

Big Country, Subtle Voices:

Three Ethnic Poets from China's Southwest



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Abstract:

In the southwest corner of China, the confluence of cultural diversity and national integration have produced a new kind of voice in the Chinese language: an ethnic voice. Speaking fluently in the Chinese nation's language and culturally beyond its Han foundations, minority ethnic writers or *shaoshu minzu* in China are inciting a challenge to the traditional conceptions of Chineseness. In the PRC, the re-imagining of the boundaries between ethnicity, nation, and the globe is being produced in ethnic voices that resist the monopolizing narratives of the CCP and the Han cultural center. Furthermore, in the West where the antiquated conception of China as a monolithic Other is still often employed, the existence of these ethnic voices of difference demands a (re)cognition of its multifaceted and interwoven ethnic, political, and social composition.

Three ethnic poets from the southwest are examined in this thesis: Woeser (Tibetan), He Xiaozhu (Miao), and Jimu Langge (Yi). They represent the trajectory of ethnic voice in China along the paradigms of local/ethnic vision, national culture, and global connections. By being both within and outside the Chinese nation and culture, they express a hybrid struggle that exists within the collision of ethnic minority cultures and the Han cultural center. Like the hybridity of postcolonial literature, this is a collision that cannot be reduced to its parts, yet also privileges the glocal impetus of ethnically centered vision. The poets' voices speak the voice of difference within China, the Chinese language, and Chineseness throughout the world.

Keywords: Chinese, Poetry, Ethnic Minority, Hybridity, Ethnopolitics

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Introduction

In the new China of rapid economic development and change, voices have emerged speaking languages of difference. Contrasting especially with the homogenizing rhetoric of the Mao era (most notably the Cultural Revolution), these voices represent a new kind of multiplicity within Chinese society predicated by a fluency in the dominant language and a perspective from the periphery. In-between the vocal registers of global fluency and local vision, these voices speak a Chinese empowered far beyond its traditionally imagined center. The drivers of this change and the subject of this thesis are China's ethnic minority writers. Positioned within and without the Chinese nation and more importantly the Han language, these writers present a new conception of "Chineseness" and its relation to the world.¹

With the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the relationship between China's Han majority and ethnic minorities experienced an unprecedented re-imagining. Prompted primarily by the dual agendas of national unification and social development, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP [*Zhongguo gongchan dang* 中国共产党]) integrated the ethnic minority populations arguably more than ever before into the Chinese nation. This was fundamentally accomplished by inscribing many of the ethnic minorities into the modern nation with the ethno-political term *shaoshu minzu* 少数民族

¹ It is necessary to demarcate the difference between the Han as an ethnicity and "Chinese" as a national/cultural concept encompassing a much greater sphere of peoples and places. In this thesis, I will use the "Han language" (*Hanyu* 汉语) to refer specifically to the language that is native to the Han ethnic group and is generally shared as one common written language, yet also includes a great diversity of regional "dialects" and sub-cultures. In contrast, I will use the "Chinese language" (*Zhongwen* 中文) to signify the language of a great diversity of ethnicities and communities who communicate through the Han language. This is similar to the transnational concept of "English" as a common world language versus its local varieties such as "American" or "Australian" English.

(literally “minority nationalities”, but now more often translated as “minority ethnic groups”), the official identity they are known by today. Currently, there are fifty-six official *minzu* in China including the Han as the majority. The term *minzu* translates a broad range of concepts in English, having as much to do with nation building in China as it does with its more recent adopted meaning of ethnicity. However, following trends in current scholarship and the focus of this paper, I will use the term *minzu* specifically to mean the officially recognized ethnic minorities of China.²

Living mostly in the remote regions of China, the minority *minzu* are situated within a dynamic clash of modern and traditional forces. Although economic development has produced improved living conditions for the minority *minzu*, this has generally been at the cost of traditional ethnic cultures and languages. Learning the Han language has become the key tool for raising oneself out of the economic isolation of the minority areas.³ Yet at the same time, this has produced a growing fragmentation of traditional ethnic culture as customs and even ethnic languages are increasingly lost between generations. In the large territories of China’s west, widely known *minzu* such as the Tibetans, Mongolians, and Uyghurs most directly experience this clash as their traditions of religion, art, and especially literature are challenged by first the growing number of Han migrants to their areas and second the modernizing force carried by the Han language. On the other extreme, the ethnic Koreans located mainly in China’s northeast (close to the border with North Korea) are the prime example of a *minzu* successful in

² See Stevan Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic in Southwest China*. (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), 38-40.

