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Emmanuel C. Eze and Arif Dirlik, *editors*

NATASCHA GENTZ and STEFAN KRAMER
editors

GLOBALIZATION, CULTURAL IDENTITIES, and MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

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Natascha Gentz
Stefan Kramer

Constance and Frankfurt, November 2004

GLOBALIZATION, CULTURAL IDENTITIES, and MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

How to Get Rid of China: Ethnicity, Memory, and Trauma in Gao Xingjian's Novel *One Man's Bible*

NATASCHA GENTZ

Gao Xingjian has become one of the most prominent "Chinese" writers because he received the Nobel Price for Literature in 2000. This award implies the integration of an author's oeuvre into the canon of "world literature," a concept which has been criticised for its imperalist implications or praised as an avenue for breaking the confines of national boundaries in literary creation.[1] In both views, the ethnic background of the author is the central element determining his identity and position in the transnational literary economy. Gao's novel *One Man's Bible*[2] (Gao 2000) is an explicit statement against such ascriptions of national identity, and his attempt at escaping from ethnicity involves a complex process of negotiating notions of history, private and collective memory, and the construction of identities. In this chapter, I will analyze the way in which Gao Xingjian solves his problem of claiming an autonomous identity devoid of ethnic definitions although narrating a historical account so closely related to a specific politically and nationally defined environment: Gao presents a biographical account of a man's life in China and abroad from the 1950s to the late 1990s, focusing on one of the most historiographically contested and politically sensitive periods of modern China, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (CR), 1966–1976. Emphasizing time and again in his novel and his interviews that he wants to get rid of "China," the label of a "Chinese writer," and also of politics, in choosing this content for the novel, Gao is nevertheless joining a transnational conversation about exactly these topics.[3] Moreover, Gao's personal interpretation of the protagonist's experiences are informed by paradigms of a collective memory present in numerous other accounts on this specific period as well. Still, his account is a deviation from previous narratives, as Gao consciously attempts to avoid any application of essentializing categories through a complex—and, to some of his book reviewers, rather confusing—merge of narrating historical events and reflection upon the process of narrating itself.

An intertextual reading will therefore help to clear out the distinct position Gao takes in this multivocal dialogue with other literatures from China and abroad, but also, to bring to the fore those aspects that make his novel a truly transcultural endeavor. What seems to be singular in this novel and what sets it apart from previous accounts of this period in China, is that the author himself is well aware of all these theoretical problems, even if he is not always able to solve them.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

The protagonist in the novel shares many biographical details with the author Gao Xingjian. Born in 1940 in the remote Jiangxi Province, Gao received his education in French language and literature at the Foreign Language Institute in Beijing and was then (1962) assigned to work in the Foreign Language Press as translator. In his student years, his mother died in a state farm and he was sent to the countryside after having been involved in political activities in the factional fights between revolutionary and rebellious Red Guards. Having spent five years (1970–1975) in a small village, Gao was able to return to Beijing and started to publish his first books in the early 1980s, among them a controversial much-debated collection of essays on modern literary techniques in which he fundamentally breaks with the most basic assumptions of a politicized literature of socialist realism.[4] In 1980, Gao started his career as a playwright at the Beijing People's Theatre and wrote a number of innovative and, again, controversial plays, which were criticized as "spiritual pollution" by the Chinese government. Escaping political harassment, Gao first undertook a long journey along the Yangzi river in 1983 and left China in 1987 to seek residence in France, where he still lives now.[5] Except for his journey through China's countryside, which resulted in his more famous novel *Soul Mountain*,[6] all these and more similar features appear as biographical elements of the protagonist in *One Man's Bible.*

As in his other writings, in this novel Gao makes use of a variety of modern literary techniques and includes different narrative modes in his story about a life in the CR. The general story of the novel has a linear temporal line and a teleological direction—which is a common feature of the biographical genre—yet the specific segments of the story are not presented in a chronological order and are interrupted by numerous reflections on the process of writing itself. For this reason, and also because many historical details are not explained but only alluded to, the story was sometimes judged as confusing and incomprehensible to readers unfamiliar with the specific political background of China's twentieth-century history.[7] The segments in the novel do not, however, appear in an arbitrary mixture, but follow a distinctively elaborated structure of two lines, which each, when set apart, reveal a logical and, to a large part, chronological narrative.

Most parts of the sixty-one chapters of the novel are presented in a realistic setting, defined by space and time, and can be divided into four groups: the protagonist's childhood and youth in his hometown (early 1950s), his student years and life before, during and after the Cultural Revolution in Beijing (late 1950s to 1976), his years on the countryside in a village in the southern parts of China (1970–75), and his later life as an exile author, which leads him to Hong Kong (mid-1990s) and makes him move around between Paris, Sweden, Australia, New York, Toulon, and finally Perpignon (mid-1990s–1996).

The first part of the narrative (chapters 1–16) consists of memories of his childhood and life in Beijing, alternating in a regular A-B pattern with a chronological narrative of his encounter with a German-Jewish woman, Margarete, in Hong Kong. Margarete had studied in China in the early 1980s and met the protagonist there. Their coincidental encounter in Hong Kong leads to a short love affair. The dialogues with Margarete confront the protagonist with his own past and evoke arbitrary memories of his mother's death; his escape from China and farewell to his Chinese lover in 1987; his first love affair in the 1960s with a girl named Lin, an offspring of a high cadre family; his later unhappy marriage to a wife, who attempts to denounce him; the beginnings of the Cultural Revolution in his work organization; first childhood experiences in the early 1950s; and his flight from the May Seven Cadre School in 1970 and an encounter with a former schoolmate, a frustrated and desolate poet who has resettled in the protagonist's hometown. The dialogues between Margarete and the main protagonist are presented in direct speech. After Margarete has left Hong Kong in chapter 16, the protagonist finally decides to write down his history and continues a dialogue with himself by addressing himself as "you." Again, this section is presented in an alternating A-B pattern of recollections of events and reflections by the writer (chapters 16–39). In this second section, the historical A part gives a chronological account of the protagonist's involvement in the factional fights during the CR. The B part interrupts this narrative with discussions of historiographical problems, how to present a truthful picture of the events, the status of literature, his own position and psychological state of mind under a fascist system, dreams from his childhood, and parables about the structure of this inhuman system. The third section sets out with his courageous escape from the labor camp and final settlement in a small village in the countryside (chapters 40–48). This period is narrated in an about sixty page-long linear chronological pattern without any interruption. It is contrasted by the following fourth section, which suddenly leads the reader to Sydney in the late 1990s and again takes up the alternating A-B pattern (chapters 49–55). Descriptions of the fates of the people he had encountered after the CR as well as his life abroad in the A line are again interrupted by dreams and reflections on his spiritual escape and liberation. The last six chapters of the novel (56–61) are set in the present, in which the writer contrasts his sexual

encounters with a "liberated" woman in the West in the A line with an almost hymnic and triumphant conclusion about the individual freedom he finally had achieved in the West in the B line. These seemingly arbitrary shifts between the two narrative modes are thus deliberately chosen, even if this is not visible to the reader at first sight.

HISTORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Because there are so many congruencies between the life of Gao and the story of his protagonist, this book is mainly regarded as an "autobiographical" novel, and his account is taken as an authentic representation of his experiences in China as a "native informant."[8] Such an assumption implies two problematic premises.

The first problem with applying this genre categorization is the identification of Gao's story with "Chinese" realities. Such identification is in tune with a general tendency in Chinese literary criticism to regard "realism" as the only and dominant form of modern Chinese literary creation. This might be due to the fact that an indigenous Chinese literary theory has emphasized realism as the main and mandatory literary technique since the beginnings of modern literature in China, which resulted in the extreme formulations of "revolutionary" or "romantic realism" in the socialist political literary theory. Being aware of this prejudice, Gao has opposed this literary theory of realism in all of his many theoretical writings on literary creation by formulating programmatic statements like "the writer is not the consciousness of society nor is literature the mirror of society."[9] Yet, the identification of Chinese literature as "realistic" touches upon the larger issue of the reception of non-Western literature in the West, that is, the position of the ethnic writer. Because the author is a Chinese writing about his own experiences, Gao's account is easily understood as an authentic description of the situation in China. That the reception of non-Western literature is largely dominated by a nationalist or ethnic perspective leads Arif Dirlik, in this volume, to provocatively pose the question of whether the ethnic writer may have an autonomous interiority at all, which does not merely reflect ethnic collectivity in a "truthful" and "authentic" manner. Gao opposes such an ethnic essentialisation of non-Western literature from a literary point of view by claiming that literature has no national boundaries. Quite to the contrary, Gao sees the most fatal distortion of modern Chinese literature in its increasing concentration on the nation, the victimization of the authors by the myth of the nation, and their subsequent tendency to act as spokesmen for the masses motivated by patriotism (Lee 2002, 31–32). With such statements the author is writing against the still largely prevalent assumption of the Chinese writer's "obsession with China," which was identified by C.T. Hsia many decades ago and meant the Chinese writers' inherent sense of duty to save the nation (Hsia 1971). It might seem paradoxical if Gao then chooses such a dramatically important part of recent Chinese history as

the novel's central focus. Yet, in this novel, the author is neither interested in political explanations of the disastrous events in the CR, nor in any possible solutions for the future of China.

His narrative of specific events more often than not lacks broader explanations of policy shifts in the background, which is another reason why this book sometimes appears incomprehensible to uninformed readers. To depict the events in this manner is a strategic choice by Gao, as he does not intend to explain the politics of the day, but is merely interested in the individual psychological reaction toward the concrete realizations of these policies in daily life ("You want to tell about an individual who was contaminated by politics, without having to discuss the sordid policies itself," 182).

Thus, the criticism of Wu Han, the emergence of middle-school Red Guards, the work team period, the split of the Red Guard movement on the basis of the blood line theory, the takeover by the Rebellious Red Guards, the shifting targets of political persecution from class enemies or capitalist roaders to the Seventh May Clique, the dismissal of Kuai Dafu, and other specific political contexts are all mentioned as historical markers for the background story but not explained or even interpreted in their political significance. It is instead taken for granted that they form a part of the collective memory shared by the readers. This would suggest that the book is aimed at a Chinese readership familiar with these specific political events. But, more importantly, it underlines Gao's intention, not to depict a specific historical event, but to describe a political catastrophe devoid of a specific temporal or political background as a universal human experience ("It is best that you do not try to write a history, but only to look back upon your own experiences," 151).

The protagonist in the novel is very direct in expressing his disintegration from his Chinese past ("What you want is precisely to remove the China label from yourself," 61), rejecting any national prescription of his literature ascribed to him ("[A friend saying to the protagonist:] You're really writing for the people of China. You said you are writing only for yourself," 280) and declaring that he is using the Chinese language only for pragmatic reasons ("The only thing in his past he didn't break with was the language. He could, of course, write in another language, but he didn't abandon his language, because it was convenient and he didn't need to look words in a dictionary," 419.) Any further discussion about the nature of his literature is rejected as belonging to the realm of politics, not literary creation:

> . . . can Chinese literature communicate? Communicate with whom, the West? Or communicate with the Chinese on the Mainland, or with the Chinese living abroad? And what is Chinese literature? Does literature have national boundaries? And do Chinese writers belong to a specific location? Do people living on the Mainland, Hongkong, Taiwan, and the Chinese-Americans all count as Chinese people? This, again, brings in politics, let's talk just about pure literature. But does pure literature really exist? (296)

The problematization of the existence of a pure literature which is not linked to "politics," the question of the possibility of writing "nonattached" history, is pursued further, not in explicit deliberations, but through narrative technique, which is linked to a second, more theoretical problem inherent in the category of "autobiography."

Although biographies had been written centuries before, the notion of "autobiography" was invented in Europe only in the nineteenth century, being a most fashionable trend in the romantic literature of the time. The concept emerged together with questions about the relationship of truth and fiction, the possibility of truthful accounts of lived events and concerns of proper literary forms, all of which were reflected by the authors of these new works (Levin 1998). In the 1960s, Roy Pascal observed that distortion of truth through the act of memory is even a fundamental feature of autobiographies, although the notion of an autonomous subject remains intact in his writings (Pascal 1965). Only after poststructuralist studies emphasized the strong relationship between subjectivity and language were autobiographical writings understood as a constant process of constructing identities through language.

Apparently well aware of these historiographic problems, the author approaches these theoretical problems of writing about oneself when he reflects upon the possibility of exploring the interior world of his main protagonist(s). In his novel, this dilemma is solved by a refined technique of introducing different pronouns for the main protagonist, the "you" of the present (B line) and the "he" of the past (historical A line). Much has been written about Gao Xingjian's innovative usage of the pronouns "I," "you," and "he/she" in different contexts for the same person. Gao elaborates on this technique in many of his theoretical writings and had experimented with it already in his early short stories of the 1980s. A major function of this dissection of a person into different pronouns is to open different perspectives on this person by the person him/herself. Yet, in this semiautobiographical novel, the dissolution of the author gains another dimension because of the fact that the actual narrator, the "I," is missing. By presenting the self of the present as a "you," Gao elucidates the dialogical character of his explorations: the "I" is of course present as the actual narrator of the autobiography, since somebody must be in dialogue with the "you." Through this construction Gao imagines a confrontation of the reflecting, writing self (absent "I") with the reflected self of the past ("he") in a dialogue with the (seemingly authentic) "you" (of the present) discussing the "he." This segmentation of the subject into different pronouns is yet more than a split of selves, which enables the reader to "see the subject from the subjects other points of view," as Kwok-Kan Tam has observed (Tam 2002, 308). Gao makes a qualitative distinction between the different subjects: the "he" is invented as a fictional protagonist by the "I" who addresses "you," whereas the "you" of the present, in contrast, evokes the impression of an "authentic" self. That this self is constructed is revealed through the absent "I."

