were to be imbued with modernity, in the 1930s the nation was increasingly represented as incarnate in the heroic resistance to Japanese aggression of the Chinese people. This representation probably has its paradigm in the "March of the Volunteers" which calls on "all those who would not be slaves to build a new Great Wall out of our own flesh and blood."70 The song, first heard in the film "Children of the Storm" in 1935, became the national anthem of the People's Republic of China.71

Here again, Zhou's depiction of his exile worked against this representation of nation, and we come back to the idea of locality, for there was a lesson to be derived from the similarities of Tokyo and Shaoxing. This was that these similarities, their "flavor," produced a similar aesthetic sensibility, even if the art-form itself was different. This shared aesthetic sensibility derived from a common East Asian heritage, which could not just be dismissed, however superior some might consider European culture to be. Zhou quoted extensively from Meiji and Taisho writers like Tanizaki Junichiro (1886-1965), Kinoshita Mokutaroo (1885-1945) and Nagai Kafu (1879-1959) who celebrated the aesthetic appeal of Tokyo and Edo culture, even while lamenting how colorless, old and repressive it seemed next to the splendors of the West. Shaoxing and Tokyo thus became localities under a kind of cultural tian, or heaven, which, in some ways, transcended the fact they were in different countries. Given the fact of Zhou's collaboration with the Japanese, put this way, my extrapolation of a "cultural tianxia," of a shared cultural space, can be seen as feeding all too easily into the idea of the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere. This was surely not what Zhou intended: he

71 Waldron 216.
lamented as a tragedy for East Asians the fact that some Japanese fascists were prepared to swallow up Asia and exercise domestic repression in order to become as well-off as the West.\textsuperscript{72} I see this as indicating that Zhou extended his dislike of the nation-state and the rhetoric of nation-building to the Japanese case. If we revert to the opposition posited between Han Yu and Wei-Jin multiculturalism, then the notion of cultural \textit{tianxia} implies openness and cosmopolitanism.\textsuperscript{73} That this cosmopolitanism extended beyond Shaoxing and Tokyo is demonstrated in Zhou's essay collections by the manner in which his intellectually and geographically wide-ranging interests are interleaved with his representations of locality. The effect is one of inclusivity and diversity. It was Zhou Zuoren's mistrust of the nation-state, desire for which consumed the creativity of so many of his contemporaries, that led him to reject the nation as a trope of belonging, and exile as a trope of alienation.

\textsuperscript{72} "Huai Dongjing," \textit{Zhou Zuoren daibiaozuo xuan} 104.

\textsuperscript{73} Edward Gunn has demonstrated that Zhou Zuoren's wartime essays were intended as refutations of Japanese propaganda about cultural purity in his \textit{Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking, 1937-45}, (New York: Columbia UP, 1980) 151-171.
Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever."

--Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile"

Edward Said's words may be aptly appropriated to describe the condition of several Chinese poets in exile whom I have known. But the poet I focus on here, Duoduo, was in a sense already an exile before he ever left his native soil; he was estranged and alienated from official society, as were most of his generation and social class, by the violence and arbitrariness of what they had believed to be an egalitarian and utopian project, the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. Even before exposure to a canonical array of foreign Modernist poets which included Baudelaire, Sylvia Plath, Marina Tsvetayeva and to their negotiation of alienation, the brutality and despair of Chinese social life are foregrounded by fanciful travels in a foreign poetic West of the mind, as in this poem written, without hope of publication, towards the end of the Cultural Revolution when Duoduo was twenty-two years old:


2 Duoduo was born in 1951 in Peking. His mother had trained as an opera singer and his father was an academic economist. After high school, the universities being closed, like many of his contemporaries he roamed the country and perceived the material realities of New China at first hand.
BLESSINGS

When society has difficulty giving birth
that thin, black widow ties magic words on a bamboo rod
which she waves at the rising moon
a blood-soaked streamer emits an endless stench
making evil dogs everywhere howl the whole night long

From that superstitious time on
the motherland, was led by another father
wandering in the parks of London and the streets of Michigan
staring with orphan's eyes at hurried steps that come and go
and again and again stuttering out old hopes and humiliations

1973

But even when this Chinese neo-modernist poet has been at his
most extremely modernist, exotic reverie is never more than a youthful
by-product of an engagement with modernism which had a deeply
serious purpose. For modernism supplied the means both to negotiate
and engage reality; engage since escapism alone might provide a means
of negotiating reality, and Duoduo, much less ostentatiously, but often
more effectively than many of his contemporaries, very seriously
engages and probes reality, furnishing caustic critique of social life.4

3 Revised version of my translation of the poem in Duoduo, Looking Out From
Death: From the Cultural Revolution to Tiananmen Square, trans. Gregory Lee
and John Cayley (London: Bloomsbury, 1989) 22; all translations in this paper
are mine.
4 It may seem odd to talk of ideological critique of social life of a state whose
authorities claim to practice Marxism, since the notion of ideological critique,
as I deploy it, stems from a Marxian analysis, but then it has been in such
states with their ossified, institutionalized practices more appropriate to
Mussolini's fascism than to a liberating ideology, that ideology, in the senses of
false consciousness and the institutionalizing of a dominant notion of Truth,
has been at least as powerful as the twentieth-century West's ideology of
capitalist modernity which is usually the object of critique. The recent
conversion of Chinese bureaucratic "socialism" to free market capitalism
renders such ideological critique even more necessary. Indeed, social
conditions in 1990s China are such that it cannot be long now before a more
forceful social critique becomes a major concern of Chinese cultural
Since the poet Duoduo and many of his exiled contemporaries seem easily accommodated within the constellation of literary Modernism, a brief consideration of Modernism—or irrealism or postrealism—in the Chinese context is essential to any discussion of exile, and of a future for Chinese writing. "Irrealism" is a term coined by Borges, while Kwame Appiah has elaborated the idea of "postrealism" in relation to the second generation or new wave of African writers such as the francophone novelist Yambo Ouologuem.\(^5\) Appiah shows how this second generation refuted or challenged the postcolonial realist novel, the originary "African novel", exemplified by Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Ouologuem, in particular, comes out against the realist novel, identifying it with the project of nationalist legitimation, indeed stigmatizing it because the nationalism it sought to naturalize had by the end of the 1960s plainly failed. The national bourgeoisie's enthusiasm for nativism was, Appiah suggests, rationalization of their urge to keep other national bourgeoisies and the industrialized nations, and former colonial powers out of their way. As the project of the first generation of post-colonial novelists is rejected, so is the realist novel itself. The conventions of realism are rejected, post-realism is promoted. That the author assaults the conventions of realism most of the time, and is thus anti-realist in his post-realism, means he or she can borrow the techniques of modernism, which are frequently as Jameson, has noted the techniques of post-modernism.\(^6\) Similarly in post-Mao China post-realism has tended to predominantly signify anti-realist, modernist. Of course, there had already been in China, during the 1920s-1940s, an active Modernist school, just as there had been a fascination with Freud, a fascination which would re-emerge in the 1980s.

As the late Raymond Williams demonstrated, the role of the metropolis is crucial to the growth of Modernism, and that role was fulfilled in China by the Shanghai of the 1920s and 1930s; "it is not the general themes of response to the city and its modernity which compose anything that can properly be called Modernism. It is rather the new

---


\(^6\) *Critical Inquiry* 17, 349.
and specific location of the artists and intellectuals of this movement within the changing cultural milieu of the metropolis." Williams also describes a scenario which with very little modification and exercise of the imagination could be Deng Xiaoping's capital, the Beijing of the 1980s: "The metropolis housed the great traditional academies and museums and their orthodoxies; their very proximity and powers of control were both a standard and a challenge. But also, within a new kind of open, complex and mobile society, small groups in any form of divergence or dissent could find some kind of foothold, in ways that could not have been possible if the artists and thinkers composing them had been scattered in more traditional, closed societies." As Williams notes there is a "radical difference" between such "struggling innovators" and the "modernist establishment" which consolidates their achievement. Of course, China has not had and does not have a modernist establishment as such. Pace Jameson, the "modernism" pursued at the end of 1980s by such as the novelist and exploiter of modernist techniques, and then Minister of Culture, Wang Meng, was not of the same order as the modernism of "unofficial" writing; it might also be recalled that it was during Wang Meng's tenure at the Ministry of Culture that avant-garde art exhibitions in the capital were forcibly closed by the authorities. However, what

---

8 Williams 45.
9 Williams 45.
10 Jameson's exposure to Chinese modern literature seems limited to a small number of texts, such as the 1936 realist novel by Lao She, *Camel Xiangzi*, and the fiction of the establishment writer who on occasion exploits "modernist techniques," Wang Meng. Jameson in his critique of modern Chinese literature seems to make a number of "allowances" for Chinese modernism. We learn for instance that when "we turn to socialist countries, we are dealing with a much more recent and chronologically limited tradition from which new and original categories may ultimately be expected to emerge, and in which inherited Western categories risk being rather misleading." "Western categories" indeed may be misleading wherever they are imported, but what is most striking here is the unproblematic acceptance of the PRC as a "socialist" country that somehow matches Jameson's Utopian ideal. Later in the same article we learn of the modernization of China described uncritically as the "specific situation of socialist construction." All seems permissible to the cultural producers of the "socialist" state. "Modernism", normally so problematic for Jameson, is suddenly made acceptable with the revelation that "it seems perfectly appropriate to consider that Wang Meng's work is
Williams describes as the "key cultural factor," the character of the metropolis, most decisively "its direct effect on form," is certainly applicable to Chinese conditions in the twentieth-century. To cite Williams again: "encountering...a novel and dynamic common environment from which many older forms were obviously distant, the artists and writers and thinkers of this phase found the only community available to them: a community of the medium; of their own practices."  

One could describe Chinese anti-realist, irrealist or neo­modernist writing and its practitioners in the late 1970s and 1980s China in similar terms. Such writing can also be seen as oppositional and resistant to the dominant ideology, and this is so all the way from the Democracy Wall period of the late 1970s to 4th June 1989 and beyond. But was the new cultural impulse fuelled by what Williams would call 'negative energy', what Lukács called 'empty dynamism'? In other words is a phenomenon such as the new poetry of the 1970s, or the avant-garde fiction of the late 1980s, capable of more than critique of the rejected ideology of the state. Williams and others have often seen the ideological critique of bourgeois society that avant-gardisms in the West have brought to bear as incapable of going further, and, as Leo Ou-fan Lee has pointed out, modern Chinese writers and artists have consistently felt the obligation to engage in critique.  

But the question that arose in the 1930s, and again in the post-Mao era, was: What then? What comes next? 

The lack of an attempt by progressive writers and artists to arrive at a formulation of what might have come next left literary culture wide open to the deadening effects of socialist realism, revolutionary romanticism and a so-called proletarian literature authorized and authored by the Chinese Communist Party; literary 'modernist' in its structure. But it should also be evident that modernist 'techniques' in this sense need carry no suggestion of some foreign export product which is borrowed or imported into a different socioeconomic context." (Frederic Jameson, "Literary Innovation and Modes of Production: A Commentary," Modern Chinese Literature 1,1 (Spring 1985) 77).

For a detailed critique of Jameson's ideas on Third World Literature, see Aijaz Ahmad, In Theory; Classes, Nations, Literatures, (New York: Verso, 1992).

11 Williams 45.

12 Leo Ou-fan Lee, Voices from the Iron House: A Study of Lu Xun (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987), 135. See also Professor's Lee's contribution to this volume.
modes which may have served a certain propagandistic purpose but which left most concerned, progressive producers of culture silent or confused. As V.G. Kiernan wrote, in the 1973 post-script to his essay "Wordsworth and the People," "the Cultural Revolution has sought to unite thinking individual and mass mind in a newer, more organic fashion, and this accounts for much of its appeal to the West, particularly to the student movement it helped to generate. Whatever the political value of that grand upheaval, however, it would not seem to have had much value for the arts, or 'culture' in any traditional sense; rather it seems to have called on artists and intellectuals to become good Chinese by ceasing to care about being themselves."13

So what about the 1980s and beyond? The fact that a number of oppositional Chinese writers and cultural figures today find themselves in exile abroad should surely make them reflect on the oft-reiterated claim of many of their number that they and their writing are apolitical or uninterested with politics. The persistence of this line of thought was demonstrated by the surprised response on the part of certain exiles, who indeed refuse to be labelled "exiles", when the CCP in 1991 declared the Stockholm-based TODAY literary magazine, with which most exiled cultural figures are associated, a "reactionary publication". A similar response met the party's notifying certain cultural figures 'work units', editorial offices and so on, that such persons were now personae non gratae and were not to be allowed to take up their posts again should they return. The prevalent wisdom seemed to be that if politics as such was avoided and the designation "exile" shunned, no political action would be taken against them.

Yet even before June 4th the mere difference of these post-Mao post-realists, the oppositional nature of their mode of expression which was at odds with the authorized mode, let alone its demonstrated capacity for ideological critique, was highly political. In any case, that the majority of the readers, the consumers, of the poets' lyric production have interpreted the product as political and as engaging in critique of official society is without doubt; witness for instance the recitation of Bei Dao's poems by students at Tiananmen in 1989. Nicole Brossard, the Québécois, francophone, feminist, poet has probed what she sees as the reasons for this contradiction: "People from groups who have been politically, economically, and culturally silenced or censored have expectations that one of them will speak about them and for them...Those readers want so much to hear or see things about themselves that they can even overestimate the political involvement of a writer. That is why writers from those groups are

often asked the question: Are you a political writer? *Etes-vous un écrivain engagé?* A question that embarrasses them and which they will be tempted to avoid by saying they write what they write because they are creative. Which is true but not as simple as it seems." Brossard sees shared experience and a "process of identification" as the reason for the reading of writing as political: "I believe that a lot of writers belonging to minorities whether sexual, racial, or cultural, or writers who belong to groups who live or have lived under colonization, oppression, exploitation, or a dictatorship, are bound to have a loaded personal memory out of which they express themselves as individuals. But inevitably their personal story converges with the one of thousands who have felt and lived the same experience." In the case of Chinese writers of the contemporary period, it might be expected that they would be in no doubt about the shared, common nature of their experience and the likelihood of, at least, their own populous cohort's identification with it.14

So perhaps it is the same old question that needs to be posed: Given that they occupy a political and ideological position, should they not attempt to mould it into something positive or at least define it? As Tony Pinkney in his introduction to *The Politics of Modernism* puts it, glossing Williams, "'in a sobering second stage [in other words after the resistance and oppositionism of modernisms] ...what we want to become, rather than what we do not want to be' becomes a crucial issue".15 Certainly the alternative to such cultural producers defining and determining their own identity will be having their identity determined by the Western Modernist establishment, concerned with commodification and packaging of the writer/artist, and the whole commercial circus that surrounds literary activity which reaches its whirligig crescendo when sanctioned, and sanitized, by the Nobel Prize for Literature.

If the potentialities of Chinese Modernism, or neo-Modernism, are to be redeemed, Chinese writers and artists in exile might attempt to save one another from mutual isolation--as their colleagues in China are already doing--attempt to save one another from not merely being exiled from China, but from being "exiles one of another," and from having their work canonized as merely the Chinese "works of radical

---

15 Williams 22; Pinkney is citing Williams' "Afterword" to *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, revised edition with afterword, 1979).
estrangement".16

* 

In thinking here about the redeeming of Modernism, it is its humanizing possibilities that are of concern. For instance, the capacity of modernist practitioners to reconfigure reality, as some contemporary Chinese poetry and fiction has done, the better to engage it and challenge dominant thinking:

INSTRUCTION

Just in the space of a night the wound broke open
even the books on the shelves forsook them
there is only the modern magnificent singer
singing softly, with hoarse voice, into an ear:
Night of a noble, night of a century
they have been eliminated by the jungle of high society
and dealt with in line with a theme like this:
They merely appeared to serve as a foil for
the misery of the world, misery
has become their life's duty.

Who says that the theme of their early life
was bright and cheerful? Even now, they think
It's a pernicious saying
In an evening with a totally artless plot
the lamplight has its source in illusion.
All they see is forever
a monotonous rope that appears in the winter snowfall
they can only go and play tirelessly
struggle with elusive things, and
live together with immemorable things
if the earliest yearnings are revived
emptiness, is already the blemish of their whole life

Their misfortune, comes from idealistic misfortune
but their suffering is brought on by themselves
it is awareness that sharpens their thinking
and through awareness blood is lost.
But they cannot grant traditional reconciliation

16 Williams 35.
although before their birth
the world had existed uncleanly for ages
they still want to find
the first culprit to discover 'truth'
and how long they must wait for
the destruction of the world.