³ See Mette Halskov Hansen, *Lessons in Being Chinese: Minority Education and Ethnic Identity in Southwest China*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

both integrating into the Chinese nation and preserving its own ethnic culture.⁴ The culture and literature of *minzu* like the Koreans and even the Mongolians, however, are greatly supported by the existence of nation-states and national cultures beyond China's borders. On the other end of the spectrum, the Tibetans and the Uyghurs are paramount examples of ethnic voices embattled between ethnic preservation and national integration within China as they struggle between the extremes of ethnic isolation (localized language) and national assimilation (modern and political force of the Han language).

In contrast to these dynamics of voice between China's northeastern and western regions, the southwest of China presents a powerful blend of both ethnic preservation and national integration. This area of China has historically been a "melting pot" of ethnic cultures and influences. Propagated by traditional trade routes like the "Tea-horse road" (*chama lu* 茶马路) that connected Chinese, Tibetan, and Southeast Asian cultures and diverse geographies from high mountain plateaus to southern rainforests, the southwest is a hot bed of diverse cultural interaction. Because of this "multi-cultural" atmosphere, the southwest has become a site where the Han language as the *lingua franca* and Han education has penetrated sufficiently enough to produce fluent minority *minzu* speakers of the language. It has given these writers the means to speak back to the center and alter the "gaze" traditionally inscribed in Han words. These new minority *minzu* writers stand between the inherently political designation of "ethnicity" in China and the rich and defiant ethnic cultures of their native identity. By wielding these two aspects of

⁴ The Koreans have the highest literacy rate of any *minzu* in China, including the Han. See Colin Mackerras, *China's Minority Cultures: Identities and Integration since 1912* (Melbourne: Longman Australia, 1995), 184-95.

their voice, they create a new language, literally a “Chinese language” beyond the traditional assumptions of a Han defined China. As both Chinese and ethnic, these writers are vocalizing a new vision of what it means to be within China and the world.

At the forefront of these new voices in Chinese literature is poetry. As having direct ties to both oral literature (sometimes similar to ethnic traditional literature) and the highly nuanced language of art, poetry stands as a tie between these two worlds. Jahan Ramazani in his book *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* assesses

. . . a rich and vibrant poetry has issued from the hybridization of the English muse with the long-resident muses of Africa, India, the Caribbean, and other decolonizing territories of the British empire. Postcolonial poets have dramatically expanded the contours of English-language poetry by infusing it with indigenous metaphors and rhythms, creoles, and genres.⁵

Coincidental to the dramatic increase of minority writers writing in the Chinese language since the reforms, Chinese poetry in the southwestern region has become a potent alternative voice in Chinese literature to the domination of Beijing and Shanghai “intellectualism”.⁶ In his doctorate dissertation, Michael Day comprehensively outlines this growth of a “second world of Chinese poetry”; an avant-garde poetry outside the official mainstream. In particular, he discusses a group of poets called “Not-Not” (*feifei* 非非) centered in the city of Chengdu 成都, Sichuan 四川 during the mid eighties to early nineties. Day details how the group through experimentation and radical deconstruction of language was able to create vibrant new voices within Chinese poetry.

⁵ Jahan Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 1.