> You seek only to narrate your own impressions and psychological state of that time, and to do this, you must carefully exercise the insights that you possess at this instant and this place, as well as put aside your present thoughts.
>
> His experiences have stilted up in the creases of your memory. How can they be stripped off in layers, coherently arranged and scanned, so that a pair of detached eyes can observe what he has experienced? You are you and he is he. It is difficult for you to return to how it was in his mind in those times, he has already become so unfamiliar. [. . .] While observing and examining him unmasked, you must turn him into fiction, a character that is unrelated to you and has qualities yet to be discovered. It is then that writing is interesting and creative, and can stimulate curiosity and the desire to explore (182–83).

Between the narrating self and the experiencing self of the past lies a chasm, a temporal rupture which even obstructs the narrating self's identification with the experiencing self of the past. He is constructed as a stranger, who can only be approached through literary techniques—fiction. What might seem a confusing mixture of subjective perspectives to some readers is instead a deliberate narrative technique to approach a historical subject through present reflections, a translation and actualization of the past self in the present through a hermeneutic dialogue.

Gao did not use a term related to (auto)biographies to label his novel, but chose the word "*shengjing*"—in modern Chinese usually rendered as "bible,"[10] which can easily be misinterpreted by simply understanding it as a reference to the Christian canonical text. "*Shengjing*" is composed of the two elements "holy" (sheng) and "classic, canonical writing" (jing), and, in its earlier usage, referred to all scriptures of major world religions, such as the Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian canon as well as the Confucian writings. In combination with other words it is even used for the writings of the sages in general, handed down to posterior generations.[11] To translate it as "bible" or "the holy scripture" would therefore imply a reduction to a Christian cultural context, which is somewhat misleading. In the author's own words, "*shengjing*" has to be understood as the following:

> You have written this book for yourself, this book of fleeing, this *One Man's Bible* [trsl. of *yige ren de shengjing* by Mabel Lee], you are your own god and follower, you do not sacrifice yourself for others, so you do not expect others to sacrifice themselves for you, and this is the epitome of fairness. Everyone wants happiness, so why should it all belong to you? However, what should be acknowledged is that there is actually very little happiness in the world (198–99).

This description is quite the opposite of what is understood as the basic elements of the bible: a canonical text handed down by God, written down by his disciples to be followed verbatim by all true believers. This shows, on the one hand, that Gao employs the label "bible" in an ironic fashion. On the other

hand, seen in the light of his constructions of identities, it opens possibilities for a more profound interpretation that brings to the fore his understanding of his constructions of the self. Taken verbatim in a religious context, the bible is the revelation of God, just as the Chinese classical texts are revelations of the unspeakable, transported into the medium of language. This process necessarily distorts the original "meaning" of the divine: "Words do not exhaust meaning" (*yan bu jin yi*), is a locus classicus in Chinese literature for expressing this problem inherent in language, which permeates the Daoist and Buddhist literature.[12] The bible we are confronted with in Gao's novel is the revelation of an invisible and unspeakable "I," transmitted to the "you," who, by writing it down, already corrupts the true meaning of the "I." Thus, already through the title, Gao addresses the fundamental problem of the authority of the writer. The struggle with language and the impossibility of exhausting meaning through words is a topic which runs through the whole novel, and it is Gao's construction of separating the narrating and the experiencing self, the former being in dialogue with "I" (the "truth" of God), which transcends this linguistic and methodological problem into a spiritual one.

HISTORY AND MEMORY

Emphasizing the individual aspect of his interpretation of life and history by this title, Gao is yet writing and speaking in a real environment. With his choice of subject he is taking part in a transnational discourse on this period of the Cultural Revolution, which is informed by several layers of communicative and collective memory.[13] This becomes visible by comparing his narrative with other histories from officially sanctioned PRC literature, banned publications in the PRC as well as so-called "dissident" literature of other exiled authors. To situate his version of the historical past within this context is necessary in order to clarify his singular position within this discourse.

The author is again well aware of the dangerous traps involved in the recollection of historical memories and their connection to language usage. The first indirect dialogue between the "I" and "you" is thus devoted to a debate of the question of how history can be written without falling prey to current ideological terminology and without explaining the implications of the basic words and notions of the period. For Gao, it seems more important to know the political and psychological implications of words like "party," "learning," "rebellion," or "revolution," or even "history" rather than the actual events described by these words. Earlier descriptions of the atrocities in the CR, as for instance Yang Jiang's short (and mild) account on her life in a cadre school, have dealt with this language question implicitly by, for instance, putting the political notions into brackets and thereby alluding to their shallow content.[14] The possibility of arbitrary interpretations of these words leads the protagonist ("you") to deny any significance to any theory or

ideology. Instead he attempts to unmask them as mere tools for fooling, manipulating, and oppressing people (chapter 18). Moreover, these reflections reveal the author's constant struggle with language. On a contextual level, his search for a new and nonpartisan language is part of a collective struggle to overcome the "Mao style" (*Mao wenti*), which dominated Chinese language in its most extreme form during the CR.[15] On the personal level it represents the individual struggle of an author to find his "own" language, a language that is able to reflect the interior of his self. What he explored is an almost hyperrealistic, plain and simple style, full of grammatical shifts and sometimes even mistakes, at times evoking the impression that he has been transcribing a speech, thereby substantiating the hermeneutical dialogue through language. Even more literary descriptions of the landscape or different people recur in almost identical phrases—again a deliberate choice by the author:

> You must find a detached voice, scrape off the thick residue of resentment and anger in your heart, then unhurriedly and calmly proceed to articulate your various expressions, your flood of confused memories, and your tangled thoughts. But you find this very difficult. What you seek is a pure form of narration. You are striving to describe in simple language the terrible contamination of life by politics, but it is very difficult. You want to expunge the pervasive politics that penetrated every pore, clung to daily life, became fused in speech and action, and from which no one at that time could escape (181–82).

From a superficial look at the content, Gao's "fictional" creation of the life experiences of his "he" is in tune with many other narratives of exile memoirs published outside China. The protagonist shares many biographical elements of other exile memoirs which were identified by Peter Zarrow in his analysis of exile memoirs of the CR (Zarrow 1999): the protagonist started as a promising young student in a peaceful childhood in the 1950s—and this "Golden Age" of Chinese communism during the 1950s is not only epitomized in the protagonist's memories of an extremely happy childhood, but also in the high expectations his parents and friends held for the communist liberation. The first fundamental breach of trust by the party came with the Anti-Rightist movement in the late 1950s. Later he was caught up in political factional fights during the first phase of the CR (ch. 19), realized the shallowness of these struggles, and volunteered to leave Beijing only to land in a Seventh May Cadre School labor camp, where he was soon to be persecuted because of his rebellious background. Knowing that this political investigation would mean his death, he managed again to escape with a courageous trick, and intended to settle in the countryside for life (ch.13). During the political struggles in Beijing, he also sided with brutal and ruthless rebellious Red Guards, but he always attempted to deescalate the conflicts and remain conciliatory toward his enemies (chs. 23, 29, 32). His attacks were a mere act of self-defense (ch. 29) and all in all he managed to maintain his inner moral integrity.