Given the nooses around their necks,
their only madness
is to pull them tighter
but they are not comrades
their scattered destructive strength
still remote has not seized the attention of society
and they are reduced to wrongdoers in the mind
merely because: They misused parables.

But at the very end they pray in the classroom of thought
and, when they see clearly their own writings, are stupefied:
they haven't lived in the Lord's arranged time.
they are people who have missed life,
remained in a place where life is misunderstood
everything they have gone through—is a mere tragedy of birth.

1976

In Europe and North America, Modernism has often been perceived as disengaged from reality; what the British political scientist and critic Alex Callinicos calls "the aesthetic withdrawal from reality." And yet like Williams, Callinicos -- the idea is explicit in the title of his book -- is uncomfortable with what seems to be the post-modernist alternative, epitomized according to Callinicos by the fashionable theorists Lyotard and Baudrillard, whom he accuses of an "aesthetic pose based on the refusal to seek either to comprehend or to transform existing social reality" or, as he puts it more bluntly, of contriving "to fiddle while Rome burns". David

17 Revised version of my translation in Duoduo, Looking Out From Death 58-59.
19 Callinicos 170, 174.
Harvey too, while giving due credit to certain enlightening revelations of post-modernism, is ultimately scathing about what he calls the "silliness of Lyotard's 'radical proposal' that opening up the data banks to everyone as a prologue to radical reform...indicates how even the most resolute of post-modernists is faced in the end with either making some universalizing gesture (like Lyotard's appeal to some pristine concept of justice) or lapsing, like Derrida, into total political silence."20 While post-modern theory seems to be in question here, "post-modern" aesthetic practices would presumably be similarly critiqued. It is indeed questionable how exactly opening up the data banks would enhance the lot of China's poor, and yet might the same not be said of Modernism's contributions?

Raymond Williams towards the end of his life came to reassess Modernism and its possibilities. Pinkney's reading of Williams reveals that he had seen in Modernism a potential force situated between, or perhaps beyond, capitalism on the one hand and on the other a Leninist philosophy so "divorced from experience" that it threatened to reproduce "within socialism the 'dominative' relation to Nature and other characteristics of capitalism".21 As Pinkney indicates "Modernism had already been a resource of sorts against such domination: Ibsen had shown both the actual impossibility and the disastrous human consequences of the abstract will, evincing [a]...sense of the organic textures of 'community' that must be defended against the predations of the 'planning' from above".22 Similarly in the visual arts the British Expressionist painter David Bomberg (1890-1957), the teacher of Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff (all of whose neglected, marginalized work is now coming to be seen as among the most socially meaningful of post-World War Two British art), was convinced that "humanity could only be saved by countering the threat of uncontrolled technological advance," a conviction which led him to declare that "with the approach of scientific mechanization and the submerging of individuals we have urgent need of the affirmation of [the human being's] spiritual significance and...individuality".23 He summed up

21 Williams 26.
22 Wiilliams 26.
his own approach in the terse statement that "our search is towards the spirit in the mass."\textsuperscript{24}

As to the charge of 'subjectivity before politics' in the West, Raymond Williams ascribes the reason for post-1950 avant-garde subjectivity to "what can be seen as a failure in that most extreme political tendency--the Bolshevik variant of socialism--which had attached itself to the ideas and projects of the working class".\textsuperscript{25} How much more a failure has the Chinese variation of socialism proven to be!

Terry Eagleton, perhaps even more pointedly, has described the results of premature socialist revolution thus:

If you try on socialist revolution in chronically backward conditions, with scattered forces and an insufficient development of the means of life, then all you will succeed in doing, in Marx's own phrase, is generalizing scarcity. The official name for this generalization of scarcity is Stalinism. It is highly unlikely that men and women, in a situation in which the production forces have not been 'maturely' developed, will voluntarily submit themselves to the draconian discipline involved in the primitive accumulation of socialist capital. If they will not, then it is probable that the bureaucratic state will do it for them. The dire consequences of that are on record, and are one good reason why socialism has stunk in the nostrils of the Western working class.\textsuperscript{26}

And, by the same token, one might add, why it stinks to this day in the nostrils of the Chinese working class. But, what might have been the alternative to premature socialist revolution? Were Stalinism or bureaucratic capitalism truly the only options? Beyond economic development, surely the failure of the socialisms Eagleton points to was due in large part to their lack of genuine participatory democracy, rather than to the unwillingness of women and men to make sacrifices for a utopian ideal.

Like the Cuban, China's revolution was as nationalist as it was

\textsuperscript{24} Bomberg 40.
\textsuperscript{25} Williams 26-27.
\textsuperscript{26} Terry Eagleton, foreword to Kristin Ross, \textit{The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune}, (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1988) xiii-xiv.
socialist and relied heavily on the discourse and ideology of nationalism, a powerful ideology and very much capable, at least for a time, of convincing people to "submit themselves to the draconian discipline involved in the primitive accumulation of socialist capital."27 Today the urban classes of China are no longer convinced of the Chinese Communist Party's patriotic credentials and the mantle and ideology of nationalism has been eagerly seized by those who have gathered around the banner of the failed political revolution of Tiananmen 1989. But such nationalism whether appropriated by Communist or anti-Communist, never was, and still is not, sufficient as a politically ameliorative ideology.28

In speaking of the Western context, Williams allows to Modernism the possibility of "the alternative directions in which a continuing bourgeois dissidence might go".29 If we rephrase the proposition for post-Maoist urban elite dissidence which refutes "the Bolshevik variant of socialism" I would suggest that, there are still, in China, alternative directions in which such dissent might go. The possibility of alternative directions has been demonstrated in Europe by modernists like Bomberg. The dehumanizing, mechanizing, industrializing, militarizing of the world by capitalism and by bureaucratic socialism—the supremacy of modernity, not modernism—was seen to despoil and destroy, and so Bomberg stressed individuality and difference, just as Chinese poets like Bei Dao and Duoduo would be seen to do in post-Cultural Revolution China. Of course, despite all their protestations to the contrary, there was an ideology and political purpose underlying the avowed apoliticalness of contemporary Chinese dissident or "unofficial" writing. Neither Bei Dao's nor Duoduo's work is ultimately apolitical, nor does it lack in ideological critique. Indeed, they can be read ultimately as belonging to the great twentieth-century Chinese politico-literary intellectual project. Given that modern Chinese writers tend to feel an obligation to the "nation," or perhaps the notion, that is China,30 is not that obligation better met by a poetic discourse, and a literary culture in general, that seeks to

27 Ross xiv.
28 Or as Eagleton puts, "no political revolution, whatever libidinal attractions it offers, to contemporary Western critics, will ever succeed unless it manages to penetrate to the very heart of capital, and overthrow its long-superseded sway." Ross xiv.
29 Williams 27.
rediscover for the individual the "spirit in the mass," and to reconnect with elements of China's culture, or cultures, which value what is different.

* 

What of the consequences of exile? There are admittedly certain positive aspects to exile; for example, the insight afforded by the externality of the exilic situation. According to Bakhtin:

"In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding---in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others."31

The exile certainly in relation to the location of exile, to the country of exile, at least initially, and perhaps forever, is an Other. Shortly after arriving in Europe from China, Duoduo wrote "In England":

After the spires and the city chimneys sink beneath the horizon
England's sky, is darker than lovers' whispers
Two blind accordion players, heads bowed pass by

There are no farmers, so there are no vespers
There are no tombstones, so there are no declaimers
Two rows of newly planted apple trees, stab my heart

It was my wings that brought me fame, it was England
Made me reach the place where I was lost
Memories, but no longer leaving furrows

Shame, that's my address
The whole of England, does not possess a woman
who cannot kiss
The whole of England, cannot contain my pride

From the mud hidden in the cracks of my nails, I
Recognize my homeland - mother
Stuffed into a parcel, and posted faraway

1989-1990\textsuperscript{32}

An Other's defiant, frustrated, perhaps angry, vision of the host country. And yet this poem ultimately is about home, about not England, but China, and about also that common exile sentiment: guilt; as Andrew Gurr has pointed out, "the exile leaves on an impulse to escape, not to enjoy travel" and in consequence his or her focus is on home, not the exotic.\textsuperscript{33}

So can the Other who is exiled become sufficiently exiled to focus on the abandoned homeland as Other? Can exile alienate the exile to the extent that he or she is able to Otherize his or her own culture? Bakhtin asserts that "entry as a living being into a foreign culture...is a necessary part of the process of understanding it," which might rather lead the exile to insights into the host culture unavailable to the culturally indigenous. But Bakhtin also emphasizes that "creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; it forgets nothing," which would seem to point to the exile always being an Other, and thus affording the exile reflective insight into home.\textsuperscript{34}

Seamus Heaney writing on a related topic recalls Stephen Dedalus's "enigmatic declaration that the shortest way to Tara [the legendary seat of ancient Irish kings] was via Holyhead [a ferry port on the British mainland], implying that departure from Ireland and inspection of the country from the outside was the surest way of getting to the core of Irish experience."\textsuperscript{35}

Another later poem by Duoduo locates the poetic voice squarely

\textsuperscript{32} My translation, in \textit{The Manhattan Review} 6,1 (Fall 1991), 20.
\textsuperscript{34} Bakhtin 7.
in the Other's West but only as a site of exilic reflection on what might be interpreted as the tragedy of China's politicized youth. But as the title of the poem "They" (or "Them") emphasizes, they appear to be very much the non-I, they are others to the subject, the I and the We of the I's generation:

Fingers stuck into pants pockets jingling coins and genitals  
they're playing at another way of growing up

between the striptease artist's elevated buttocks  
there is a tiny church, starting to walk on three white horse legs

they use noses to see it  
and their fingernails will sprout in the May soil

the yellow earth of May is mound upon mound of flat explosives  
imitated by death, and the reason for death is also

in the very last jolt to the soil of the ironware in heat  
they will become a part of the sacrificed wilderness

the silence of the long dead dead before dying  
makes all they understood immutable

the way they stubbornly thought, they acted  
they gave away their childhood

made death preserve intact  
their hackneyed use of our experience.

1991

But on reflection, is not the final historical complicity of the "I"'s generation with "Them" reached in the final couplet, with the repetition of the same old mistake, "their hackneyed use of our experience"?

*  

---

36 Manhattan Review 23.
So what of Duoduo now several years into exile. Obviously Duoduo is disconnected from the vital source of his poetry, finds it harder and harder to write poetry, while relatively easy to write self-reflective pieces and short stories inspired by his new exilic experiences. Of course, there is the classic separation from family and friends, the death of his mother since he left China was a terrible blow. As Said told us, the "achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever." Of course, there is the classic separation from family and friends, the death of his mother since he left China was a terrible blow. As Said told us, the "achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever."38

Now, Duoduo literally wanders from country to country in search of respite, in pursuit of a livelihood. In China, I saw him as often lonely and frustrated, enraged even, by the isolation which marked much of his life in Beijing. It was only in the year or two before June 4th 1989 that he was beginning to be accepted and published by the liberalizing literary establishment and by the anti-establishment too. Obliged to do a hack writing job by day which sapped his energies—he was a reporter on the Peasants' Daily, having to cycle an hour each way down Beijing's Chang'an Avenue to work and back—his strength and release lay in his defiant difference, his salvation and redemption in poetry. During that time, he was, superficially, the least flamboyantly "political" of poets. But then suddenly on June 4, 1989 with his dramatic flight to London, he suddenly, yet briefly, was the European media's favorite "dissident poet." The directness of political expression he had long shunned was suddenly cast upon him as he was devoured by a brief orgy of a rapacious consumption conducted by the media and culture industry by the media and the culture industry. When media interest in Tiananmen and China waned, he found himself as isolated and alienated as ever, except now commodified, his "dissidence" now packaged; a dissidence always so simplistically projected by the Western media establishment as anti-Communist and pro-Capitalist sentiment, as the desire for the Western liberal notion of freedom. A Soviet exilic predecessor, the poet Igor Pomarantsev, in 1987 described the phenomenon thus:

The key to my recognition...is otherness, my foreign birth and language. But...it happens to be the case that

37 These comments are based on my acquaintance and conversations with, Duoduo during 1986 in China and over the years since June 4th 1989.
[this culture of the West] only accepts those...poets who have had their finger nails pulled out at home. The vulnerability of finger nails, or their absence, is--like it or not--somehow connected with poetry. The possibility cannot be excluded that the reader, in order to justify his own creative passivity, will recognize talent only in those poets who have paid for their celebrity with finger nails...Fate, pain, finger nails, like music, do not need translation. You believe them.39

But later, all but a few forget the finger-nails. The news media's commodification, even fetishization, of shock and revulsion and compassion is transferred, in a flash, to the next "sexy" horror story. For Duoduo, isolation and alienation were at the root of his impulse to write, but suddenly for a brief media moment, what his poetry said, the complex representation of, and reflection on, his and China's reality, a series of negotiations spanning a decade or more, did not as such matter. His poetry was but a commodity, a sign of dissidence that the Western media could neatly, tidily read alongside Soviet and East European dissidents/dissidence.

But even before his arrival in the West, the two years or so of gradual recognition in China, his being drawn towards the center, his being increasingly included, his retreat from internal exile, made poetic production increasingly arduous. As if coming out of ostracization, out of his exile of the mind inversely and adversely affected his productive capacity. By saying that, I am not hoping to lend credence to, to legitimize or authorize, the notion of estrangement as a *prerequisite* for a modernist writer's creativity, but merely to foreground the necessarily inherently lonely task of writing against a backdrop of repression, while recognizing that the frequent solitude of swimming against the tide is a phenomenon of rebellion rather than revolution. In swimming against the tide, Duoduo was a battler against the false consciousness of the moment--a curious moment situated in the context of a bastardized Marxism, of a Leninism gone terribly awry, even by Soviet standards, which moreover now increasingly encouraged capitalist, consumerist, materialist values with all the concomitant potential loss of common decency. He brought to bear critique, through his poetry, on the bad faith, and misrule of the Chinese Communist Party which sustained an ideology which he, together with a minority of others involved in cultural production, gradually, although only

But then, upon arrival in the West, Duoduo found himself confronted by the ideology of the Capitalist West, with control of literary production, not now by bureaucrats but, by commodification, found himself courted by the all too transitory interest of the reporter, the commercially-oriented mentality of the literary agent and the commercial publisher. In China it was the Chinese Communist Party and its organs of literary control which suffocated literary creativity. In the West it is the commercial exploitation, and the tunnel-visioned greed, and need, of the culture industry that attempts to consume him and his production.

Exiles like Duoduo may also be smothered by the kindness of well-intentioned Western hosts. Even with all the traditional insecurity and uncertainty of the exile as they wander from country to country, from writer's fellowship to writer's fellowship, there is always the knowledge that there is the safety net that will be provided by one of these well-wishers, and so there results an impulse to please, an unwillingness to disappoint. But Duoduo seems to have survived all this. He continues to craft a poetry that speaks to his and his original community's past and present, and yet produces a critique of modernity that speaks to us all. Above all dominates the isolation that the poetry's "I" has still to overcome. Take, for example, the poem "I've Always Delighted in a Shaft of Light in the Depth of Night"

I've always delighted in a shaft of light in the depth of night
midst the sound of wind and bells I await that light
in that morning asleep until noon
the last leaf hangs as if dreaming
many leaves have entered winter
leaves falling from all sides hem in the trees
trees, from the rim of the sloping town gather winds of four

40 This is not to deny that the ideology and behavior of such writers and cultural producers, despite their capacity to lay bare and demystify the dominant ideology, can betray tendencies to elitism, sexism, racism, ignorance. Such perhaps is in part the legacy of prolonged exposure to a hypocritical ideology, but may also partly be due to behaving "badly". But is this very different to general condition of modernity elsewhere? I tend to the view recently succinctly glossed by Kate Soper: "Women and men...are not only, or even primarily, ignorant or ideologically determined, but good or evil; they do not simply act in error, they act well or badly." (Troubled Pleasures: Writings on Politics, Gender and Hedonism, London: Verso, 1990) 100.
seasons--

Why is the wind always misread as the center of being lost
why do I intently listen to trees hinder the wind once more
force the wind to be the harvest season's five prized-open
fingers
the wind's shadow grows new leaves from the hands of the
dead
finger nails pulled out, by hand. By tools in hands
clenched, the spitting image of a human, yet spat on by humans,
like the shadow of a human, walked over by humans
there it is, driving the last glint of light from the face of the
dead
yet honing ever brighter the light that slices into the forest!