⁶ See first Michael Day, *China's Second World of Poetry: The Sichuan Avant-garde, 1982-1992*, (Leiden University: Digital Archive for Chinese Studies (DACHS), 2005, <http://www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/dachs/leiden/poetry/md.html>), and then Maghiel van Crevel, "The Intellectual vs. the Popular: A Polemic in Chinese Poetry," (Leiden University, 2004)., on a polemic between “popular” and “intellectual” schools in Chinese poetry during the late nineties.

Thus, the southwest is a crossroads of both avant-garde poetry and ethnic poetry, creating a doubly significant alternative voice in the Chinese language.

The three poets I have selected for analysis in this thesis embody the combination of these voices. Each is a member of a minority *minzu* from the southwest and also was either a participant or contributor to the Not-Not group and its poetry journal. Woese is a Tibetan (*Zangzu* 藏族) poet from the city of Derge in Kham (in Sichuan's western autonomous Tibetan area). And although she is firmly tied to her native culture and religion, she uses the Chinese language to portray a new view of the Tibetan land and people. He Xiaozhu, on the other hand, is a Miao (*Miaozu* 苗族) poet from the city of Chongqing (formerly apart of Sichuan). He has little cultural connection to his ethnic group, yet still writes with an implicit ethnic vision. The last to be discussed is Jimu Langge, a Yi (*Yizu* 彝族) poet from the Yi Liangshan Autonomous Prefecture of southern Sichuan. Out of the three, his subtle irony and self-reflexivity between ethnicity and the Chinese nation most staunchly reveals a new kind of China. Representing this new generation of minority poets, these three all use the Han language as their native written language, yet their words speak an avant-garde language of ethnic vision.

Because of this hybrid confluence, in this thesis I am focusing on the southwest, particularly Sichuan, as the site of highly dynamic voices of fluency and ethnic vision. The southwest captures both the contested space of voice in China by speaking in the language of the Han yet in the worldviews of local/ethnic cultures.⁷ Although this new trajectory of Chineseness is all but ignored in China itself, Western scholarship on China

⁷ An additional question beyond the scope of this paper is the ability for minority *minzu* educated elites to speak for the less educated members of their groups. For a more detailed analysis of this issue see: Ralph A. Litzinger, *Other Chinas: the Yao and the Politics of National Belonging* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

further adds its own shackles to these simplistic conceptions by misinterpreting terms like “Chinese” and “Han” as equivalents in English. In China, these conceptions are also convoluted and overlapping, but they at least contain the space for expansion of these conceptions and identities. To appreciate the complexities of China, it is absolutely necessary that Western scholars differentiate between terms such as Hanification (becoming Han) and sinification (becoming Chinese). Particularly in Chinese literature, Western scholarship has failed to appreciate the complexity and growing abundance of minority voice. Writing in Chinese, rather than just Han words, the three poets I am focusing on in this thesis actually create a Chinese language in the grandest sense of a “national” culture. How is one sinified when one is already Chinese and speaking in a Chinese voice?

However, these poets’ identities can also not be so simply contained within the PRC. The greatest significance of China’s minority poetry is its instancing of a vibrant and discursive “Sinophone” in China and throughout the world. The struggle between the global and the local produces the kind of hybrid identified by Ramazani in postcolonial poetry as not the peaceful harmonizing of equal parties but the intense struggle of maintaining a centered “locality” in the face of colonizing forces.⁸ These voices are a glocal component along the Sinophone trajectory both reifying the Chinese language as a modern and global language as well as manifesting the local worldviews of ethnic cultures in China.⁹ As Djelal Kadir describes in his article on the “worlding” of literature,

⁸ Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse*, 36.

⁹ The term “glocalization” is defined by George Ritzer as “the interpenetration of the global and local resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas.” George Ritzer, “The Globalization of Nothing,” *SAIRS Review* 23, no. 2 (2003): 192.

In the case of literature, the compelling question becomes, who is worlding literature and why? And in the instance of globalization the inevitable issue is the locus where the fixed foot of the compass that describes the globalization circumscription is placed. Where the foot of the compass rests is inexorably the center.¹⁰

Contemporary Chinese ethnic poetry has its feet in the ethnic center but it speaks a language of outward projection; an interwoven conglomeration of local/global and tradition/modern impetuses, the dynamic hybrid struggle.