In many interviews and writings Gao articulates his attempts to escape this predicament of being entrapped by ideologies and their languages by placing himself at the margins of society as a neutral spectator. In the novel, this role of an outside observer is taken over by the experiencing self of the past ("he"). The sceneries are filled with a large number of people from different social strata, through which Gao gives a panoramic picture of the Chinese society of those days. Yet none of the characters are developed as individuals.

Gao has been criticized for this lack of individual voices of his other protagonists, especially Margarete, who is described in the fullest length in the novel, and (in other writings) women in general. His stereotypical presentation of woman as naïve and emotional rather than rational, and mainly sex-oriented, was interpreted as a misogynist and male-chauvinist attitude.[16] But this reduction of persons to stock characters again appears as a specific strategic device to fully develop the protagonist and his character as the main hero. Moreover, it is not restricted to women alone. The different backgrounds of the people he encounters, such as poets, painters, philosophers, entrepreneurs, or lovers, reveal different aspects of the personality of the protagonist, they only function to convey these aspects in their dialogues with the main character.

In looking at the overall depiction of Chinese society through these characters, we find an astonishingly mild verdict of the author. Except for Lin, a privileged high cadre daughter who had a risky love affair with the protagonist, all persons introduced experience a tragic fate, in one way or another. They can be divided into two groups: those who actively attempt to change their situations (a.o., his superior, the cadre Liu Ping, his schoolmates, the poet Luo, the mathematician Datou, his colleague Liang Kuan and a friend, the painter Dong Ping) and those who are passive and subjected to their inevitable destinies (e.g., his elder colleague Tan Xinren, his father, his father's cousin Fang, his schoolmate Rong, Xiaoxiao, a former Red Guard, and his disciple Sun Huirong in the village). Some among the first group are, like the protagonist, able to get away by escaping from China (Datou, Liang Kuan, Dong Ping and a Hong Kong entrepreneur), or by escaping from the political center, like the village cadre Lu who withdrew to a small hut in the mountains. There is only one truly negative figure in the novel: Danian, a brutal and ruthless blood-line Red Guard, who is the concrete enemy of the protagonist in their Red Guard struggles, and is sentenced to confinement after the CR. Another villain, the local cadre Zhao, only gradually reveals himself as a coward when it is disclosed that he raped a school girl. Yet, the actual villains responsible for the national catastrophe remain abstract, represented by nameless masses following the orders from above like a mass of sheep or an obscure political leadership giving those orders as anonymous agents. Even the responsible cadres at the highest political level, are, when mentioned, depicted as persons full of moral integrity who deserve the protagonist's respect.

This mild diagnosis of Chinese society seems, to a large part, to be indebted to a flow of a literature of humanism, widespread in China in the early 1980s, a reaction to the dehumanization of the individual in the CR and an attempt to restore the value of human dignity. Especially the degraded local cadre Lu, the only thoroughly positive figure in the entire novel, and a person the protagonist clearly admires, is imbued with the virtues of fairness, cleverness, and leniency and presented as a model party cadre under whose rule and protection the protagonist feels ultimately happy and content. The mild voice of the author reminds of conciliatory attempts to restore the image of a harmonious society, which had only been disturbed for a while during the turbulences of the CR but was not essentially fractured, alienated, or sick, an image actively promoted by the PRC leadership in the early 1980s; this is rather surprising, given the general tone of contempt for the political oppression that occurred.

If other previous accounts of former Red Guards followed a strategy of emphasizing their political blindness, which prevented them from recognizing the manipulation of the masses and of denying any true authenticity in their political actions (Zarrow 1999, 172), the protagonist's perspective allows him to remain authentic.[17] He was never blinded, but always able to figure out the necessary tactical moves. Because of this ability, he was never a concrete victim subjected to cruelties by others, but suffered only from the general aggressive and restrictive climate. As an observer he was not only able to detect the false and shallow behavior of his contemporaries, but also to scrutinize and analyze his own behavior during the events, yet this scrutinization does not imply any specific sense of guilt felt by the protagonist.

Such a seemingly heroic story is, however, undermined by the fact that the protagonist is entirely alienated from his environment and not able to survive in it, fleeing constantly. Escape is one of the major themes in Gao Xingjian's writings, not only physical escape from one place to another, but also escape from a mental perspective, from any philosophical territory that could restrain his intellectual freedom. Escape, as a leitmotif of his life, is the only possible way to maintain individual integrity and autonomy against political authorities, public opinion, social morals, or commercial interests.[18]

This trope of escape runs through the whole novel. Yet, there is one sequence in which it does not appear; this is during the protagonist's life in the village. Also, the narrative structure of this part underlines the protagonist's apparent feeling of relief and the redemption of an unfractured self, as it is the only sequence in the novel which is not interrupted by metareflections. Instead, the countryside was the ultimate destiny of salvation. When able to finally settle down in small village for the rest of his life, the protagonist rejoiced in happiness and the author gives an extremely romantic and seemingly naïve picture of his bucolic life on the countryside (ch. 41). Thus, at first, the protagonist experiences the countryside in a romantic tradition, highlighting the purity, simplicity, and naturalness of a peasant life (and thereby follows a stereotype of the traditional Chinese literati). Here, the author deviates form other standard narratives of the sent-down youth, for

whom the point of disillusionment with CR politics came with the death of Lin Biao or their relegation to the countryside (Leung 1994). In contrast to most sent-down youth narratives, which emphasize ideological disillusionment in the face of hardships and the corruption and feudal practices in the villages, Gao's protagonist is only slowly exposed to the cruelties of rural life through the lessons taught by the above-mentioned party secretary Lu, the secret "king of the mountains" in this area (ch. 47). Before this, he constantly nourishes his hope to become "one of them," and at times even feels accepted as an ordinary peasant. It is the only—although short—phase in his mature life in China, when he identifies with his surrounding and overcomes the overall feeling of alienation—even if only to recognize that this identification was an illusion as well.

Lu explains the farmers' ruthlessness, unreliability, and selfishness in a historical perspective, as the essential character of the ordinary peasants in China, drawing a line from the Taiping rebellion to the liberation wars and finally to the Cultural Revolution. Yet, with his protagonist, Gao refuses any reference to a Chinese cultural tradition or a Chinese particularity. The confrontation of the protagonist's past in China with present his life in the West is never explained in terms of cultural difference. In his descriptions of events in China there are not even hints of residues of a feudal Chinese tradition in human relations or of sociopolitical habits of strict obedience to the ruler, as, for instance, are found in Liang Heng's *Son of the Revolution*.[19] Neither is there any attempt to explain a culturally defined Chinese character or to provide broader historical perspective on the course of Chinese history, as found in other writings after the Cultural Revolution.[20] If he generalizes, he speaks of human beings, mankind, or—in social terms—the masses. Even when reflecting upon his own identity as a Chinese, he merely emphasizes his fundamental radical break with this identity without ever touching upon questions of what qualitative features these "Chinese" elements would have.