Against the light of spring I enter the light of before dawn
I recognize the only tree that hates me and has remembered me
Under the tree, under that apple tree
the table in my memory turns green
the splendors of May, bones by wings startled awake, unfold
towards me
I turn around, fresh grass has grown over my back
I'm awake, and the sky has already moved
death inscribed on the face has entered words
illuminated by stars accustomed to death
death, projects into light
making the solitary church the last pole to measure starlight
making the left out, left over.

1991

Since Duoduo is a poet in exile, called by many a dissident poet,
there is a presumption that his lyrics will convey a political message.
Some of his poems very clearly do so, and the lyrics in this poem will
probably lead the reader to such a reading. There is, for instance, a
sense of the guilt of the exile, distanced from the site/sight of others'
misfortune. But multiple readings of Duoduo's poetry are always
possible. Duoduo has always written out of a time and space
determined by great political maneuvers and their human consequences,
and yet the politics of his poetry surely is not limited to a critique of a

41 My translation in The Manhattan Review 6,2 (Fall 1992) 8; further poems
may be found at the end of this volume.
society constrained and molded by China's still dominant Confucian-Leninist ideology, but also involves a critique of a modernity in which we are all implicated.

Thus while the wind and the forces of nature have frequently been symbolic of political forces in Chinese poetics, for Duoduo, Nature (trees, the wind) has long been a sign and source of unrestrained power, a power humankind in the era of modernity attempts to defy or harness maybe, but a power which is also fundamentally hostile to modern human projects. In this sense, surely Nature is the ally of the poet in his critique of society, and of himself. Death has long been a recurrent image in Duoduo's poetry, from the youthful poems composed in the early 1970s during the Cultural Revolution, down to his post-Tiananmen lyric production. The deaths of his compatriots over the last few decades are evidently one of this poem's concerns. But there is perhaps also a dwelling on the death, a year into the poet's exile, of his mother in Beijing, and of his brother several years previously. Beyond these specific instances of death there is also a more philosophical meditation on death, and, thus, on life itself. "Light," traditionally associated with life and goodness, is here imbricated with "death": "death projects into light," stars are "accustomed to death." Despite the light of spring and dawn, the "I" of the poem is forgotten by the trees of society, except for one which hates him. He is isolated like the "solitary church," dead or as good as dead, an observer alienated in and by the forest, and who is unaided by the ultimately unenlightening "shaft of light".

*

Finally, what of the new found freedom of exile? Duoduo and many others now realize that freedom is a complex notion, that the "freedom" of the West is a limited and limiting freedom, that China's seeming lack of freedom paradoxically empowered them to write. The poetic discourse told of, was a part of, China's modern social experience, and was a serious functional discourse contributing to the task of ideological critique. The West can silence writers in a different way. All the "freedom" in the world, cannot replace the invigoration of being engaged in the reality of China, a reality which bred his modernist poetry. As Joseph Brodsky put it in one of his more cogent statements:

Because of his previous incarnation, he [the exiled poet] is capable of appreciating the social and material advantages of democracy far more intensely than its
natives are. Yet for precisely the same reason (whose main byproduct is the linguistic barrier) he finds himself totally unable to play any meaningful role in his new society. The democracy into which he has arrived provides him with physical safety but renders him socially insignificant. And the lack of significance is what no writer, exile or not, can take.42

Significance? Or is it rather a question of the need to play a role in society? If the latter, then it means having a social, and a political function, a function which so many modernist writers are at pains to deny—as the continuing debates amongst exiled writers and intellectual about so-called chun wenxue (pure literature) illustrate. When a writer says in the Chinese context: "I just want freedom to write," she or he is perhaps being either naive or disingenuous, for what does it mean "to write" in China, or for that matter about China? Internal exile in China, exile of the mind, alienation, ostracization, exclusion from official literary arenas gave rise to a sense of community with the canonized modernist poetic heroes, be they Western poets or East European. But being physically in the West opens up a Pandora's box in which the exile starts to see the ideology of the capitalist world, of Western civilization, unveiled. What in China seems to be a cool refreshing Western breeze can be an icy northern wind up close.

Modernism in China fulfilled a need, it challenged the falseness of Chinese Communist Party ideology; it may continue to do so. Even exiled modernists can continue to do so, if they can resist the blandishments of Western consumerism, resist commodification and exploitation of themselves and their work as anti-Communist artifacts. Just as in the West, in earlier stages, Modernism challenged dominant bourgeois values, so in China Modernism has challenged the supposedly "revolutionary" and "collective" image of society projected by the state; an ultimately false and hypocritical image. Modernism can emphasize the importance of individuality, of difference, in a society where such are denied. Innovative Modernism breaks away from restrictions, flouts rules, is in short rebellious and revelatory. Its attraction is obvious, and yet the same modernist impulses have in the main long since been trivialized, absorbed into the orthodox fabric of commodity culture, have lost the power to shock, to challenge. So can this recent Chinese manifestation persist into what Raymond Williams calls the "second stage"? Can it go on to contribute, to

paraphrase Williams again, to a modern future in which community, but without uniformity, may be imagined again? In exile, can the isolated, individual artist resist being co-opted by the commodifying impulse of Western society? Can the fragile Chinese modernist challenge to conservatism, Stalinist statism, and the market economism, survive in exile in the Western bourgeois capitalist world which has tamed and institutionalized the Modernism which bourgeois Europe and America once produced. Moreover, how will Chinese Modernism negotiate the emerging globalized capitalism of which consumerist China of late twentieth-century is now a part? It would require great strength of will and some sort of coming together, a sort of association of writers, artists and thinkers in exile. It would require overcoming the risk of being subsumed under what might be seen as the totalizing, collectivizing, modernizing, and--most difficult to withstand--patriotic project that Chinese writers and artists have subscribed to, often to their peril, for the last hundred years, and seem, in the main, content to continue to support. It would mean trying to establish transindividual relations which avoid both the rule of pseudo-collective identities such as the twentieth-century, not least in China, has witnessed, and notions of personal independence that result from bourgeois freedom and which lead to a set of parallel egoisms. It would mean not that creative "individuality" should be denied or its importance diminished, but that individualist careerism and opportunism should be sublated. Cliques and guanxi (the unfair exploitation of relationships and connections) would need to be shunned. Is there a likelihood of such an initiative? As it is, Bei Dao and Chen Maiping's Scandinavia-based TODAY magazine has until recently provided a potential site, or at least focus, for such a free association of writers for whom not conformity but a human and humanizing culture for China would be the aim. But can such magazines--for surely there is a need for more than one and inside China too--and groupings survive the vicissitudes of the cultural marketplace, and the competing ideologies of those who demand a so-called chun wenxue (pure literature) and those who seek a more pragmatic approach to the use of literature? Finally, can it be expected that this time round out of exile and tragedy there could come a real

---

43 Williams 35.
cultural invigoration to inspire, rejuvenate and redeem, not a monolithic, but variegated, at once Chinese and transcendental, project of which would be tolerant and supportive of difference, and allow the realization of the socially transformative and humanizing potential of cultural production?45

45 The editors of TODAY have announced that during 1993 the editorial operations of the magazine will be moved to New York.
Exile and Poetic Creativity

C. H. Wang

I would like to start with some observations I have about the idea of exile or something equivalent in classical Chinese poetry, followed by very personal comments on my own experience writing abroad.

The term exile is really quite a problem. We have well encountered this problem during the last two days and sometimes, when I think about exile, I think about banishment or demotion, or retirement, reclusion. Sometimes I even think of it as being thrown into prison. Chen Maiping said that a Chinese writer who recently went into exile abroad, felt that his country of exile, Germany, was a prison.

In the very beginning of Chinese history, there were at least two real exiles, some kind of voluntary exiles and they are mentioned and described by Sima Qian in the beginning of the Yezhuan section of his Shiji. They were real dissidents of the newly founded Zhou dynasty. Sima Qian makes it very clear that they felt that the conquest, the revolution, the replacement of the Yin dynasty by the Song was not a justifiable one. One day, Bo Yi ans Shu Qi went up to King Wu and said: "Your father has just died. The mourning period hasn't been observed properly so far, so you are not filial. And then, you being the subordinate general of the dynasty, how can you lead an army to attack your superior?" But then, the revolution became a successful one, so the two retired to Shouyang Mountain and starved themselves to death rather than compromise their integrity. 1

I think this is a very good example, because we had some doubt yesterday about whether there was any kind of liufang [banishment] liuwang [going into exile], but I think so yes. It did exist in ancient China. But we also mentioned the idea of expatriate. That is probably the most desirable term for many writers today, especially for those from Taiwan. As for previous expatriates, Yu Xin was an expatriate. He served a northern dynasty but his home was south of the Yangzi river. 2

1 For Sima Qian's full account of this episode and the "biography" of Bo Yi and Shu Qi see: Records of the Historian: Chapters from the Shi Chi of Ssu-ma Ch’ien, translated by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) 11-15.
2 Although the Western Wei and Northern Zhou dynasties bestowed honors and offices on Yu Xin, he was never allowed to return home and died in the
As for myself and some of my friends, being in America for so many years, removed from the land where I was born and, even in a sense, from the place which I love the best, I still don't want to say that I am an exile. That term never occurred to me in my life. I was a visitor, a visiting professor, or something like that. And then because of these writing projects of mine, I feel it is much easier to carry them out by keeping a distance. That is the idea of keeping some distance from the center, from the center of activities. And in solitude you create something weighty and important enough that you think you will treasure it.

For example, you probably know about a novelist and short story writer by the name of Qideng Sheng (1939- ). He is a very important writer in the last 30 years in Taiwan. Qideng Sheng never wanted to live in Taibei, he always lived in a small place called Tongxiao, next to the strait of Taiwan. He teaches in a primary school and he keeps writing these really marvelous stories. In a sense, Qideng Sheng is a self-exile from the center of all publishing activities. But I think he feels very comfortable really.

Qu Yuan was, of course, the first one in documented literary history to be banished to a place. He was slandered and banished to a swamp and he wandered around the rivers and lakes, where he talked to some fishermen. He learned from the folk poetry—the way I learned form American poetry and English poetry—and then, he created his own LIsao poetry. So, this is a process, in the sense that he had to be banished and sent to the rivers and the lakes in order to really generate some kind of enthusiasm or desire to create poetry. Poetry then, is almost like a consolation, or an alternative way of expressing his ideas: political philosophy and understanding of history. So, I would say that without his being slandered and banished we wouldn't have Qu Yuan. This is exactly what Liu Xie (ca. 465-522) says: "Bu you Qu Yuan qi jian LIsao." This is a very strange compliment: "If there is no Qu Yuan, how can you have LIsao?" In the past, when I was a graduate student I didn't understand it. It didn't make any sense. Qu Yuan is a symbol, Qu Yuan is the banished one, the righteous person being sent away, expelled from the center of activities. Every time I read in classical Chinese poems about somebody banished I would think of Qu Yuan. This is the idea of Qu Yuan as a symbol. But, you have to become frustrated in one way or another in order to generate that kind of power,

north. For further biographical information and a translation of a fu or rhyme-prose poem in Yu Xin bewails his exile and disgrace, see *Chinese Rhyme-Prose* translated and with an introduction by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971) 102-109.
Exile and Poetic Creativity

the kind of power necessary to produce the *Lisao*. We can even associate this with Sima Qian's own observation. He says in the postface to his *Shiji*:

I was humiliated by the emperor's treatment and then I thought maybe I should commit suicide. Then, no, I shouldn't commit suicide, I have to hand down this great task given to me by my father.3

So, there is some kind of very compelling power behind you once you are a mistreated innocent.

I would like to give another example. Li Deyu was very successful in the capital in Chang'an. At that time I think he did not write anything but poems. But Li Deyu was then banished and demoted all the way to Hainan Island anticipating Su Dongpo by several eras. There, as he crossed the street, he started writing a poem expressing his feelings about the capital, about himself, about the emperor, about what he sees around him. Without this exile in Hainan Island, I do not think he would have written any poetry.

The most famous exile is, of course, Su Dongpo and I am extremely interested in him. A graduate student of the university of Washington finished a dissertation about Su Dongpo and exile under my supervision. Su Dongpo, of course, if you look through his biography, you will see led a very erratic life. Sometimes, he was the most important official in the capital and at times he was just a minor prefect. During his life I think he was appointed to about forty to fifty different positions in various provinces. It must have been extremely difficult, especially since he didn't like to ride horses. When he was relocated, he would write a memorial to the emperor asking whether he could find some other means of transport. This kind of difficult busy life is documented in his complete works. We also notice that many of his poems were composed during periods of his exile.

However, it is not easy to discern the extent of his difficulties from his poems, since he seems to have written poetry so as to camouflage those difficulties. Indeed, judging from his poems, it seems

3 Sima Qian's father Sima Tan, had also been a court historian and envisaged such a history. Supposedly in accordance with his father's wishes, Sima Qian took up the task when he became grand historian. Midway through the task he fell into disfavour with the emperor and was condemned to castration. The usual response would have been suicide, but Sima Qian chose to live and complete his history.
that he was very happy. He had friends, he was very affluent, he drank wine, so on and so forth, but it is not really true. But because of this experience he wrote many, many good poems.

The second time he was banished to Guizhou, he pretended to be very happy too, so much so that the news came to the capital and to the emperor. The emperor decreed that he should be moved to Hainan Island. I really think that he was very carefully building up a little kingdom for himself. He knew he was old by this time, he was over sixty years old. He was very positive, however; he organised a school to teach the aborigines to read and write.

Most of the poems he wrote during exile were superb, first rate poetry, and many poems he wrote when he was in the capital were just occasional poems, nor mediocre, but not really comparable. So, this is what I mean when I say that when you are in exile and in trouble, there is another instinct that will arise as an alternative to make you as worthy as you were when you were in power. Poetry is a kind of consolation, poetry is an alternative way for you to express yourself.

I would like to mention one thing. Officers and officials during the Qing dynasty, the Manchu dynasty, who were appointed to Taiwan felt that they were in exile. If they were moved from Hunan province to Hainan, they would write all kinds of poetry and they would feel they were exiled. But in fact, after two years or so they would be moved back to somewhere else like Shandong after 2 years. But once they came to Taiwan, feelings of self-pity were generated immediately. They would write about Taiwan as the most incredible place on earth. This self-pity caused a desire to compile exotica. One of the poets would say that in Taiwan the spiders don't weave any cobwebs. Another calimed that in Taiwan crabs walked straight. So this was a very strange island. Those poems were meant to be sent back to the mainland, to their families and friends. Especially astonishing to these poets was the fact that many birds and plants and animals from Taiwan were not even recorded in the Classics. They would look at a tree and say "What's this?" They had nevercome across it in the Book of Songs.

Well, these were examples of exilic experience from imperial China, and now I would like to relate to some of my own experiences. Some people would certainly ask of my friends and myself, teaching and writing in America and publishing in Taiwan, whether we feel that we know the current problems of Taiwan. I think I can positively say that I do know what is going on. Federico Garcia Lorca lived in New York for a while. Reporters asked him the question: "Don't you miss Spain? Do you remember Madrid?" He said: "Of course! When I close my eyes the whole city of Madrid is before me." And, I constantly
have this feeling, I can close my eyes, and in one second I can see the whole city of Taibei. I can even discuss the lay-out of the subway now. I can also count how many blocks from here to there, so that picture, that image, the whole organic being of Taibei, or Taiwan a whole is always with me. I feel that if I write, I write for Taiwan, just as Lorca would for Spain. James Joyce living abroad actually was writing for Ireland. We are not as privileged as painters, artists. We have to think about the medium. This is the idea behind keeping a distance. We could also ask: "Do you see better when you are on the other side of the Pacific?" I really don't know. Sometimes, I feel I can. Sometimes, I don't, I really have some doubt. For example, about fifteen years ago I wrote a play, in verse, Wu feng. It is an old story which happened in Ali Shan. For the first twelve years or so I was really extremely proud of this, and my friends and readers liked it and so on. About two or three years ago, I suddenly felt that this play had a problem because it is politically incorrect. In my play, I have a conflict between a Han Chinese and the aborigines in Ali Shan, and eventually, the Han Chinese old man sacrifices his life in order to remove the curse of the mountain. Thus it might seem that I implied that the aborigines are very savage and have very stupid beliefs. But when I conceived the story, or rather rewrote the story, I meant to configure a person who was almost as great as Jesus Christ, someone prepared to die in order to give salvation. But that won't work any more. Last year, I went back and gave a lecture at a college, and I was severely attacked by some young people over the play. When you are away you think you can see better, but at times, there are some problems. I wonder whether other Chinese poets in Europe and America will have this problem. I do not know, but I for one have had this experience.

But one thing is sure. What I think is that a first rate, a really sophisticated writer should not be situated by his immediate community. What I mean is that if you live in Chicago and you write a novel and you immediately use Chicago as your background I think it is too simple. I can live in Seattle, I can talk about South Africa. This is what I feel. So in that case, I don't really have to live in Taibei because I think my poetic creation is not just a document, evidence of I being in this particular place. I want to live here but I want to let my imagination and my consideration go anywhere it can. This is not like academic research for which you have to go to the library and so on. To write, in a sense I think it is probably even better to be away from the big center of all the activities because, for instance, you would have fewer invitations to do things like participate in conferences and symposia, and you don't have to socialize so much. I am committed to this kind of pursuit of the universal, the more abstract, the more
transcendental kind of things. Of course, I care about the changes and the movements, the problems that occur in society, not only in Taiwan, but also in China, and in the rest of the world. But, I am against an immediate response to these problems in an essay or a poem.

Before I move on, I would like to mention one thing. In 1983-84, I was teaching at Taiwan University, and I was also committed to writing a column in the Lianhe bao, one of the biggest newspapers in Taiwan. So I wrote one column, one essay a week, all about political and social problems, like the corruption of the officials. And I wrote for about 5 months and then I came back to Seattle, and I felt I wanted to go on. But then it became very difficult. When I was writing in Taibei the newspaper came at six o'clock or seven o'clock, and by noon if that was a good essay I had written, I would have already received about forty telephone calls and that gave me more confidence to go on next week. But in Seattle, nobody would really call me. I wrote with all effort and sincerity, but there was no way. It was very difficult for me to continue. So after two months or so, I stopped voluntarily. This is probably the same problem with running Jintian.\(^4\) All the intellectuals are contributing to it, but you don't have the common, the popular readership. That is really a big problem. This is like the problem we faced so many years ago in the Taiwan Diaoyutai Movement. Everybody was a leader. Every single one was a leader. If you went to an auditorium to talk about how corrupt the KMT government was, and how savage the Japanese government was, there would be about five hundred people there. Everyone wanted to be the leader, because every one was the elite, they'd studied abroad. So there is a problem here. I don't know whether it's relevant or not.

I would like to conclude by reading some poems I have written over the last twenty years. I have just realized that I have been here for over twenty-five years. Exiled or not, sometimes I didn't feel that it was exile or banishment, but rather a kind of desertion. Especially, when I was in graduate school, one day I suddenly felt that I was going to dedicate myself to scholarship. I was going to stop thinking about all these problems in China. At that time I didn't have a separate concept of China, nowadays I do. At that time China had so many problems, but one day I suddenly felt I wanted to desert China and run

\(^4\) Jintian, or Today in English, was an influential and widely read literary magazine during the democracy movement of the late 1970s in China. Dormant for a decade, having been harassed into closure, it was relaunched abroad, in Stockholm, in 1990. It has continued to publish mainly exiled writers' works, but also some mainland texts, although its mainland readership is naturally limited. The editors are Bei Dao and Chen Maiping.
into scholarship. This was when I was about 28 years old, I wrote a poem, called "Song: Deserting":

So we are out of the besieged city now on fire.  
The freezing cold should give your dizzy blood affirmation, an arrow let out  
In the bitter winter battle by the resistant:  
From the burning parapet to the snow

The winking river bank
Must be a port, the one that is used to complaining  
And the inn where we lodged the evening before going to the war  
Has turned into a sensitive plant: its wine-banner is shaking but will not hasten daybreak  
First degree insomnia makes it unable to bear  
The sight of any homeward boat, from now on

The call to massacre  
Has nothing to do with you

That was my first awareness that I wanted to think about something else. Of course, the worst extreme of this tendency is to be found in the story about a professor of medieval literature on vacation in London when the German tanks invaded the Netherlands. The press asked him what he thought and he said, "I am a medievalist. This is not my field." That's quite intolerable.

In 1973 I went back to Taiwan for the second time, after about seven years. I was escorted on a tour of the island by some official from the Ministry of Education to see how advanced, how progressive the island was supposed to be. And I was taken to Gaoxiong. At that time, Taiwan was just experiencing the beginning of a flourishing economy. The way they started was to have a special zone, what they called "export zone." That is to say that they got companies such as IBM to invest money in Taiwan in that area next to the port, whence they exported manufactured goods to Singapore or Malaysia. But such goods were not for sale to the the Taiwanese people. So they actually only provided labels for the big international companies. I was taken there and I came back and I wrote a poem. This is called "Gaoxiong 1973." It is a kind of prose poem.

The form of the ship is defined entirely by its contents,  
the color of the harbor by Mount Qi, the directions of
the wind by emotion, and anxiety by the switch of longitude and latitude—aware of all this, I stand up posing for the photographers in the export zone, and suddenly see how the rain is drifting this way from different places, and the feeling of shame is clearer and sharper than fatigue cutting through my sick chest.

The senior officer from the port authorities politely recollects for us all the time when he first arrived, the color of the harbor was defined by the war, the form by Mount Qi, and the tides by the wind. His accent is sufficient to prove that this is a man wandering out of a respectable family from north Fujian, his language is interlarded with English jargon. It is said that among the senior officers in the port only very few possess such good breeding. "Shanghai has been silted up by the mud of the Huangpu River", he says, "just like Lugang." "Declined," he says: "therefore Gaoxiong is number one, the greatest commercial port of China."

Gaoxiong in the afternoon begins to steam from heavy humidity, and the form of this ship is dissected little by little. The exhausted oil floats on the water, a brief spell of sunshine dries up the container pier. We stroll along the railroad tracks, stand still occasionally, posing for the photographers. The senior officer from the port authority as politely as ever continues to explain to us the procedure and method of container freighting. His language interlarded with English jargon. Suddenly, there is a sweeping shower and 35,000 women workers get out from the day's work simultaneously and my feeling of shame is clearer and sharper than fatigue, cutting through my sick chest.

I hope this conveys the sense that I had strong expectations of something, and I also felt as though I didn't participate in making it successful, but, then was also the feeling that we were only being used by capitalists from other places. Maybe not an exile's feelings about his homeland but rather, I don't know it is very complicated.

The last poem I have here was written in 1979, also in prose form. I wrote this when I was a visiting professor at Princeton, and it happened that I occupied the office next door to the one occupied by Einstein so many years ago when he was in Princeton. I was thinking
about this during the springtime, and then I wrote this poem. The title is "Princeton 1979". It is a poem which in a sense is talking to Einstein.

Last night you came up to me amiably among the shadows of the newly blooming magnolias. In the legendary theatre old and worn you smiled asking why I had not written a poem for you, Albert Einstein, great physicist, Jewish sage. "After all," you said, "your study is right next to mine, can it be possible that you never think about me going in and out of the room?"

Great physicist, Jewish sage, Albert Einstein, I heard that the most striking discovery you made for the modern world was the theory of relativity, 1919, concerning the universe. I however do not understand it, so it may not concern me, though I believe I, too, am a disciple of the theory of relativity. Though I have heard much about your name I do not really know you. In the shadows of the newly blooming magnolias, you urged me to write a poem in commemoration of you. "After all," you said insistently, "it is my centennial anniversary this year, don't you hear me moving chairs next door, or coughing when you read in your study? I didn't think very much about physics in later years, I spent most of my time thinking about the problems confronted by the Jews."

Relative to your wrinkled forehead there is the spotted dogwood outside the windows, now waiting for spring warmth to bloom. I stroll along the corridors and I seem to hear your footfalls resounding from the other side of the courtyard and yet it may only be the echoes of my own footfalls, and still it may very well be you who are taking a walk thinking of the problems of Israel, I am thinking of Taiwan.

Science fascinates me. Though I do not understand it, I am not less fascinated by science. You cannot move my heart Albert Einstein, I am really sorry, though Israel surely can. Since the first snowstorm I have heard many people talking of you. Everywhere I go this little town is famous because of you, then spring arrives and they continue to talk about you. Summer, autumn, winter.
I am sorry I am not able to write a poem in commemoration of you, nor am I able to join with others talking of you, though some years ago I did listen with much enthusiasm to you promoting Israel. As to the theory of relativity, 1919, something striking also happened in China during that year. For example, the May Fourth Movement. Albert Einstein, have you heard about the May Fourth Movement? Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science, our blood and tears, have you heard of them? Many people have sacrificed their lives for democracy and science in China. The flowers of the dogwood, I believe, will some day be shared by all of us as they shine upon me now meditating on your words...

Your confidence and wisdom have been carved on the wall next to the fireplace in the seminar room. I have counted them in the shadows of the magnolia and the splendor of the dogwood convinced that truth is pursuable as are democracy and science. The theory of relativity has nothing to do with me and yet the struggles of Israel move me. Jewish sage, great physicist, can you be moved by my Formosa?5

CAST

Young man 20 years old
Young woman 22/23 years old
Middle aged man 40 odd years old

TIME: from the small hours of the morning until daybreak

PLACE: a ruin in a capital

ACT ONE

[The noise of tanks rolling along an asphalt road in the dark. The sound of nearby machine guns and sub-machine guns. A ruin in the capital, resembling a dilapidated warehouse. In the corner on the left a ramshackle door patched up with tin-plate. The door is pushed open, letting in a limp ray of light from a street lamp. A young man sticks his head around the door, panting, and thoroughly reconnoiters this odd-looking place, where everywhere there are scattered bits of junk that cannot be clearly made out.]
Gregory B. Lee

Young man: [To someone outside the door] Quick, get inside!

Young woman: Sure there's no-one there?

Young man: Shush! [Entering]

[Young woman enters panting]

Young woman: It's so dark I can't see a thing.

Young man: You'll get used to it in a while. [Quickly closes the door] Only when no-one can see anyone else can you feel safe.

[The young woman leans against the closed door catching her breath to the muffled sound of machine-gun fire.]

Young man: They're still shooting people.

Young woman: And they're shooting to kill! At first I thought they were just shooting rubber bullets into the air. I never thought they'd spotlight the crowds and strafe them with gunfire.

Young man: And with dum-dum bullets too!

Young woman: Oh, look. Where's all this blood come from? [Inspecting her clothes and sniffing her hand]

Young man: Have you been hit?

Young woman: [Feeling her clothes] It's everywhere. There's blood everywhere!

Young man: Quick, let me see where you've been hit?

Young woman: It's all over me, all over... [sobs]

Young man: Don't cry out, someone'll hear.

Young woman: All over... [weak and limp]

Young man: [Touching her] Yes, it is. Where's it hurt?

Young woman: My chest. I can't breathe. I'm going to die...
Young man: Calm down! It's just your skirt, you've been splashed with someone else's blood.

Young woman: Then I'm not going to die?

Young man: No, you're not going to die.

Young woman: I don't want to be a cripple!

Young man: Come on, what are you talking about. Feel your hands, your arms, you're all there, everything's fine.

Young woman: I saw her...

Young man: Saw who?

Young woman: That young girl running beside me. She gripped her stomach, she opened her mouth to scream, but no sound came out. She just fell to her knees as the blood squirted out between her fingers...

Young man: The tanks were just behind you, smashing through the road blocks, the garbage cans, the bicycles, the tents...

Young woman: And they were still inside, all those people from our broadcasting station...oh, I can't stand up...

Young man: Straighten your legs!

Young woman: They're burning...

Young man: [Feeling her legs] It's nothing, they're just grazed, otherwise you couldn't have run all this way.

Young woman: If you hadn't helped me up I'd, I'd...

Young man: You're scared stiff, it was a close call!

Young woman: [Suddenly hugging him] Tell me I'm still alive!

Young man: Yes, you're still alive. We're both alive. We've escaped.

[Sound of another spurt of automatic gunfire in the distance]
Gregory B. Lee

Young woman: Ah! [Holds him tight]

Young man: They're mopping up on the Avenue.

Young woman: Will they come as far as here?

Young man: They'll be too busy to get this far for a while. I guess we're safe enough here till daybreak.

Young woman: You've been wounded in the head!

Young man: [Feeling his head] Ugh, splattered brain! He was just one step in front of me. I heard this pop, and the back of his head just burst open ... [The girl slumps to her knees] What is it?

Young woman: My arm's smeared with it too, I feel sick...I'm going to throw up...

Young man: What can we do? Look, just wipe it off on your clothes, it's just blood.

Young woman: I can't stand the rancid stench.

Young man: Well take off your skirt. [Walks away] Try to calm down a little.

Young woman: There's no need to walk away.

Young man: I'm right here beside you.

Young woman: Hold my hand.

Young man: You're trembling.

Young woman: I just want to cry.

Young man: Cry then, it's ok.

Young woman: I can't. Oh, I just want to cry and cry and...

Young man: Don't, they'll hear outside. [Holds her]

Young woman: I know but I just want to yell out. Just let me cry out once and then I'll die like this not seeing anything, not hearing anything... what's that!
Young man: Nothing.

Young woman: Listen, listen.

Young man: You're just on edge.

Young woman: Panting!

Young man: That's you.

Young woman: There's someone there!

[The door opens just enough to let in a thin ray of light and then shuts again]

Young woman: A thief?

Young man: Even a thief wouldn't risk his neck at a time like this. Could be another who got away. Don't make a sound!

[The door is swiftly pushed opened to the sound of military vehicle after military vehicle roaring past. In a flash someone slips in. The door is immediately shut. The figure lights up a cigarette lighter revealing himself to be a middle-aged man.]

Young man: What are you doing in here?

Middle-aged man: Getting out of the wind to light up.

Young man: Smoking's prohibited here.

Middle-aged man: The whole city's been set alight by the military, the streets are full of billowing smoke, and you're worried about this tiny flame. You're wasting your time doing your shift today. Come and have a cigarette.

Young man: [Coming out his hiding place] Have you run here from the Square?

Middle-aged man: From home, even home isn't safe. [Lights up the lighter, illuminating his surrounds.]

Young man: You mean they've already started on the house-to-house searches?

Middle-aged man: Well, it won't be long will it? [Passes out a cigarette, lights
it, weighing up the young man. Notices he's wearing a T-shirt) Student? What's it like on the Square?

Young man: Surrounded by tanks. They've turned on all the illuminations. Those who didn't get out are most likely dead by now. There were bodies strewn across the road all the way here.

Middle-aged man: There's no safe place to go in this town. Even inside your own four walls you can get hit by a stray bullet. The old man upstairs from my place went to fetch in his pot plants, he was growing some really fragile plants and was afraid all the exhaust fumes and the smoke would damage them. As soon as he opened the balcony door he caught a bullet right between the eyes. Killed him stone dead.

Young man: They're specially trained marksmen, snipers. They don't want people taking photographs of them and collecting evidence of their crimes.

Middle-aged man: He was just putting on his spectacles. He was very short-sighted. A retired accounts clerk from some brewery or other.

[Silence]

Middle-aged man: [Using his lighter for illumination] Is this a warehouse?

Young man: Who knows what the hell it is?

Middle-aged man: [Looking about] A ladder? Scaffolding or a gallows?

Young man: The very picture of Hell.

Middle-aged man: At any rate it's a place to hide. Better than that illuminated butchers' yard out there. You the only one who escaped?

[The girl, skirtless, quickly hides herself]

Young man: The group I was with broke out on the south side, we all spread out to avoid the gunfire. I just got here. [Obstructing him] It's reasonably safe indoors though. Why are you here?

Middle-aged man: Me? An hour ago I got an anonymous phone call telling me that my life was in danger?