However, as a matter of fact, the protagonist takes cultural and ethnic differences for granted, as revealed in his dialogue with Margarete: "You are not like other women of the West, you are much more like a Chinese girl."[21] Such statements again testify the common phenomenon, that cultural and ethnic essentializations are much more easily applied to the "other," even if they are explicitly rejected for oneself.

In his analysis of exile memoirs on the CR, Zarrow discovers a common linear narrative structure from tragedy (the experience of Maoist China as a pure nightmare) to triumph over the troubles (recognition of realities) and actual accession to freedom in the West.[22] He argues that this triumphant arrival in the West as the final destination and only place in the world allowing for individual freedom and true subjectivism caters to a Western readership by reinforcing the common assumptions of a Orientalist despotic East against a free democratic West and that this makes up for the common success of such descriptions outside China. In Gao's case, this is substantiated by many reviews of his recently published English translation as well as the publisher's promotion, which all emphasize exactly this point, describing the book as "a profound meditation on the essence of writing, on exile, on the effects of political oppression of the human spirit, and how the human spirit can triumph."[23]

Indeed, the protagonist's experiences in the West are presented in the same romantic fashion as his life on the countryside, evoking images of bucolic landscapes and indulging in his own feelings of an achieved personal freedom to live his own independent life. Ironically, reminding almost of CR propaganda narrations of "remembering the bitterness of the past and rejoicing in the sweetness of the present," the West serves as the final point, where the teleological narrative of a process of maturing (by learning to understand realities), resulting in the achievement of a true and independent position, comes to an end. Yet, in the case of *One Man's Bible*, the image of a free West is exaggerated to an extent that suggests that the author is producing a (contrasting) image rather than intending to present "Western realities." The protagonist praises the freedom in the West in hymnic verses: this environment not only provides political freedom (as he is able to articulate whatever opinion he has) or individual freedom (as he is able to sleep with any woman without thereby infracting social or moral norms) but also economic freedom (as he is not forced to rely on writing for his income).

> You're light, and float up as if you were weightless. You wander from country to country, city to city, woman to woman, but don't think of finding a place that is home. You drift along, engrossed in savoring the taste of the written language, and, like ejaculating, leave behind some traces of your life. . . . You simply live in this instant, like a leaf on the brink of falling from a tree. . . . sooner or later it has to fall, but while it's fluttering in the breeze, it must strive for freedom (426).

This image of his free and careless life in the West, evoked by these comments, might appear naive, yet it is an image painted by the protagonist, and thus a narrative technique which serves as a negative foil to poignantly contrast the heavy psychological burden of the dictatorial system of the past. It also expresses the articulation of the "you"'s insurmountably strong and ultimately essential desire for freedom as a consequence of his experiences in the inhuman system of his past. It is thus necessary only in order to provide a counter-image to the unbearable conditions of the past.

Moreover, this individual perception of the protagonist's own freedom is contrasted with anecdotes and scenes from the West, which subvert this positive image. This technique of juxtaposing tragic fates of individuals he observed in China and in the West is most clearly applied in chapters 48–52, which narrate his encounters with student girls in the Chinese village alternating with

scenes of his love affair with a French girl Sylvie. In the A line, the protagonist meets two sent-down girls who live alone in a school in a deserted area, teaching the children during the day and catering to the village population at night. Spending a night in their house, he notices the lack of door locks (ch. 48). In the next scene, the protagonist of the present is in Sydney together with his current lover, Sylvie, searching a primordial forest area. Sylvie is introduced as a sexually and ideologically liberated woman who frequently changes partners regardless of their ethnic background (which is emphasized). However, this life does not bring full happiness to her, as she frequently sinks into deep depressions—partly because this life is the result of a former unhappy alliance which had lead to pregnancy and a subsequent abortion (ch. 49). Back in the village in the following chapter, the protagonist discovers that his former student Sun Huirong has been raped by the local party official. Reading through all the files of the case he learns that she had become pregnant, was accused of having seduced the man, and has therefore been transferred to a remote production brigade. Her mother had helped her settle the abortion in a hospital, and finally, Sun became the whore of the village (ch. 50). In France, Sylvie tells the story of her intimate girlfriend Martina. Martina also had an active sex life with changing partners, yet this was not accepted by Martina's mother, who sent her to a mental hospital, anxious that society would regard her daughter as a whore. Martina became an alcoholic and finally committed suicide. Sylvie then reveals the grievous story of her own full "sexual liberation," experienced during a holiday trip with Martina, during which Martina had seduced Silvie's first boyfriend and arranged a sexual encounter of all four partners, which caused Silvie's inner moral disillusionment. Gao does not compare these events in China and the West, but juxtaposes them without any comment. The reader is forced to draw his or her conclusion, or, just to let this image evoked by the juxtaposition take effect. The protagonist's escape to the West is therefore not an arrival but the continuation of a permanent state of fleeing (in) the world.

Thus, his choice of a voluntary exile from his homeland is not perceived as a preliminary state of existence which had to be overcome, but as the ultimate source of joy and happiness.

> He had no leader, because he was not controlled by the Party or some organization. He had no hometown, because his parents were dead. And he had no family. He had no responsibilities, he was alone, but he was free and easy, he could go wherever he wanted, he could drift with the wind (419).

By fully appreciating the good fortunes of his exile life, the protagonist is ardently speaking against the assumption expressed by Edward Said that "the essential sadness of exile can never be surmounted. . . . The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever" (Said 1990, 357).[24] This sets him apart from the real exile poets of the present, such as Bei Dao, Yang Lian, and Duo Duo, who reflect

a melancholic longing for their distant homelands. In contrast, the protagonist does not feel rootless and depressed for having been culturally deprived, but evokes the impression of having stepped into a cosmopolitan space from which he is able to pick and choose the raisins out of the international confectioner—at least there is no single word of a miserable feeling about this state of life in the novel.

In tune with those exile writers is Gao's detest for political statements. A surprising feature of most of these exile writers is their common rejection of the political implications of their writings and a strong defense of the concept of "art for art's sake," instead of calling for political action.[25] This withdrawal from social and political responsibility might be a reaction toward their common experience of the consequences of an extreme political reading of Chinese literature in China. By maintaining that he is only writing for himself and by establishing this realm of internal exile, the protagonist mainly confirms the reachievement of his human dignity. This means keeping a private mental space isolated from social or political interference and nourishing this space in times of darkness.

> A person cannot be crushed if he refuses to be crushed. Others may oppress him, and defile him but, as long as he had not stopped breathing, he will still have the chance to raise his head. It is a matter of being able to preserve his last breath, to hold onto his last breath, so that one does not suffocate in the pile of shit. A person can be raped, woman or man, physically or by political force, but a person cannot be totally possessed; one's spirit remains one's own, and it is this that is preserved in the mind (446–47).