Young man: Police?
Middle-aged man: I think it might have been a friend who's in the know tipping me off that I'd better run for it.

Young man: So that must mean they've already got a blacklist of people they want to arrest, mustn't it?

Middle-aged man: They've got everything from wire taps to videotape of the square. Who wrote what, who said what, it's all in their computers. They can arrest whoever they want anytime they choose. And you've only got the one life.

Young man: So what can we do? Can we get across the ring road?

Middle-aged man: Who knows. The roads are full of APCs, but we might as well try our luck. [Finding a place to sit down, puts out the lighter flame, heaves a deep sigh.]

Young man: So why are you just sitting there?

Middle-aged man: There's still a good hour or so before daybreak.

[Silence on stage. The girl comes out of hiding and knocks something over.]

Young man: Who's that. [Immediately stubbing out his cigarette]

[The girl approaches them. The middle-aged man gets up and lights his cigarette lighter]

Young man: Don't! Don't light it!

Middle-aged man: Oh, sorry.

Young woman: [To the young man] What are we going to do?

Middle-aged man: Looks like you too have really got something going on, but this is hardly the time or the place.

Young man: Her clothes were covered in blood.

Middle-aged man: [Unable to contain himself] What's a girl doing getting mixed up in all this!
Young woman: Even the elderly and the children they'd surrounded were slaughtered? D'you know what slaughtered means? Even at midnight people were milling about the square, just like some national holiday. Who could have dreamt it?

Middle-aged man: It should have been dreamt of.

Young man: Well did you think it would end that way?

Middle-aged man: I just hadn't imagined they'd sink to such depths of depravity.

Young man: It was unthinkable.

Middle-aged man: But when you started the movement you should have thought about organizing the retreat.

Young man: Did you think about it?

Middle-aged man: It should have been thought of.

Young man: If you thought about it why didn't you make your own get-away sooner, instead of ending up in this situation?

Middle-aged man: Let's just say I wanted to see how things would turn out.

Young man: Since you claim you foresaw things would end up this way, how come you got drawn into it?

Middle-aged man: [Smiling wryly] In spite of myself, I suppose. I'd always detested this filthy business of politics, always.

Young man: Well, nobody forced you, did they?

Middle-aged man: Listen kid, you're not the only one with the right to be indignant. Everybody was indignant. Otherwise there wouldn't have been so many people demonstrating on the streets in support of you, and there wouldn't have been thousands of people slaughtered either.

Young man: So you think the people's struggle for democracy and freedom was completely meaningless?
Middle-aged man: [Immediately agitated] Don't talk to me about the People. They were just the millions who inhabit this city, that's who they were. Unarmed except for bottles and bricks. Bricks are no use against guns and tanks! It was so obvious that it would be simply heroic suicide. People just can't help being naive and foolhardy.

Young man: You included!

Middle-aged man: [Bitterly] Yes, me included!

Young man: [Persisting] Any regrets?

Middle-aged man: [Coldly] It's late in the day for regrets, young fellow. How about you?

Young man: The People's struggle for freedom will triumph sooner or later, even if it means spilling blood.

Middle-aged man: So why did you run away when the tanks came?

Young man: I didn't want to be a meaningless martyr.

Middle-aged man: I see. Should I have been a martyr then? Don't talk to me about the People. Who's right, you or me? You only represent you, and you haven't even learnt to master yourself yet? And don't talk to me about the final victory. If freedom only brings death, then how is this freedom of yours different from suicide? If you're not even alive, then what's the use of the final victory? The fact of the matter is both of us are trying to save our skins!

Young man: People aren't like dogs...

Young woman: [ Restraining him ] Don't worry about him, it'll soon be dawn!

Young man: I can't bear his sort of...

Middle-aged man: Listen kid, you've got no option. Like it or not you'll have to bear defeat. your sort of blind enthusiasm is all to no avail when death is staring you in the face!

Young man: So why don't you turn yourself in straightaway then, and declare yourself in favour of the massacre. Tell them that those who died were just thugs, and there are two more right here all bloodstained.
Middle-aged man: [Sneering] The boot's on the other foot! They're more likely to let you go than me. They can say you're still a kid who's been hoodwinked, and that the ones stirring up the turmoil are precisely people like me. In all likelihood they've got the confession written out already, and all they need is some young fellow to go through the motions for the TV cameras...

Young man: That's a real insult to my human dignity...

Middle-aged man: But what they insult is more than human dignity. They can take what you like to call the People and turn them all into mince-meat, and all in the name of the People too! Don't talk to me about the People any more, and don't talk to me about the final victory either! All we can do is run away, all we are is fugitives. That's what's facing both of us. [Muttering to himself] And life itself is just running away!

[Nearby a blast of gunfire. The stage is silent. The three people draw close to one another. The sound of scratching on the metal door.]

Young woman: [Quietly] Someone's outside the door!

Middle-aged man: Let's bar the door! [Tip-toes up to it and leans against it]

[The young man picks up a tool and sticking close to the wall, approaches the door ready to strike. The scratching sound continues and the shrill sound jars on their nerves. ]

Young man: [Lowering the tool in his hand] Maybe it's someone else on the run?

Middle-aged man: Push!

[The young man uses the tool in his hands to bar the door. Middle-aged man kneels on the ground and listens.]

Young man: Shall we open up or not?

Middle-aged man: Wait! Maybe they're being followed.

[The scratching continues. The young woman closes her eyes tightly.]

Middle-aged man: [getting up] May be they're wounded.

Young man: Shall we let them in!
Middle-aged man: Hang on a minute! [Puts his ear to the door and the scratching sound stops] May be it's too late. Open it a fraction and take a look.

Young man: [Opening door very slightly] It's a dog.

Middle-aged man: A police dog!

Young woman: [screams] Ah! [Bites her fingers]

[Young man immediately closes the door. Silence]

Young man: Doesn't look like it. If it had been a police dog it would've barked long ago. I'll chase it away.

Middle-aged man: Don't provoke it. One bark'll bring a patrol down on us. Let's just bar the door tight.

[The two of them pile all sorts of junk up against the door.]

Young woman: I just can't bear it...

Young man: [walking over to her] Don't worry, it's just a dog. Even dogs get scared stiff by the sound of gunfire.

[Comforts her]

Middle-aged man: [heaves a sigh of relief, searches for a cigarette] There's not much difference between humans and dogs, it's just that humans have a bit more intelligence, that's all.

[The young man puts his arms around the young woman. The middle-aged man strikes his lighter. The young woman immediately pushes the young man away, wrapping her arms around herself, middle-aged man turns away, lights his cigarette. The lighter goes out.]

Young woman: Humans are more cruel-hearted than dogs.

Middle-aged man: [Inhaling cigarette] Humans can't even save their own skins, never mind rescue a dog.

Young woman: But when dogs rescue humans they don't think about their own lives.
Gregory B. Lee

**Middle-aged man**: That sounds all very nice. [To the young man] Smoke?

**Young man**: Save them for yourself.

**Middle-aged man**: [Lights lighter to look at watch] An hour until dawn, I shan't get to the end of this packet. [Finds somewhere to lie down, but immediately sits up again] This place is terribly damp, mind you don't catch cold.

[The young man takes off his own T-shirt and wraps it around the girl.]

**Young woman**: You're really kind. [The young man kisses her] Don't, don't, he'll see.

**Young man**: This time at night no-one can see anything.

**Young woman**: But I can see the red glow of his cigarette every time he inhales. It makes me uneasy...

**Young man**: Don't worry about him. [Kisses her]

**Young woman**: I can't... That cigarette...

**Young man**: Can't you put that cigarette out?

**Middle-aged man**: Then I'll never get to the end of the packet. [Groping, he counts his cigarettes] There's still one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen... That's about one every ten minutes... No, seven minutes, no, I'm afraid it's one every five minutes...

**Young woman**: Oh, I just can't take it!

**Young man**: Close your eyes.

**Young woman**: I feel so tense, my head's pounding...

**Young man**: You just relax, lean on me... [Kisses her]

**Young woman**: I just can't relax, my nerves are raw!
Young man: Your whole body is trembling, you're very sensitive to...

Young woman: I can't feel anything, nothing at all, I'm as numb as a corpse, I wish I'd been shot dead and at least it would have been all over...I can still see the terror in that girl's eyes as she opened her mouth to scream, but before she could utter a sound, blood spurted out between the fingers that were gripping her belly...She fell to her knees...and I saw flames dancing before my eyes...

Young man: They were tracer bullets, they're not lethal. Bullets that can really kill you move too fast for you to see them.

Young woman: But I saw flames...blinding flames...so bright they made me dizzy...

Young man: No, they'd be the spotlights placed all around the square...the ones used for the dancing on National Day...

Young woman: I feel as though I've been shot...as though my guts were pouring out...

Young man: Don't talk rubbish!

Young woman: Tell me, am I still in one piece? Tell me!

Young man: You're fine, very much alive...

Young woman: [Collapsed in his arms] Will this body of mine...move again? Tell me, I want you to tell me!

Young man: Your body's fine, but you should loosen your clothes a bit...

Young woman: Please don't...oh...

Young man: Your whole body is talking...

Young woman: Yes...

Young man: Don't cry...

Young woman: Am I still capable of crying? Can I still sigh? Can my fingertips still feel pain?

Young man: You're trembling all over...trembling with life...
Young woman: No, no, no, it's no good, nothing is any good... My head is going to burst... I'm smothered in blood... They're going to tear me apart...

Young man: No, it's only me... Stroking you... Tenderly, softly...

Young woman: I don't know how much longer I can go on like this, not knowing if I'll still be alive in ten minutes' time. I don't want dawn to come.

Young man: I'll protect you, I'm by your side.

Young woman: I'm so grateful to you...

Young man: It's fate, fate that brought us together.

Young woman: I want to live, I really want to live to be a good wife... a loving wife...

Middle-aged man: [Suddenly gets up] Someone's coming! [Stamps out his cigarette]

Young woman: [Tightly shutting her eyes] But I can't hear anything, where am I? Where am I? Don't leave me, don't abandon me, I'm floating in a river full of corpses... I just want to die...

Young man: [Pushes her away, shakes her] Pull yourself together, open your eyes!

[Outside the sound of heavy footsteps approaching. The three of them freeze. Silence. The sound of two or three people urinating. The footsteps recede into the distance.]

Young man: The bastards! [Suddenly embraces the girl, frantically kisses her]

Young woman: [Turning her head away to avoid him, pushes him away. To middle-aged man] Give me a cigarette. [Straightens her brassiere]

Middle-aged man: Fine. Can I use the lighter now?

Young woman: [Sharply] Go ahead.

[Middle-aged man lights the lighter. Young woman takes a long puff, immediately coughs.]
Middle-aged man: Don't inhale so much, do it like this...[Blows out a smoke ring.]

[Young woman imitates him, head thrown back blowing out smoke.]

Middle-aged man: Never smoked before?

Young woman: I've tried it.

Middle-aged man: These aren't the sort of cool menthol cigarettes that girls play with, these are for real.

Young woman: So what, I've tried everything. [Laughs nervously]

Middle-aged man: Ever tried pot?

Young woman: The question is: have you?

Middle-aged man: Yes, I have. I've done the lot, but I've never had this experience of counting out cigarettes before.

Young woman: So why not give it a try, just this once? [She inhales desperately hoping to puff out a smoke ring]

Young man: [Steps forward snatching the cigarette from her mouth and throws it away] That's enough!

Young woman: [Startled] What do you think you're doing?

Young man: [Picking up the T-shirt for her] Hadn't you better put this around you?

Young woman: I don't need it! [Throws T-shirt away] I'm in the dark. So what, if I'm not wearing anything. What's it to you?

Young man: [Muttering] I...that's not what I meant...I was just worried you might catch cold.

Young woman: [Angry] You're not my husband. [But then silently picks up the T-shirt and puts it on]

Middle-aged man: Have you got a husband?
Gregory B. Lee

Young woman: [In no better mood] I've got a friend, a boyfriend! A lover if you like.

Middle-aged man: Lovers are much more fun than husbands, marriage is such a boring convention.

Young woman: But I'd still like to have a husband, to be a wife.

Middle-aged man: So as to end up divorced?

Young woman: Why divorced?

Middle-aged man: What I'm saying is that these days fewer people are getting married while lots of people are getting divorced.

Young woman: If I got married it wouldn't be in order to get divorced.

Middle-aged man: So what would it be for?

Young woman: For love!

Middle-aged man: Of course.

Young woman: I'd like to have a child with him...He wanted to marry me, but I didn't say yes.

Middle-aged man: Why was that?

Young woman: I'm not ready to have a child so soon, don't you think I'm too young to be a mother? I thought that before getting married I'd like to be an actress for a few years.

Middle-aged man: I don't see the contradiction, you could marry first and have children later on.

Young woman: But in the acting business, especially if you're a woman, if you get married before you've made your name...

Middle-aged man: Oh yes, that's a tough profession. But there are lots of girls who still want to be actresses nevertheless...

Young woman: But it also depends on what you've got to offer.
Middle-aged man: You've got a very good voice.

Young woman: A good voice isn't enough.

Middle-aged man: Well, then you've got a very nice figure too, I happened to notice.

Young woman: You don't need to explain yourself. It's not good enough men to say you've got a good figure, women have to say it's good too. Anyway, even if you've got a good figure that won't make you an actress.

Middle-aged man: Naturally you have to have special training and some talent. It doesn't look as though you lack either.

Young woman: I'm a drama student, that's what I'm majoring in.

Middle-aged man: Are you at the Drama Institute?

Young woman: Just about to graduate. I've already had lots of theatre companies and film studios interested in me. It's just that I haven't made up my mind yet.

Middle-aged man: I'm sure you'd make a really good actress.

Young woman: [Bitterly] That's if I can get through to-day.

Middle-aged man: There is that of course.

Young woman: [Sighing] But even if I make it through to-day I'll never get to be an actress now.

Middle-aged man: Why's that?

Young woman: Because I was the one who broadcast most of the statements and protests against martial law by all sorts of celebrities. I was on duty day and night in our broadcasting tent, and made lots of broadcasts every day, snatching the odd wink of sleep when I could. It's already been three days and nights since I had any serious sleep. They must have recorded my voice right from the beginning.

Middle-aged man: What a shame, such a lovely voice.

Young woman: You listened to the broadcasts?
Middle-aged man: Not just once, it was after I was moved by that passionate voice that I said what I did, and that's what got me known as an agitator.

Young woman: You're a real smooth talker. Were you one of those drafting the statements?

Middle-aged man: I can't write that kind of manifesto, it's just that just occasionally my name was on them, people came and asked me to sign them. How can you refuse?

Young man: [Sneering] Couldn't help yourself, huh.

Middle-aged man: That's the way it was, sometimes I didn't even sign them, someone would just give you a call, saying your name was needed. How could you refuse? Even though you knew that signing was like signing your own death warrant.

Young woman: [Curious] Are you a writer?

Middle-aged man: Well,...I...

Young woman: You're frightened I'll blurt it out if I get arrested, aren't you?

Middle-aged man: Girls don't often do that.

Young woman: Stop saying "girls", "girls". No-one's a child.

Middle-aged man: Sorry. Of course, you're an actress, and a very promising actress.

Young woman: Stop ridiculing people. You've got no respect for anyone.

Middle-aged man: [Apologetically] You're right. That's probably what's wrong with me.

Young woman: That's what's wrong with all of you writers, you're so accustomed to criticizing and being sarcastic. Can't say anything without a sting in the tail.

Middle-aged man: [Enthusiastically trying to explain] I'm really not that kind of critic, but I get criticized from every direction, so that I'm always on the defensive. [Sincere] That really is what's the matter with me.
**Young woman:** A very articulate justification. [Whistles, stops immediately. Silence]

**Young woman:** [Sorrowfully] They never go easy on anyone...I've got no dreams left now. All I can hope for is to be someone's wife, have a baby, be a mother. Of course, that's if a miracle should happen before you finish that packet of cigarettes.

**Middle-aged man:** You mean a stroke of luck.

**Young woman:** What's the difference between a miracle and luck?

**Middle-aged man:** Miracles come from Heaven, they're manifestations of God, but there is no God. But luck, that's simply to do with chance, life itself is a sort of chance occurrence. Your mother and father happen to have sex, you happen to come into the world, and then by chance it's extinguished. Either by war or by disease, you die. If not in a massacre, then in a car accident.

**Young man:** Couldn't you shut up for a while, let people have a bit of peace and quiet?

**Middle-aged man:** Can't you see that she's calmed down now. You're the one who's agitated.

**Young man:** You're philosophical claptrap's not going to save anybody.

**Middle-aged man:** And who's going to be saved by your kind of impetuous behavior?

**Young man:** Sounds like you think the democracy movement should never have been started?

**Middle-aged man:** If all it was going to lead to was a massacre then that's right, it shouldn't.

**Young man:** [Standing up, coming forward] What do you mean by that?

**Middle-aged man:** What I mean is, if you only worry about starting things without thinking about bringing them to a conclusion, if you can only blindly attack and don't know how to organize a retreat, then you shouldn't be involved in politics. You'll just end up another lost chip on the gambling table. Listen kid, you're still too wet behind the ears to play politics.
Gregory B. Lee

Young man: [Furious] If you're such an old hand, if you could see from the beginning what was going to happen, why didn't you stand up and lead then, instead of sitting there now making sarcastic remarks.

Middle-aged man: I've already told you, I just happened to be passing by, just a chance passer-by, who happened to get roped in, just happened to get worked up, made a few chance remarks, and that was all. I've got my own agenda! I had enough of politics long ago. I'm not cut out to be a leader, and have no wish to be one. Besides, with so many leaders already, why should I get my hands dirty.

Young woman: Hey, fellas, why don't you give it a rest? My head hurts!

Young man: Didn't you hear what he said? He's not in this with us, he's just a passer-by!

Young woman: So what? Isn't he on the run just like us?

Middle-aged man: That's right. It's our destiny. Me, you and even him. It's human destiny to be a fugitive.

Young woman: The question is how to be a fugitive? Are we just going to sit here and wait for death?

Young man: We have to leave! We can't wait for them to hunt us out at dawn. We've got to get across the main street.

Middle-aged man: [Coldly] Not even a dog could do that, let alone a person.

Young woman: So what are you saying we should do?

Middle-aged man: Wait and see.

Young woman: [Bitterly] Wait for a lucky break?

Middle-aged man: [Calmly] Wait until just before dawn, when the street lights are turned off, then in the half-light see if there's any chance of getting across the ring road, wait until there are people walking about on the streets. Didn't they say they wanted to restore order? They'll have to let the workers go to work, let the peasants into town to sell their produce. When that happens maybe we can merge into the crowd.

Young man: Do you think anyone will be going to work at a time like this?
**Middle-aged man:** With a gun staring them in the face people will do anything, people will go to work, buy and sell, repair shoes, drive a car, earn their daily crust. People are just cowards!

**Young man:** But the whole city is protesting against the massacre! The workers will definitely strike, the struggle will get more ruthless. [To the young woman] We've got to spread the word about the reality of the massacre, expand our struggle to the rest of the country. Call for a workers' strike, a students' strike! In no time there'll be a civil war!

**Middle-aged man:** Civil war? Are you joking, where are the weapons?

**Young man:** We've got information, the army's already split.

**Middle-aged man:** You're still relying on that? Relying on those behind-the-scenes deals between the military and the politicians? Don't you think they've dealt the student protest card for the last time now?

**Young man:** Well, don't you think you were a card? A very minor card!

**Middle-aged man:** You've said it! That's precisely what I don't want to be, a card in somebody's hand, dealt out by others, I must have my own free will, independent, immovable will. So I have no choice but to flee! **Young man:** [Cooling down, and full of animosity] So you're also escaping from us? Escaping from the movement?

**Middle-aged man:** I'm escaping from all so-called collective will.

**Young man:** If everyone's like you, there's no hope for the country.

**Middle-aged man:** What d'you mean by country? Whose country? Has the country acted responsibly towards you or me? Why should I be responsible for the country? I'm just responsible for myself.

**Young man:** You're just going to stand and stare while the nation perishes.

**Middle-aged man:** I'm just saving myself, if the nation perishes one day, then so be it! Isn't that how you want me to justify myself? Any other questions? Is your interrogation over?

**Young man:** [Dumbstruck] You're...you're a...
Middle-aged man: An individualist, a nihilist? I may as well tell you I'm not any "ist" at all, I don't need to worship any ism at all. I'm just a living human being, who can't bear the idea of being slaughtered or being forced into suicide.

Young man: [To the young woman] I can't stay here a minute longer. Let's go!

Young woman: [To middle-aged man] What are you trying to do? [To the young man] Don't go!

Young man: Then I'll go alone. [Walks towards the door]

Middle-aged man: Whoever wants to go or stay, it's up to them.

Young man: [Holding onto the boy, to the middle-aged man] D'you want to send him to his death?

Middle-aged man: I just want him to know that people don't count for anything in the face of guns and tanks!

Young man: [Shouting] Didn't we stop the tanks!

Middle-aged man: That was before they decided to open fire. Let's just say they weren't ready, they were still talking amongst themselves.

Young man: You mean all this blood was shed in vain? History, history will remember this day! This blood-drenched day! [Yelling] This victorious day---

Young woman: [Pulling him] Stop shouting!

[Silence. The young man tries to control his sobbing]

Middle-aged man: [Muttering to himself] History? The one you write or the one I write? Or theirs? History is a mire, a rubbish-heap of waste-paper.

Young woman: You're so callous! [Exploding] Just keep your mouth shut, all right? [Tenderly, to the young man] Are you okay?

Young man: Don't worry about me.

Young woman: He's crying.

Middle-aged man: [Walking over] Young man, it's not that I don't respect you all, it's just that I don't want to be your appendage.
Young man: You're disgusting!

Middle-aged man: Yes, I know, I disgust a lot of people. [Sits down, takes out a cigarette, puts it in his mouth and lights the lighter]

Young woman: You're already dead inside.

Middle-aged man: [Taken aback] Maybe.

[Silence. Middle-aged man blows out the lighter. Hangs down his head]

Young woman: How many cigarettes have you got left?

Middle-aged man: Twelve, thirteen? Like one?

Young woman: No. [Notices he is not smoking] Why aren't you smoking?

Middle-aged man: I'm thinking about giving up.

Young woman: Have you done that a lot?

Middle-aged man: Yes.

Young woman: But you can't change your character.

Middle-aged man: That's just human nature.

Young woman: Stop going on about humans. Are you some kind of philosopher?

Middle-aged man: Fortunately not.

Young woman: I just can't bear people talking about philosophy.

Middle-aged man: Then what do you want to talk about?

Young woman: Anything at all. (Pause) Do you live nearby?

Middle-aged man: Near the overpass.

Young woman: Once you were out you couldn't go back?
Middle-aged man: My wife urged me to make a run for it. She was the one who answered the phone, she turned white. I gave a few hurried instructions and left without even waking the child.

Young woman: Boy or girl?

Middle-aged man: A girl. She was restless all night, I made her a bed on the floor in case any stray bullets should come through the window. But she was tired and we'd just coaxed her to sleep when the telephone rang.

Young woman: You've got a nice home, your wife sounds nice too, what were you doing denouncing marriage?

Middle-aged man: Aren't you also happy, the way you two are now? Running away together, sharing life or death. That's romantic too.

Young woman: If I'd had a home like yours then I wouldn't be running.

Middle-aged man: I was afraid they'd take me away in front of my daughter. [Silence]

Young woman: I'd rather die than be arrested by them.

Middle-aged man: You don't have to be.

Young woman: I'm terrified of being tortured, of suffering, I'm terrified of pain...

Middle-aged man: [Sighing] Yes, they're capable of anything...

Young woman: Don't talk about it!

Middle-aged man: Then what shall we talk about?

Young woman: I don't know. [Silence]

Middle-aged man: You two can get married now.

Young woman: [Laughs nervously] You're a real joker.

Middle-aged man: I'm serious.

Young woman: [Softly] We've only just met.
Middle-aged man: Isn't he your boyfriend then?

Young woman: I don't even know his name.

Middle-aged man: [Taken aback] Oh, names are just codes. A nice kid.

Young woman: We escaped from the square together. I was scared stiff, he pulled me up and I just followed him...

Middle-aged man: All things are possible, that's how life is. you can carry on following him, he seems like a very responsible fellow.

Young woman: He saved my life. [Suddenly starts to sob]

Middle-aged man: [Gets up, walks away, he treads into some water] Where's this water come from? [Lights lighter and discovers a puddle of dark water] There must be a leak somewhere?

Young man: [Also coming over to take a look] I don't remember it being there when we came in.

Young woman: Maybe it's a tap that hasn't been turned off properly? [Immediately getting excited, rushes to fetch her skirt] Let's see where the tap is.

Middle-aged man: [Using the lighter to hunt for the source of the water] It seems to be coming from outside...

Young man: Maybe it's coming from some construction site nearby, maybe they've shot through a water pipe.

Middle-aged man: Who knows?

Young woman [Squatting besides the puddle washing her clothes, sniffs] It's got a rank, muddy smell about it [Stands up, throws the damp clothes away]

Young man: Perhaps it's seeped out from an underground sewer. [Climbs up onto scaffolding, looks down with the air of a child] The place will be like a quagmire in no time.

Young woman: If it really turns into a quagmire that wouldn't be too bad, then nobody could get in.
Middle-aged man: [Standing besides the puddle, staring] It's flowing very slowly, you can hardly see it. It must have been this way for a while. [Looking down intently in the light of the lighter]

Young woman: What are you looking at?

Middle-aged man: A mirror.

Young woman: What are you saying?

Middle-aged man: It's so still it looks like a mirror, you can see yourself in it, it looks so deep and calm...

[The girl can't help coming over, bends her head and looks at her own image in the water, unwittingly posing]

Middle-aged man: Don't you find her very attractive? [Holding up the lighter staying close the better to see her]

[The two have a good look at each other's reflection, the girl stirs water lightly with her toe and turns away]

Middle-aged man: What did you do that for?

Young woman: [Eyes closed] It's only a pool of dirty water.

Middle-aged man: When it comes down to it which is more real, the sewage or the reflection? I bet you find it hard to say. The simplest things in life are very often the most difficult to understand. For instance, can you understand why---What's wrong? [Holds up the lighter, turns to shed light on the young woman]

Young woman: Nothing.

Young man: He's making fun of you.

Young woman: [Having a brain wave, mischievously] Why not? Let's play one last game before we die. [Gets hold of the lighter, holds it up high] I'm holding up a torch, I'm the Goddess of Liberty, your idol. [Giggling she turns and mutters to herself] But I can't overcome my own misery. I'm walking on the edge of an abyss staring into deep still black waters, thinking about the skipping elastic I used to jump over as a child. [To the young man] How does that song go? [Mutters to herself] It was in my head all along but now I've
forgotten it... [Out loud] I'm the Goddess of Life, I'm holding aloft the torch, walking across a single-plank bridge, staring down into the abyss beneath my feet. [She's walking across a plank of wood in the puddle] I don't whether I can get across...

**Middle-aged man:** Have a go.

**Young woman:** But I'm afraid, I'm afraid of these deep, black, deathly waters.

**Middle-aged man:** But really it's only a puddle of dirty water...

**Young woman:** No, it's bottomless, it could swallow me up.

**Middle-aged man:** Go on give it a go.

**Young woman:** No, no, this isn't fun at all, can't you think up something more interesting. [To the young man] Come over here, come and have some fun with us.

**Young man:** I'm not an actor.

**Young woman:** You're such a bore to be with.

**Young man:** Go and find someone who isn't a bore then.

**Young woman:** [To the young man] Come on, come and have a dance with me. Do you remember those late nights and early mornings under the Goddess of Liberty, those concerts listened to by thousands, all around there the loudspeakers blaring, broadcasting the martial law order, while we had nothing, but we danced to rock and roll on the square, frenzied rock and roll! Come on, have a dance with me.

**Young man:** [Getting down off the scaffolding, forcing himself to dance a few steps and then stopping] There's no music.

**Young woman:** The music is in our heads! Let's dance from memory...

**Young man:** I can't dance, get him to dance with you. [Turns away]

**Young woman:** It's so quiet just as though nothing had happened, nothing at all. What's wrong with you two? I can tell you, men usually count themselves lucky to get a dance with me.
Gregory B. Lee

Middle-aged man: [Approaching] I'll dance with you then, but I can't dance those new-fangled dances.

Young woman: So dance an old fashion dance then. [Laughing]

Middle-aged man: A slow dance then?

[The lighter goes out. The middle-aged man takes her in his arms. The two of them are cheek to cheek, just lightly swaying, they don't dance]

Young woman: [Softly] Tell me, do you love your wife?

Middle-aged man: I used to.

Young woman: Have you loved any other women?

Middle-aged man: What do you think? [Softly strokes her]

Young man: [Walking past him] Womanizer!

Young woman: What did he say?

Middle-aged man: He said you're very attractive.

Young woman: Sounds more like it's you saying that.

Middle-aged man: So why d'you ask?

Young woman: I felt like having it confirmed.

Middle-aged man: Just sensing it wasn't enough?

Young woman: I really like voices in the dark, there's a mystery to them.

Middle-aged man: I'm afraid the only real mystery is women.

Young woman: I thought you knew everything.

Middle-aged man: Perhaps I haven't lived long enough yet. [Tries to kiss her, she pushes him away]

Young woman: [Moves to one side and closes her eyes] I saw snowflakes, huge snowflakes falling...
Fugitives

Young man: [Sitting on the scaffolding, peeved like a child] Leaflets, roll after roll of leaflets, martial law orders thrown from the helicopters.

Young woman: Don't interrupt!

Young man: We're all entitled to have our say aren't we?

Young woman: I want to act!

Young man: You two can act what you want to, but haven't people got the right not to watch?

Young woman: [Shouting at him] Let me act! I want to act, act!

[Silence. She covers her face with her hands and quietly cries]

Middle-aged man: [Walks over to her side, softly] It's just a child's fit of pique, don't pay any attention to him. [Prompting her] Huge snowflakes falling... That's good, go on.

Young woman: I see lots and lots of big snowflakes completely obliterating the square and the streets, like an enormous shroud covering the city---

Young man: [Loud] I can see one black sun after another, their miserably pale deathly light illuminating people dressed in mourning---

Young woman: [Persistent] I can see lots and lots of big snowflakes, the whole city is a patch of pure whiteness, lots and lots of big snowflakes falling silently, endlessly...

Young man: They're standing in the pure white square conducting a ceremony to pacify the souls of the dead, to commemorate the countless people who were sacrificed in the bloodbath...

Young woman: The whole world is a sweep of pure white, we climb up onto the grass-covered city walls, the air cold and crisp, and lots and lots of big snowflakes fall...

Young man: I want to climb out of the blood, I want to live to see that day!

Young woman: You're clasping my hand, we climb onto the ruined walls, snow covering the streets, cars and people all looking so small, all slowly moving about, we walk along the city wall, you clasping my hand...[Middle-aged man
cautiously takes her hand] breathing out warm air as that crisp coldness stings our cheeks, I stare at the big snowflakes as they fall, the sound of the city becomes faint and distant, the air feels like it's passed through a filter, you puff out a ball of white breath, you pull down my small felt hat so that it covers my ears, my fingers are pink with cold, loosing all sensation, and you grasp my hands, puffing out balls of white breath...

Young man: We'll live until that day, we must live until that day...

Young woman: [No longer paying attention to the middle-aged man's hand] But I'm already done for...

Young man: No, we shall live, we'll escape from this darkness, I want to dream of that day, when we hold that grand ceremony for the nation's martyrs.

Middle-aged man: [Steps back, a little sad, muttering to himself] I'm going to slip away...

Young woman: [Walking away on her own, muttering to herself] No, I'm going to get dressed up magnificently and perform at the festival's gala evening, [she approaches the puddle of water, lights the lighter and holds it up with both hands] I want to look at my body in the mirror...

Young man: A grieving nation...overcome with sorrow...

Middle-aged man: [Sitting to one side, staring at the flame in the young woman's hand] I grieve for myself...inside there is only a dim flicker of light, you guard this dim light, and it's always like walking through the river of the dead, ill winds blowing from all sides, ready to snuff out the light at any moment...

Young woman: I want to have a mirror as big as a wall, to look at myself, to look at those huge snowflakes falling, I'm walking in the snow, completely naked, mind and body bright and clean, just like when I've passionately made love with him, I lose myself...