The overall story of the experiences during the CR narrates a heroic account of a protagonist who is able to overcome all difficulties through his cleverness, wit, and mental superiority. In all cases, the protagonist is able to escape from persecutions because he can foresee them and thus prepare against them by escaping from the dangerous environment: from Beijing he sets out to inspections tours, from the cadre school he flees to a village in the South, after the CR he escapes to the West. This hero apparently also feels no need to develop a "sense of shame" as articulated in Qian Zhongshu's remarkable foreword to his wife's account of her life in the state farm, describing himself as belonging to those persons who are "feeling ashamed of their own cowardice, people who lacked the courage to protest that which they believed unjust, but whose most courageous act was 'passive' participation in the campaign."[26] This self-scrutinizing perspective is, admittedly and as far as I can see, unique in the current literature on the CR. The few self-accusing instances in the novel are restricted to descriptions of the protagonist's passive attitude, for instance, for passively watching an old lady being beaten to death on the street. At the same time, the subsequent remarks on that instant, that the police were inactive as well, place responsibility on the state instead of on the individual.

MEMORY AND TRAUMA

The possible acknowledgment of a sense of guilt and a thorough reflection on traumatic experiences faced during the CR on the side of the victims is limited by the fundamental problem that such a discourse on the CR is still tabooed in the People's Republic of China.[27] Yet, "to hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance" (Herman 2001, 9). This social context is not given and makes it so difficult for most of authors writing on the CR to sincerely overcome the past in a more reflected and rational fashion. The crucial question for an official reevaluation of the CR lies in a new evaluation of the role of Mao Zedong and Jiang Qing (or the "Gang of Four"). Plays or literary and academic pieces which attempt to approach this sensitive question by a more neutral perspective are still banned in China.[28]

In Gao's novel the question of how to deal with this period in a sincere and proper way is the central question. The whole issue of recovery from the traumatic experiences is approached through a comparison between the CR and the Holocaust, while at the same time the possibility of this comparison is made a topic of discussion. Apart from the fact that such an analogy is largely rejected in academic scholarship, it nevertheless prevails in popular descriptions of the CR.[29] In academic discussions, the question is posed of whether the experiences of the CR victims can be regarded as "traumatic" at all. Ann Thurston affirmed the traumatic character of the experience as she observed a general sense of loss generated by an extreme situation that lacks possible explanations (Thurston 1988). Lucien Pye has argued against this by referring to the quick return to normal life after the fall of the "Gang of Four," which would contradict the fact of a traumatized society.[30] More recently, Vera Schwarcz has approached this topic by comparing the modes of recollection of Jewish and Chinese victims by highlighting the fundamental relation of individual memories to cultural memories.[31]

In Gao's novel, this comparison is directly addressed, when the "you" is confronted with Margarete, the German girl with a Jewish family background, who suffers from transgenerational traumatic syndroms. Because of her own loss of a sense of safety, still being fearful of persecution by remaining Neo-Fascists in Germany, Margarete involves the "you" in exhaustive discussions about the necessity "to remember": in order to avoid letting history repeat itself, on the one hand, but more importantly, in order to gain relief through communicating the experienced suffering (ch. 8). The protagonist ("you") refutes her arguments one by one, unwilling to see himself as suffering from any posttraumatic syndrome. Time and again he emphasizes that he had cut off all links with the past and only thus had acquired his new happiness and freedom.

Margarete slowly deconstructs this self-image of the protagonist as a content and happy citizen of the world. She serves to exemplify the traumatized person with whom the protagonist "you," who regards himself as "untraumatized" and as free person, has to be forcefully confronted. Also here, there is no sense of shame, which restrains the "you" in the beginning from retelling the stories of the past, shame about the indignity suffered or the violation of bodily integrity, which often prevents the traumatized from recollecting their experiences. The only reason why the "you" at first refutes approaches is because of his conviction that forgetting was the only way of relief, thus repeating his trope of "escape" as a device of survival.

This attraction of amnesia appears repeatedly in the novel through the metaphor of flowing water. As Vera Schwarcz has explored, the metaphor of water is linked with the benefits of amnesia in Chinese folklore, and it seems significant that water, small ponds, rivers, or the seaside are the most common features in the landscapes painted in the novel. Most obviously, the largest part of the scenes from the protagonist's exile life takes place at the seaside in Sydney (ch. 49) and Toulon (ch. 59), or at a lake in Sweden (ch. 17), and the Hong Kong scenes are full of descriptions of the sea, too. Diving into water in order to forget or free oneself is a trope, which Gao has extensively elaborated in his short story "Haishang" (Out at Sea), whereas in "Choujin" (Spasms), the attractiveness of the sea (in a metaphorical reading: of amnesia) is a real threat to the life of the protagonist.[32] The cadre Lu, who retreated into the mountains to break with his past, built his house beside a small pond, which the protagonist hears murmuring while lying on bed at night (ch. 52). It is this oscillation between painful memory and sedative amnesia that directs the mode of narration in the novel and defines the fundamental condition of the narrator(s).

The protagonist's desire for amnesia is successfully crushed when Margarete explains in what respect the Holocaust fundamentally differed from the Cultural Revolution. Only then the protagonist feels so provoked that he flares up to state:

> "Fascism was not only in Germany, you never really lived in China. Fascism was no worse than the Cultural Revolution," you said coldly. "But it wasn't the same. Fascism was genocide, it was simply because one had Jewish blood in one's body. It was different from ideologies and political beliefs, it didn't need theories." She raises her voice to argue. "Your theories are dog shit! You don't understand China at all, and haven't experienced the Red Terror. It was an infectious disease that made people go mad!" You suddenly lose your temper (66–67).

The protagonist begins to recall his sufferings, which come into the picture first and foremost as nightmares ("You say that memories might give her strength but for you they are the same as nightmares," 60). An experience is defined as traumatic if the victim is suffering from posttraumatic stress disorders, nightmares, stress symptoms, and nervous anxieties. Traumatic moments become encoded in forms of memory which break spontaneously

into consciousness, as flashbacks or nightmare, and they are not encoded in a verbal, linear narrative, but in vivid sensations and images (Herman 2001, 37–38). Also, this is clearly reflected in Gao's structural arrangement of the novel. After this outbreak, the "you" who had denied any traces of trauma beforehand, begins to explain that he can find relief only through sexual intercourse with woman.

> She needs to search for historical memories, and you need to forget them. She needs to burden herself with the sufferings of the Jews . . . , but you need to receive from her body a confirmation that you are living at this instant (67).

The many sexual encounters narrated in this novel are presented as a vehicle to overcome the traumatic experiences inscribed into the body of the protagonist. As their dialogues continue, it is revealed that Margarete's actual trauma was that she had been raped in her early youth. Margarete's physical manifestation of her trauma is her masochistic desire for sadist sexual practices and the experience of physical pain, as she discloses to the "you" in their last sexual encounter (ch. 16). For the protagonist the only way of relief was his ejaculation into a female body. The connection between the political and the physical is taken further by the "you" when he compares his political experience to being raped.

> You say that you have experienced the feeling of being raped, of being raped by the political authorities, and it has clogged up your heart. You can understand her, and can understand the anxiety, frustration, and oppression that she can't get rid herself of. Rape was no sex game. It was the same for you, and it was long afterward, after obtaining the freedom to speak out, that you realized it had been a form of rape. You had been subjected to the will of others, had to make confessions, had to say what others wanted you to say (121–22).