Young man: I'm sitting beside the violent sea, watching the endless blue sea, mountainous, waves raging forward under the sky, a line of white foam along the dark wave-tops...

Middle-aged man: You walk through the gloom-ridden river of the dead, guarding the dim light, that vision keeps coming back to me, I always see it dreams too, so that I don't know even whether it's a dream or an illusion, or just
a feeling...

**Young woman:** I was holding a candle, d'you remember? That New Year's party, I was wearing a white dress, like a little girl in a solemn procession, walking over a single-plank bridge, under my feet dark, deep, flowing waters, we were playing games, I was skipping over the elastic, d'you still remember that song? How did it go? We all danced...[Lighter goes out]

**Young man:** A deserted sea-shore, just you and me, the two of us naked...

**Young woman:** Why is it I can't remember how that songs starts? All of us girls danced, it's such a well-known song, how could I forget it? Just by the front door there was a little alleyway where we skipped and danced, you boys really hated it, always deliberately cutting across our elastic.

**Young man:** We're rolling around on the beach, like two naughty children...

**Young woman:** All you boys are bad, even then you were bad, you called me into the alleyway to see a comic book, but it was one of those books! Where did you get hold of that kind of filth? You had something disgusting in mind!

**Middle-aged man:** You walk through mire neither shallow nor deep, hands, feet, your whole body wet, constantly uncomfortable, always dreaming of some dry place to go...

**Young woman:** It was a really hot day, in the evening everyone was in the yards cooling off, I came out from that little room of yours, past the doors of the houses, everyone looking me up and down like that, I purposefully held up my head, but already I wasn't as pure as before, that's right, not as pure---

**Middle-aged man:** You're enveloped by water weeds, how many years have I been dreaming that dream, that deep, black dead water, with water weeds all under your feet, you can't get out of this mire...

**Young woman:** He was so coarse...

**Young man:** I just want to sit on the bank, staring at the limits of this expanse of black dead water, and the clouds joined to that grey sky, just staring, staring at the sky...

**Young woman:** Ants are crawling all over my insides, they've crawled all over my body, they've come out of my ears and my nose, they're eating me, in Africa there's a big man-eating ant, at first I was terrified, but now I'm not bothered,
I'm quite happy with them crawling all over me...

Young man: My mother, she'll be old soon...

Young woman: I'd like to hear him speaking into my ear...huddled in the soft bedclothes...snuggling close to his warm body...

Middle-aged man: Mire...sodden...tramping on and on...

Young man: [Sitting up with a start] It's smashed.

Middle-aged man: What's smashed?

Young woman: The goldfish bowl's smashed.

Young man: What goldfish bowl?

Young woman: The one on the window ledge, I'd forgotten to close the window, and a gust of wind caught the curtain and dragged the bowl over and it smashed, the goldfish was wriggling all over the floor...

Young man: I meant my head was smashed, I was just having a nightmare, they broke into my head, bam! They smashed it!

Young woman: [Turning on him] Don't you go frightening me with your smashed heads, you're horrible, I don't want to know about your smashed heads! I was talking about the goldfish bowl, I bought it for my father, with the money I got from the film studio. I did some filming, it was on the job training, it was the first money I'd ever earned.

Middle-aged man: [Making fun] I wouldn't mind a daughter like you.

Young woman: You don't deserve it.

[Silence]

Young man: Hey, what time is it?

Young woman: Don't light it. Don't light the lighter.

Middle-aged man: You've forgotten. You've got the lighter in your hand.

Young woman: Let's just stay in the dark like this, and forget about what time it
Middle-aged man: Just talking drivel in the dark like this?

Young woman: Delving into our minds.

Young man: We're just like the living dead, it's just like hell.

Young woman: We're fine just like this...

Middle-aged man: [Listening] It's gone all quiet. There's no more shooting, a ghost town, ruins, desolation...

Young man: [Jumping down from the scaffold] It's no good, I've got to go outside. [Starts to unblock the door]

Young woman: What do you think you're doing?

Young man: I'm going out to take a look, I can't just sit here waiting to die.

Young woman: Are you mad?

Young man: After all we can't just rot to death in this place, we've got to break out!

Young woman: They'll shoot!

Young man: I'm not an idiot, I'll just take a look first.

Young woman: But you'll never be able to get back! [To the middle-aged man] Say something!

Middle-aged man: Perhaps he's right, give me the lighter. [Takes the lighter, lights it, looks at his watch] Perhaps the street lights have already been turned off. [Helping him to unblock the door, listens at the door]

Young man: Anything moving?

Middle-aged man: Can't hear any vehicles, no footsteps either.

Young woman: Have they pulled out?

Middle-aged man: They've finished, it's all over.
Young man: I'll open the door.

Middle-aged man: Not so quick, let's talk about how we're going to do it. Three of us together will make an easy target.

Young man: I'll go first. [To the girl] You follow me.

Middle-aged man: If they open fire, we won't be able to make it back.

Young man: Then we won't come back!

Middle-aged man: We don't have to act like sheep, and they're using automatic weapons. We'll have to spread out, and go in different directions until we get over the main road, then join up again.

Young man: You go your way and we'll go ours.

Young woman: My heart's beating fast...feels like a premonition...

Young man: Okay, so just wait here while I go first, if nothing happens then you can follow. [Opens the door a fraction] The street lights are off. Quick! [Dashes out of the door]

Middle-aged man: Hang on! [Grabbing hold of the girl] I'll go first and you follow. [On the point of going out of the door, sound of gunfire, they immediately shut the door]

Young woman: [Screaming] They've killed him!

Middle-aged man: Don't yell! [Covering her mouth]

Young woman: They've killed him! Let me go!

Middle-aged man: They'll hear you.

Young woman: [Attempting to go through the door, middle-aged man grabbing her] You let me go...

Middle-aged man: You're insane!

Young woman: [Crying] They've murdered him...Why did you let him go? Let me go! You're so selfish...You swine! [Frenziedly beating him]
Middle-aged man: [Downcast, releases her, letting her pound at him] I never thought...I should have known...

[Young woman falls on him, tries to control herself but weeps endlessly. The middle-aged man quietly consoles her, putting her hair back in place]

Middle-aged man: They'll be here any minute. Just wait for them.

Young woman: I won't let them arrest me, just let them kill me!

Middle-aged man: Don't talk nonsense. You're still young, it's more than likely they'll release you one day. You have to keep living until that day, [Bitterly] that day when freedom wins out.

Young woman: I'll be old then, and crushed out of all recognition...I don't want to live for that day! I don't want to live any more!

Middle-aged man: [Getting angry] Stop being hysterical! [Slaps her]

[Girl amazed, just stares at him blankly]

Middle-aged man: [Seriously] Go and hide at the back! If they come here hunting for us, don't shout out, don't make a sound [Girl doesn't move] I told you to go and hide at the back, don't you understand?

Young woman: [Pitifully and quietly] Don't leave me...

Middle-aged man: I'm not about to go out and get myself killed, I'll just be here smoking a cigarette.

Young woman: [Gripping his hand] Don't smoke anymore, I'm frightened of the flame, frightened of everything.

[Middle-aged man silently embraces her, kisses her, Se stands on her toes, in ecstasy]

Middle-aged man: [Sympathetically and softly] Okay, off you go to the back and stay there...

Young woman: [Mumbling] No, this is nice...I don't want...

Middle-aged man: No! It's no use...you foolish girl...
Young woman: You're the fool! Get on with it...

Middle-aged man: I don't feel like it... I can't make love at gun point!

Young woman: [Madly kissing him] They might be here any second... I don't even know if I'll be alive after this moment... I just want it all to be over... [With ill will] What are you waiting for?

Middle-aged man: No, I just can't... [Moved and with extreme tenderness] You're a nice girl...

Young woman: A woman!

Middle-aged man: Yes, a real woman....

Young woman: A nice woman...

Middle-aged man: Very much a woman... a sensitive woman...

Young woman: Wild...

Middle-aged man: Liberated...

Young woman: And deep, oh...

[In the gloom the water flows, drip by drip. The black pool gradually expanding]
ACT II

[A few rays of early morning light filter through the roof so that it's neither light nor dark. The walls and objects about the place are still shrouded in darkness, making everything seem even stranger, once resembling the interior of a flooded building, and a quagmire. The middle-aged man and young woman lie naked on a wooden above the surface of the water]

Young woman: A boat.

Middle-aged man: What?

Young woman: A yacht, drifting on the water, drifting who knows where, and who knows whether we're dead or alive...

Middle-aged man: There's no distinguishing between us, there's no that's me, and there's no that isn't me, a confused mass...

Young woman: No stars or lamplight to be seen, who knows where we're lying, there are just a few bizarre shadows...

Middle-aged man: Indecipherable, incomprehensible, without thoughts, without desires...

Young woman: The glow of the cigarette coming and going, the loving touch of a hand, lazing about, like a dream, then the awakening, a realistic dream ...

Middle-aged man: The demonstrations, the gatherings, the protests and the squabbling, the indignation, the declarations, the lemonade bottles, crushed cardboard boxes and the rubbish on the square, it's all gone, it's unimaginable, never so relaxed, never so lethargic, no need to hurry ever again.

Young woman: No more exams, no more appointments, no more disappointing films, and those upsetting glances, no more memories, and no more regrets.

Middle-aged man: Just two soulless bodies.

Young woman: Just haziness and fatigue.

Middle-aged man: You're insatiable...

Young woman: You're excessive...
Middle-aged man: In the face of death all hopes and desires have become absurd.

Young woman: [Opening her eyes] Where's the light coming from?

Middle-aged man: [Also opening eyes] Oh, it's already morning. [Sitting up] But the sun hasn't come up yet.

Young woman: They've forgotten us.

Middle-aged man: Or they haven't got round to us yet. Fate is making fun of us both.

Young woman: Well, still a mystery then?

Middle-aged man: Yes but, well you are a woman. A real live woman.

Young woman: Thanks.

Middle-aged man: It's me who should be thanking you.

Young woman: [Coldly] There's no need for thanks, just gratitude for still being alive.

Middle-aged man: It's just another sort of chance occurrence.

Young woman: Couldn't you talk about something else.

Middle-aged man: [Looking at her] You're extremely pretty...really lovely!

Young woman: You've only just noticed?

Middle-aged man: It's only now that I've been able to see clearly, your whole body looks glorious in the dawn light, it's dazzling.

Young woman: I'm not just a body.

Middle-aged man: Is your soul as pretty?

Young woman: Don't talk to me about souls! Have you got a soul?

Middle-aged man: Who knows?
Young woman: You, you just love yourself. [Silence. Fumbles for the T shirt,
holds it to her body, suddenly covers her face with her hands] You murdered him....

Middle-aged man: [Startled] I murdered him?

Young woman: Yes, you. You. He was still just a child...[cries]

Middle-aged man: [Helpless] He wanted to be a hero, he just killed himself like a fool.

Young woman: I hate you! You thought you'd have me, didn't you? But I detest you!

Middle-aged man [Equally cutting] You're the cause of his death, he wanted to show that I was a coward and he was a hero. How could I stop him? The only one who could have stopped him was you, so why didn't you? How can you blame it on me? You're the woman, couldn't you see what was happening?

Young woman: Don't talk like that. Don't be so hurtful...

Middle-aged man: I wasn't saying you'd killed him at all...don't be like that...[Tries to console her]

Young woman: Don't touch me...I despise you!

Middle-aged man: [Releasing her] I know...

Young woman: You don't know anything at all, you don't understand a thing!

Middle-aged man [Completely at a loss] Yes...I'm a fool. [Totally miserable] Sorry, I'm really sorry.

Young woman: There's nothing to be sorry about, may be it really is me who is no good.

Middle-aged man: Don't be saying things like that, [pityingly] you're a nice woman, it's just that you're a bit naive that's all...

Young woman: [Staring at him with a pitying glance] Aren't we all naive?

Middle-aged man: [At a loss] With death staring us in the face, we're not heroes or cowards, nor saints either, we're just fools...total fools.
[Young woman gently embraces him. The young man pushes the door open a crack, quietly slips in, gently closes the door.]

**Middle-aged man:** Someone's come in!

[Silence]

**Young woman:** [Turns] You're still alive?

**Young man:** [Leaning on the door] They killed it, that dog that sat outside the door all night, it was shot in the middle of the road. [Silence] I chased it away, just gave it a bit of a kick, the street lights were already off, but it was still difficult to see, I thought I'd give it a try...

**Middle-aged man:** How come you've only just come back?

**Young man:** I didn't dare to come in straight away, I was frightened of attracting attention, I ran on a few steps and turned into an alleyway and circled round, I thought I might find a place to get across, but all the roads out of town are blocked off with tanks and APCs, the streets are covered with bricks and bodies...let me have a cigarette.

[Middle-aged man pulls on his trousers and takes the cigarettes out of his trouser pocket and gives them to him. The young man takes one. Middle-aged man takes out his lighter and lights it for him. Young man sees the young woman sitting there naked. Stunned, he doesn't draw on the cigarette. The lighter goes out]

**Young man:** [At a loss] Oh...I...[Turns, open the door to leave]

**Young woman:** Where are you going?

**Young man:** I....uh....don't know...out for a minute...

**Young woman:** [Immediately runs over to him barefoot, grabs him] You can't go out again! [To the middle-aged man] Block the door quick!

[Middle-aged man starts to block the door]

**Young man:** I just want to take a look...

**Young woman:** Stupid child!
Young man: I'm not a child.

Young woman: You are... you're a stupid child...[holds him tight]

Young man: [Desperately trying to shake her off] I'm not a child! I grew up a long time ago----

Young woman: [Tenderly] A real man, huh, a man in need of a woman's tenderness, aren't you?

Young man: [Avoiding her] I don't want anyone's pity...just leave me alone!

Young woman: You're overtired, I know, me too, we're both worn out, worn out by life...

[Middle-aged man in a corner lights a cigarette]

Young man: [Sobbing, falls into young woman's arms] I...I oughtn't to have come back...

Young woman: [Embracing him tight] Don't say things like that...I'm with you now...Don't get me worried like that again will you...answer me...talk to me!

Young man: That dog--

Young woman: Never mind the dog.

Young man: I shouldn't have---

Young woman: It had nothing to do with you, you really are a silly boy...[Young man suddenly kisses her] Ah...please...don't...not in front of him [Unable to break free, let's him kiss her, then immediately tries to push him away] Okay, don't get rough----that's enough! [Shoves him]

Young man: [Persisting] How come it's all right for him and not for me?

Young woman: What's all right?

Young man: As if you didn't know. Stop acting all innocent!

Young woman: That was because I wanted to, if I want to do it with somebody, I'll do it, but it's me who decides!
Young man: Just like that, with anybody at all? Even with somebody off the street, just like that?

Young woman: It's none of your business.

Young man: Even if it's some jerk? Some womanizing good-for-nothing?

Young woman: As long as it's a man.

Young man: [Taken aback] You're a real actress! A cheap, little--

[Young woman slaps him. He's about to flare up when he sees her weeping, biting her fist while she kneels down, dumbstruck]

Middle-aged man: [Going over, to young man] You've got no respect for other people, and none for yourself either. [Throws away his cigarette, goes to aid of young woman]

Young woman: Leave me alone, leave me alone! I don't want anybody, just get the hell out of it, you just don't deserve a woman's love, you men just don't deserve it!

[Middle-aged man, quite helpless, can only stare at her]

Young man: [Cautiously goes to her side] Look you're in the dirty water, I'm really sorry...

Young woman: Sorry, sorry, it's always sorry, when a man's hurt a woman that's all there is to say...sorry.

Young man: Just now I was really talking rubbish...Can't I just take it back? [Attempting to help her up]

Young woman: Don't bother. [Helps herself up] No-one can save me, no-one can save anybody, everyone's just a passer-by, don't think that just because you gave me a hand and saved my life that I belong to you, that I'm obliged to sleep with you.

Young man: I didn't say that.

Young woman: That's right, you never said as much, but I know what's in your mind, you think women are just cheap, don't you? They can't exist without you men? You're still just a kid with your head full of filth.
Young man: [Uncomfortable] I just wanted to...wanted to see you again. I shouldn't have come back...I was frightened I'd never see you again...that I'd never find you again...would never know where you'd got to...on my own, I couldn't get across, just couldn't get across...they'd have killed me just like that...I just wanted to see you again...one more time...I never got a good look at...

Young woman: [Strokes his head] Me neither, I didn't stop worrying...

Young man: We'll never leave each other again, if we have to die we'll die together!

Young woman: I'll only hold you back, if you can make a run for it, you should, don't worry about me.

Young man: I'm not going anywhere. [Buries his head in her bosom]

[Middle-aged man gathers up his clothes]

Young woman: What do you think you're up to?

Middle-aged man: I'm going outside.

Young woman: You're no kid, why are you trying to pull the same trick?

Middle-aged man: I don't want to get in the way of other people's happiness.

Young woman: You mean we getting in the way of yours.

Middle-aged man: We're getting in each other's way, it'd be better if we split up.

Young woman: Because of him?

Middle-aged man: No, because of me.

Young woman: [Mockingly] You getting in your own way?

Middle-aged man: Perhaps. In any case, you two were here first.

Young woman: Nobody told you to leave.

Middle-aged man: No, I know.
Gregory B. Lee

Young woman: So just stay put then.

Middle-aged man: Thanks for the consideration---

Young woman: [Coldly] Everyone's a fugitive here, there's no lord or master...

Middle-aged man: [Wryly] You're right there, and we're not in Heaven either.

Young woman: But neither are we in Hell.

Middle-aged man: Of course not. And we've got a pretty young woman here too.

Young woman: And a live one at that.

Middle-aged man: A kind woman.

Young woman: Who knows, maybe just a decadent woman.

Middle-aged man: There doesn't seem to be any clear dividing line, in general I mean.

Young woman: The same's true for men, between heroes and good-for-nothings there doesn't to be a clear dividing line to us women either.

Middle-aged man: Especially in front of a naked woman.

Young woman: You filthy swine. [Silence] How come you've got nothing to say, a clever chap like you? I was also speaking in general about men, or rather about all men. [To the young man] That includes you, except you're slightly better than him, you've managed to preserve some of your innocence, deep down you're all the same, you think ill of women, in fact you're the ones who are filthy, you're only happy when you're defiling women, but what you really defile is yourselves!

Middle-aged man: Everyone has desires, men and women don't differ in the slightest in that respect.

Young woman: But are you capable of the kind of affection women are? You just think about possessing, grasping, have you ever thought of giving anything to a woman? But women, apart from being women, are mothers too, always forgiving you no matter how demanding you get, however much you hurt them.

Middle-aged man: Don't forget, women are daughters too.
Young woman: And they should be hurt even less.

Young man: Can't we talk about something else?

Middle-aged man: You don't have to listen. But it's much more interesting listening to women talking philosophy than listening to men arguing over politics.

Young woman: Men aren't the only ones qualified to talk about philosophy.

Middle-aged man: I wasn't for one moment saying women aren't capable of talking philosophy, philosophy is something that you or I, with nothing else to do but live out this degrading existence, can do as we like, an intellectual game, which men and women can play time and again. It's just that a woman has a woman's philosophy, and a man has a man's, and neither solves any problems.

Young woman: [To the young man] Don't move, just lie here like this, just now you're being a good boy.

Middle-aged man: [Bitterly towards young man] What fun it is listening to a woman talk philosophy!

Young woman: Haven't you had your fun? [Middle-aged man waves his hand, doesn't say anything] You'll never have anything, all aloof, and looking at people with those cold eyes of yours, you haven't got any decency, so you'll always be lonely, even when you make love to a woman she'll never really love you!

[Middle-aged man furious, but temporarily lost for words, can only pace up and down]

Young woman: [Provocatively] So even you can be stumped for words! Stop walking up and down, and making that splashing noise.

Middle-aged man: [Angrily] You're a bitch!

Young woman: And that's your doing too.

Middle-aged man: How's that?

Young woman: Yes, you'll never understand a woman.
Middle-aged man: No...[Sighs]...well, perhaps you're right. [Stares at the rising water and steps into it and sits down burying his head]

[The young boy his head on the young woman's bosom gradually starts to cry]

Young woman: Don't hold it back, cry as much as you want. No-one will hear, it's already daylight. They won't come now.

Young man: I...I love you...

Young woman: Don't talk about love...[Sadly] love is long dead.

Young man: I want to get out of here with you alive, we must carry on living, I want to be with you forever! We can leave this God-forsaken place and go to the countryside, hide in the mountains! I'll look after you, I really will, I won't ever hurt you again...

Young woman: But I don't deserve your love...Can't you understand? I just feel sorry for you, I feel sorry for you.

Young man: I love you!

Young woman: [Startled] No, no, don't say such things...

Young man: Well, what do you want me to say then? I think you're-

Young woman: Oh! [Moved, she bends to kiss him]

[The two passionately embrace. The middle-aged man quietly goes towards the door, knocks into something which falls over with a bang. The young woman and the young man are startled and immediately separate]

Middle-aged man: [Apologetically] It didn't do it on purpose.

Young man: [Uncontrollably angry] If you want to go then get out now, go on sod off!

Middle-aged man: Okay kid, once I'm out of the door you two will have plenty of time. [Girls laughs coldly] What are you sniggering at? [Agitated] There's nothing to laugh about here!
Young woman: I'm laughing at you! Do you think this is what I want? [Laughs out loud nervously]

Middle-aged man: [Uneasily] No, [Awkwardly] I just wanted to avoid...myself.

Young woman: So, just open the door and get the hell out! You're still afraid to die...

Middle-aged man [Disagreeing] Death isn't at all frightening if you're destined to die, what's frightening is despair, the despair before death, people not being able to put up with each other, what's frightening is this sort of hysteria---

Young woman: What's frightening is yourself! Wherever you manage to escape to you'll never be able to escape from yourself! [Pityingly] You're terrified of the loneliness that faces you, who isn't terrified of that kind of loneliness? Come here, you too are a big kid in need of comfort. [Young boy angrily getting up] What's wrong with you?

Young man: I feel depressed!

Young woman [Getting worked up] You're all depressed, but once you pour out your misery onto a woman, you're all heroes. You can't put up with loneliness, but you want women to. You can't face yourselves, all you can do is prove your manliness in front of women, but you never allow a woman to prove herself, to prove she is a woman! Her character, her dignity, her desires! [Stands up proudly] You're the only ones allowed to have desires, but you never allow a woman whom you possess, or as you would say "love", to display desire for anything but you, only you are allowed to have your so-called freedom, spirit and determination, no-one else is allowed to have them, all you can do is to unburden your misery onto another's shoulders, and all of you are selfish, ugly and petty, and all of you strive to express your own egos. [Laughing to herself] Only when you're standing in front of a woman, in front of a naked woman's body and you yourselves are naked, that's the only time you are real.

Middle-aged man: [Softly] You're playing with fire.

Young woman: [Softly] Just once before death. [Turning, muttering to herself] Even before death arrives a woman is already destroyed by the man she loves...[Closing her eyes]

[Middle-aged man ponders, throws down his clothes, walks over, stands in front of her, embraces her, begins to kiss her, she falls into his
arms. Young man uncontrollably enraged, dashes over, grabs hold of her and they all fall into the muddy water where they roll into a mass. First of all she groans, then wails out loud, like a wounded beast. The middle-aged man breaks away, watching the two bodies twisting about incessantly, very sad. All this takes place very slowly in a solemn atmosphere, accompanied by the sound of ever moving water

Young woman: [Making a suffocating noise] No! It's no good--You're insane! I don't want to---I can't, no... [Swoons]

Young man: [Frightened] What's wrong! [Kneels beside her, shaking her vigorously] Wake up! Wake up! [In a panic] Is she---?

[Middle-aged man walks over, kneels downs softly stroking the girl's lifeless arm. Sound of rushing water still rising. Girl comes round, and starts crying]

Young woman: [Slowly gets up, paying them not the slightest heed, sits in the muddy water, as though in a daze] Oh, what desolation...

[Middle-aged man gropes for cigarettes, puts one in his mouth and is on the point of lighting up]

Young woman [Not looking at him]: Any left?

[Middle-aged man passes the cigarette packet to her, girl takes it, pulls one out. He lights the cigarette lighter for her. The girl drops her cigarette in the water, takes another out and drop that into the water, and does this repeatedly until she's scattered all the cigarettes in the water. Finally, she throws the cigarette packet into the water, she sits there looking blank and indifferent. Middle-aged man looks at the lighter in his hand, turns the flame up to maximum. The young man with his back turned to them, kneels in the water his head hanging down. The morning sun shines through the cracks in the roof showing the sewage to be a crimson red. Middle-aged man throws cigarette lighter into water, forgetting that there is an unlit cigarette in his mouth. Heavy knocking at the door: Bam, bam, bam! Bam, bam!]

136
Bam, bam, bam, bam, bam!
Like the rattle of a machine-gun. The three remain motionless sitting in the sewage which looks like blood]

-The End-
Paris, October 1989

Some notes and suggestions on performance of this play

(1) The state of humanity's existence from ancient times until to-day has been a relentless tragedy. This play attempts to portray modern people in the face of a dire situation by means of the form of classical tragedy. Thus, in performance, it should be given both that declamatory tone common to Greek tragedy and that ceremonial solemnity one finds in Asian classical drama.

(2) This is a political, philosophical, and psychological play, and should not be performed as that sort of social realist play that reflects current political affairs. The actors' expression should avoid reproducing the trivial reality of everyday life and their movements should be clean and clear.

(3) The main emphasis in scenery, lighting and costume should be on a spectrum of grays and whites and blacks, only right at the end of the play should there be any bright colour.

(4) There is no need for musical accompaniment, but the sounds of objects, should be mixed in a musical fashion.

(5) The puddle which grows into a quagmire on the stage just needs the installation of waterproof materials and an ordinary household tap. On the stage there should be a surface of about 2 square meters of water from 3 to 4 cm up to 10 cm, there is no need for a larger area of water.

The playwright.
Translations of Exile Poems by Duoduo

Gregory B. Lee

WATCHING THE SEA

Having watched the winter sea, what flows in your veins is surely blood no more
so when making love one should surely gaze on the ocean
surely you are still waiting
waiting for the sea breeze to blow on you once more
that breeze will surely arise from the bed

that memory is also, surely is
false images of the ocean preserved in the eyes of dead fish
fishermen are surely engineers and doctors on vacation
June cotton in the earth is surely cotton swabs
surely you're all still in the fields seeking vexation
trees you brush by are surely bruised and swollen
huge rage surely makes you have a future different from the crowd
because you are too fond of saying surely
as Indian women will surely expose their flesh at the waist

the distance to the place you live together is surely not far
the distance to Chinatown is likewise surely not far
surely there will be a moon shining like a mouthful of spit
surely there will be people who say that is your health
no longer important, or even more important, surely
surely it stays in your mind
just like that square of arrogant bomb-casing on the English face
watching the sea surely uses up your lives
stars preserved in the eyes have surely become cinders
the ocean's shadow surely seeped from the seabed to another world
in a night when somebody anyhow must die someone surely must die
although the ring surely does not wish to be long dead on the flesh
shooting hormones into a horse's arse will surely stir it up
so to arrange tidily is then surely to create disorder
when a bicycle chain falls off peddling surely gets faster
the spring wind surely resembles the kidney stone sufferer's
    fastened green belt
the taxi driver's face surely resembles stewed fruit
when you go home that old chair will surely be young, surely.

1989-90
WINTER'S DAY

The very last ray of the setting sun warms the spire
the stove fire in the church, has already died out
ah, time, time

I seek what I've lost
and what I've got, let go
done with words from a tombstone

I saunter amidst people
vast world, everlasting parents
prayers, from the heart rise

silent, and beyond sound
melt together with winter's exchange:
wind, is a lonely rider

clouds, are bunched up laughing country brides
December's mystical palpitations
are just bursts of an old recital

1990
I'M READING

In the November wheat field I'm reading my father
I'm reading his hair
the colour of his tie, the crease of his trousers
and his hooves, tripped up by shoelaces
now skating on ice, now playing the violin
the scrotum shrinks, the neck, knowing too well,
    stretches toward the sky
I read as far as my father's being a large eyed horse

I read as far as his having temporarily left the herd
his coat hanging from a small tree
and his socks, and appearing indistinctly in the herd
those pallid buttocks, like a meat-stripped
oyster shell containing a woman's toilet soap
I read as far as the scent of my father's hair oil
the smell of tobacco on his body
and his tuberculosis, illuminating the left lung of a horse
I read as far as a boy's doubts
rising out of a patch of golden corn
I read as far as when I was old enough to understand
the red house roofs where grain is dried start to rain
the wheat sowing season's plough drags four dead horse legs
horse skin like an opened umbrella, and horse teeth scattered
everywhere
I read as far as one face after another is carried off by time
I read as far as my father's history silently rotting in the ground
locusts on my father's body, just continuing to exist alone

like a white-haired barber embracing an ageing persimmon tree
I read as far as my father's returning me again to a horse's belly
when I just want to turn into a stone bench in the London fog
when my glance passes over the men strolling down the bank-lined street...

1991
THERE IS NO

There is no one bidding me farewell
there is no one bidding another farewell
there is no one bidding the dead farewell, when this morning starts

there is no border to its self

except for language, facing the land with its lost border
except for tulips' flourishing fresh flesh, facing windows unclosed into the night
except for my window, facing my no longer comprehensible language

there is no language

there is only light repeatedly grinding, grinding
that repeatedly worked saw at daybreak
only that restive tulip, until restive no more

there are no tulips

there is only light, stuck at dawn
star light, sprinkling into the speeding train's slumbering baggage car
the last light, trickles off a baby's face

there is no light

I use an axe to split open meat, hear the sharp cry of the shepherd at dawn
I open the window, hear the yelling between light and ice
it's the sound of yelling makes fog's fetters crack open

there is no sound of yelling

there is only land
there are only land and people who transport grain who know
only the bird which calls at midnight is the bird who has seen dawn

there is no dawn

1991
Whether it's morning or whenever, it's morning
you dream of your waking, you're frightened of waking
so you say: You're frightened of rope, frightened of faces
a bird-like woman, so you dream of your father
speak bird talk, drink bird milk
you dream that your father is a celibate
by chance, and not in dream
he had you, you dream of your father's dreamed dreams
you dream your father says: This is a dream dreamed by a dead man

you don't believe it but you incline to believing
this is dream, merely dream, your dream:
it was the handlebar of a certain bicycle
retaining the shape of the hand's grip
now, drooping down on your father's little belly
once a foetus which refused to be born
it's now you, climbing back to the handlebar
you've dreamed of all the details in your dream
like your father's teeth lying on the ground, sparkling
at you laughing, so you certainly are not death itself
merely an example: you've dreamed of your dream's death.

1991
IN WEATHER SUCH AS THIS
NO MEANING IS TO BE HAD FROM WEATHER AT ALL

Land has no boundary, railroad tracks no direction
rejected by a dreamed-out dream
stuffed into a shoe-box
controlled by a sort of lack of means of denouncing
in the time an insect takes to walk by
those fearful of death increase their dependance on fear

In weather such as this
You are an interval in the weather

whatever you stare at you are forgotten by
inhaling what it exhales, it bores into your smell
staring upon the change before day-break
you find the opportunity to turn into grass
passing by trees grown by people
you forget everything

In weather such as this
you won't stand by weather's side

nor will you stand by faith, only by the side of fabrication
when horses' hooves no longer fabricate dictionaries
ask your tongue to fabricate hornets no more
when wheat in fabrication matures, afterwards rots away
would you eat up that last plum in the nightingale's song
eat it up, afterwards leave the sound of winter on the branch

In weather such as this
only fabrication advances

1992
WHEN I KNEW THE BELL-SOUND WAS GREEN

From whatever direction the tree is facing I accept the sky
Midst the trees hide olive green words
like light hiding in a dictionary

recorded by stars that have passed on
balanced by flocks of blinded birds, light
and its shadow, death and death to come

two pears swaying, on the tree
fruit has the earliest shadow
like the bell sound hiding in the trees

on the trees, December wind resists even fiercer wine
there is a gust of wind, hastens the arrival of discourse
blocked by the upright post of the granary, blocked off

dreamt by the marble stone's bad dream, dreaming of
startled by the sound of the wind going down to the tombstone, startled
awake
the last tree leaf flees to the sky

Autumn's writing, bursts from the death of trees' death
the bell sound, just then illuminates my face
for the last time conveying a golden sky---

1992