The traumatic experience of the protagonist was not physical persecution, but a spiritual one. The leniency in his verdict about most of the people involved in the struggles in his homeland, and also in his overall evaluation of the good and bad in his life (repeating that he has no enemies and even expressing a general gratitude for his after all still lucky fate), is contrasted with his fundamental traumatic suffering from oppression of freedom. And there is only one person responsible for this trauma, whom he cannot forgive:

> What he wanted to say was, you could kill people at your will. What he wanted to tell Mao was, you made every single person to speak your words. He also wanted to say that history would fade into oblivion, but, back in those days, he had been forced to say what Mao had dictated, therefore, it was impossible for him to eradicate his hatred for Mao. Afterwards, he had said to himself that as along as Mao was revered as leader, emperor, god, he would not return to that country (405).

The interpretation of his experience as a physical rape emphasizes the sense of being the victim of a criminal act rather than of a tragic political development. It also emphasizes the senselessness of the occurrences. The protagonist's reevaluation of the role of Mao is therefore one of a criminal who raped people at will. Although this political rape is part of the past, it is still actually present in the protagonist's subsequent rejection of articulating anything political and in his final solution of seeking relief only in the depths of a female body. Metaphorical analogies between ejaculating and writing, both presented as the ultimate modes of decreasing his psychological pressure, recur time and again. According to Herman "traumatic events have primary effects not only on the psychological structures of the self but also on the systems of attachment and meaning that link individual and community" (Herman 2001, 51). Given the fact that there is yet no outside support for the CR traumatized to recover by communicating their experience to a trustworthy community, the protagonist's solution out of his psychological dilemma is a kind of solipsism, a rejection of any outside influence and ultimate concentration on himself and physical—sexual—sensations, which he ultimately defines as an "awareness of life." For his artistic life, this means gracefully sublimating the frustrations of life into art (p. 445).

CONCLUSION

In his account of the history of an individual life during the CR, Gao has obviously no intention to give a new interpretation of the historical past in his description and (unwilling) analysis of the political and social background of the Cultural Revolution. Instead, he presents a mosaic of ostensibly unrelated scenes filled with a wide range of various people, which are most convincing in their capacity to convey the general sense of tragic disillusionment behind seemingly trivial events. The novel presents a genuine mixture of approaches in an individual's attempt to localize himself in historical, social, and ethnic terms. It addresses the fundamental problems in this process of localization, trying to solve them partly expressively, by theoretical explorations, but mainly implicitly through literary techniques. His attempt to integrate reflections on identity and self-construction, the human conditions of remembering, the self-positioning in a transnational literary economy, and the process of writing into the literary creation itself is certainly a unique approach to the complex problem of the role of the Cultural Revolution in Chinese history and in individuals' lives, which has up to now been dominated by stereotypical accounts and shallow political or psychological explanations.

Gao's complex construction of the protagonist's self in the novel is another attempt at escape from collective memory and, from a theoretical point of view, a very interesting approach to the complex issue of history, historiography, and language. The superficial teleological narrative of an individual arriving at a state of ultimate happiness by voluntary withdrawal is subverted by the

simultaneous disclosure of the illusionary character of this happiness and freedom of the protagonist when pointing at the traumatic stress he is actually suffering. The protagonist's various attempts to overcome his traumatic past certainly make up for the strongest parts of this novel, although the presented solution is full of contradictions. Claiming to have overcome all the horrors of the past and having achieved an ultimately independent and freed state of mind, the protagonist is still caught by his powerful need and desire to vent his psychological pressure through unattached sexual activities. This contradiction is taken further at the end of the novel, where he ponders the question of where he could find a woman who was independent and solitary like him, yet would be willing to fuse his "solitude with hers in sexual gratification" (439), and thus expresses his still fundamentally present desire for psychological attachment.

To understand this contradictory image of the protagonist, it has to be kept in mind, that the "you" who is speaking with a seemingly authentic voice about his freedom and happiness is also a figure, developed through the hermeneutic dialogue with the absent "I." If, at the final point of his biographical journey the protagonist seems to have regained an intact identity, this is presented as an illusion as well. It is in this particular respect that Gao's elucidation and stress of the extreme anxieties, difficulties, and contingencies a self-stated nonethnic writer faces is successful. His novel is the testimony of an attempt to dissolve the "subject of culture" by situating it within a terrain of contested sites and by making these contestations visible.

NOTES

This paper is a by-product of my translation of Gao Xingjian's novel *One Man's Bible* into German (*Das Buch eines einsamen Menschen,* Frankfur a. M.: Fischer Verlag, 2004). I wish to thank Irmy Schweiger for her critical remarks and helpful suggestions.

1. For a critical discussion of the ideological and economic implications of this concept see Jones, "Chinese Literature in the 'World' Literary Economy." Torbjörn Lodén, who also took issue with Stephen Owen's essay discussed by Jones, takes a more positive stance emphasizing the creative possibilities opened up through a transnational literary intercourse. Cf. Lodén. "World Literature with Chinese Characteristics."

2. Gao started writing this book in 1996 in France; it was first published in Taipei in 1999. For an English translation see Gao Xingjian, *One Man's Bible,* translated by Mabel Lee, London: Flamingo, 2002, which is used in this paper for reasons of stylistic coherence, if not indicated otherwise.

3. In an interview with Jean-Luc Douin Gao said: "I think of me as a citizen of the world. A frail man, who has managed not to be crushed by authority, and who speaks to the world with his own voice." Label France, April 2001. In another interview at Harvard University he defined his Chinese identity as entirely personal: Asked how he views his cultural identity, and whether he misses China, Gao gives a typically internal definition of self. "I am China," he says, tapping his chest. Wo jiushi Zhongguo. "China is inside me, and that China," he says, gesturing to encompass the world of politics and pain, of fallibility on a systematic scale, "has nothing to do with me." Shen, "Nobel winner affirms the 'self.'"

4. Gao Xingjian, *Xiandai xiaoshuo jiqiao chutan* (A Preliminary Exploration of the Techniques of Modern Fiction), Guangzhou, 1981. The book incited a polemic discussion on modernism in Chinese literature.

5. More biographical details can be found in the various contributions to the monograph on Gao Xingjian edited by Tam, and especially Terry Siu-Han Yip's chronology of his life and writings in this volume. Tam, *Soul of Chaos.*

6. Gao Xingjian, *Lingshan* (Soul Mountain), Taipei, 1990. For an English translation see Gao Xingjian, *Soul Mountain.* Translated by Mabel Lee, London, 2000.

7. E.g. W.J.F. Jenner, in *The Guardian,* 30 November 2002; Peter Gordon, "Cure for Bitterness," *Asian Review of Books,* 24.10.2002; see also the reviews under: http://btobsearch.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch by Shirley N. Quan, Library Journal; Kirkus Reviews.

8. The identification of the protagonist with Gao is either taken for granted in most of the reviews of *One Man's Bible* mentioned above, or the distinction between the fictional account and his biography is regarded as insignificant.

9. Gao Xingjian, *Meiyou zhuyi* (Without isms), Hong Kong, 1996, 23, which is a collection of such essays. For an analysis of his literary reflections see Mabel Lee, "Gao Xingjian on the Issue of Literary Creation for the Modern Write," in Tam ed., loc. cit., 21–41.

10. The term was—together with many other optional translations—integrated into the Chinese language as a translation for "bible" in the early-nineteenth century, yet only in the early-twentieth century did it become the standardized translation word.

11. *Hanyu dacidian* (Great Chinese Dictionary), Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe, 1991.

12. "Xici shang," in *Shisanjing zhushu,* ed. Ruan Yuan, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999, vol 1: *Zhouyi Zhengyi,* 82.3. "As for the Way, the Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way. As for the names, the name that can be named is not the constant way" is another well-known passage from the *Daodejing,* which immediately comes to mind in this regard. Cf. *Lao-tzu Te-Tao-ching. A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Ma-wang-tui Texts.* Trsl. By Robert G. Henricks, New York: Ballantine Books, 1989, 188.

13. Communicative memory is a term coined by Jan Assmann in his studies on the cultural memory, and ecompasses memories which are related to the recent past (in contrast to a cultural memory which refers to fixed points in the past represented in symbolic figures). Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis.*

14. Yang Jian's "Ganxiao liuji" (Six Notes from a Cadre School) was first published in *Guang jiaojing* (Wide Angle) 103 (April 1981). For an English translation see Yang Jiang, *Six Chapters From My Life "Downunder."* Translated by Howard Goldblatt, 1983.

15. On a brief analysis of this *Mao wenti* see Kong Jiesheng, "Xishuo yuyan" (Playful words on language), *Zhengming* 10 (October, 1993), 78–81.

16. On stereotypical descriptions: E.g. Bradley Winterton, *Taipei Times*, October 20, 2002. Roger Gathman. *http://www.csmonitor.com/2002;* for a more balanced analysis of Gao's treatment of woman in *One Man's Bible* see Rojas, "Without [Femin]ism." I wish to thank the author for making the article accessible to me before its publication.

17. Zarrow argues that the conventional narrative of individual triumph excludes the possibility to depict a sense of freedom or intellectual incitement or the righteousness of beating political victims during the CR.

18. See his essay collection *Meiyou zhuyi.*, Gao Xingjian, 1996, loc.cit. "Escape" is also the title of one of his plays: Gao Xingjian., "Taowang" (Fugitives), *Jintian* 1990. 1. See also Gao Xinjian, 1990.

19. Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro. *Son of the Revolution*. New York, Vintage, 1984.

20. E.g. Sun Longji, *The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture,* published in Hongkong in 1983. Excerpts from this much debated book are to be found in Barmé and Minford, *Seeds of Fire. Chinese Voices of Consciousness.* In the literary realm the authors of the "New Historicism" as Mo Yan, Su Tong or Yu Hua would be examples of choosing a broader historical perspective to explain the underlying paradigms of the Chinese culture.

21. Mabel Lee translates this passage as "You're not like a Western woman, you're more like a Chinese woman," p. 95 in her translation, but the Chinese text distinguishes between the Western woman as "*xifangren*" (Westerner) and the Chinese as "Chinese girl" (*Zhongguo guniang*), which I think is significant.

22. Zarrow, 1999, esp. 170–73. Most explicitly this theme runs through the prominent biographical account of Nien Cheng in Cheng Nien, *Life and Death of Shanghai,* New York 1988.

23. Barnes & Noble Review. From the publisher. *http://btobsearch.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch.*

24. In contrast to Gao's novel, this situation is dramatized, for instance, in Nien Cheng's account on her final departure from China. Cf. Cheng Nien, 1988.

25. For a very interesting and lively discussion of literary activities inside and outside China after the Tiananmen massacre see the website of the China Symposium '89, Bolinas, California, 27–29 April, 1989 edited and annotated by Geremie R. Barmé, especially Leo Ou-fan Lee's contribution under http://www.tsquare.tv/film/Bolinas7lee.html. A short description of the exile writers situation can be found in Oliver Kramer, "No Past to Long For? A Sociology of Chinese Writers in Exile."

26. Qian Zhongshu, Foreword in Yang Jiang 1983, 8.

27. On the current political evaluation of the CR in the PRC leadership see Dittmer, "Rethinking China's Cultural Revolution amid Reform."

28. For instance, Sha Yexin's play "Jiang Qing and Her Husbands" (Jiang Qing he tade zhangfumen), written in 1991 and published in Hong Kong, can still not be performed on PRC stages. For an analysis and translation into German see Natascha Vittinghoff, *Geschichte der Partei entwunden—Eine semiotische Analyse des Dramas Jiang Qing und ihre Ehemänner (1991) von Sha Yexin,* Bochum, Projekt Verlag 1995.

29. E.g. Sheng-mei Ma, "Contrasting Two Survival Literatures; Vera Schwarcz,

30. Without attempting to engage in this discussion it should be noted, that trauma theories stress the point, that between the traumatic event and the post traumatic disorder lies a period of latency, during which no direct effects of the experience can be observed. Pye, "Reassessing the Cultural Revolution," 605–6.

31. Yet she also firmly maintains that there was a fundamental difference between the Cultural Revolution and the Holocaust. Schwarcz, *Bridge Across Broken Time,* ch. 4.

32. Gao Xingjian, "Haishang" (Out at sea) and "Choujin" (Spasms), in *Gei wo laoye mai yugan* (Buy my grandfather a fishing rod), 1989, 87–94, resp. 236–40.

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Film and Music, or Instabilities of National Identity

ROGER HILLMAN

INTRODUCTION

Time was when classical music knew its place, or places. Largely immune to cultural wars till the onset of jazz between the wars, it occupied the concert hall as a bourgeois institution, the opera house as a greater social melting pot, the drawing room as a social grace, and so on.

Classical music was drawn on by film from the outset of its history, a history of just over one hundred years, embracing nothing less than a new art form, a new technology, and a prime source of images for a century progressively dominated by the visual. Not least was the case with live accompaniment in the 'silent' era. Indeed, without the competing elements of dialogue and sound effects, music was both more exposed and more readily manipulated by the demands of the images. Reduced to a set of emotional stimuli in the cue books of Rapée and others, certain set pieces from the classical repertoire functioned as a kind of acoustic animation. Others found new moorings, which were to be highly influential in the history of the cinema (e.g., Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* in Griffiths' *Birth of a Nation* and its afterglow in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*).

Largely overlapping the advent of the talkies, radio brought new possibilities of disseminating all kinds of music. And still early in the history of this new medium, Nazi propaganda left indelible fetishized imprints on chosen vehicles, as when Liszt's *Les Préludes* interrupted regular programs with announcements from the Eastern front. Such ideological demonization of particular music in turn proved a rich resource for historical allusion in the New German Cinema (see below), or in that of formerly occupied countries (e.g., the same Liszt devastatingly accompanying the central figure's own 'victory' in Forman's *Closely Watched Trains,* when he conquers premature ejaculation).

This brief overview is simply designed to establish the cultural mediation of classical music, which occurs, often in veiled form, in film. It is further