Finally, I think it is necessary to acknowledge my own participation in this glocally translative process. In this thesis, I am presenting for the first time in English translation the poetry and prose of these three ethnic poets. Although the Anglophone world and its similarly modern trajectory may in comparison mute the strength of a Sinophone, I also argue that it is this very leap from one globally discursive language to another that highlights the Sinophone's potential. Because Chinese carries increasing currency in the world, ethnic poets such as these can reach far beyond their isolation and inscribe an ethnically centered worldview onto the world stage. Without a Sinophone vibrantly shaped by participants like these poets, the voices of China's diversity would be left unheard. Though an outside observer and non-native to either Han or minority *minzu* cultures of China, I have attempted to capture in translation the glocal impetus of the original poems that provide a sense of both the Han language and ethnic vision.

The thesis is divided into five sections. The first two sections will discuss the foundations of ethnic poetry in China by addressing the ethno-political nature of *minzu* in China and the conception of "minority literature" within/out of the cultural center.

¹⁰ Djelal Kadir, "To World, To Globalize: Comparative Literature's Crossroads," *Comparative Literary Studies* 41, no. 1 (2004): 2.

Sections on each of the three poets, Woese, He Xiaozhu, and Jimu Langge will follow, including appendixes of translations at the end of the thesis.

“Shaoshu Minzu”: Ethnopolitics in the Chinese Nation

Shaoshu minzu (minority nationalities) hold a contentious position in China between ethnic difference and political unity. The rhetoric of the CCP places the concept *minzu* 民族 (literally “nation”) at the forefront of a “unified” Chinese nation while at the same time regulating the maintenance of a multi-cultural (multi-*minzu*) image. Therefore, *minzu* is a pivotal concept in deconstructing/reconstructing the Chinese nation. However, the essential point to explore is not that China is only a homogenous or cohesive society/culture but rather how pluralities in China function within and outside the shifting cultural entity “Chineseness”.

To accomplish this, it is necessary to establish the etymological as well as historical and political conditions of the term *minzu* in China. I will first analyze its foundations in the nation-building project of China’s Republican period [1911-1940s] and then its usage by the CCP [1949-] for “official” identification. After which, I will consider the implications of the changing meaning of *minzu* for contemporary China and its emphasis on integration. As China rapidly develops into the global sphere, complex issues like *minzu* insightfully display the changing face of “Chineseness” in the world.

Identification

REPUBLICAN PERIOD

At the time it entered China, *minzu* was used to demarcate the “Chinese” people as one

of the “nations of the world”. It was therefore readily utilized by reformers to describe the Chinese as a unified body, and furthermore state their hierarchical standing in the world order.¹¹ As argued in her study on the formation of the modern Chinese language, Lydia Liu describes the “translingual practice” that was occurring in the Chinese language to constitute a modern Chinese “nation” in reaction to colonial powers (including the West and Japan).¹² China (and the Chinese language) that existed after the Republican revolution though still inherently Chinese, was vastly different from that of the Chinese tradition; it was the break between “old” China and its forced capitulation into the western dominated “modern” world. *Minzu* was one of the products of this “translingual practice” when it was borrowed in the late nineteenth century from the Japanese kanji translation (*minzoku*) of the western concept “nation”.¹³

Since its introduction, *minzu* has been a powerful tool in imagining the Chinese “nation”. As aptly observed by Thomas Heberer, it was to be defined by the Chinese, “as the historically legitimated territory plus the whole population.”¹⁴ In the hands of Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孙中山), the revolutionary leader of the new republic, the principle of *minzu* was securely set as the foundation of the new “nation”.¹⁵ Although his first conception of the “nation” did not differentiate between the ethnicities of China, he later revised his conception to describe a five *minzu* “nation” made up of the Han, Tibetans, Mongolians, Manchu, and Hui. Yet after his death, the Nationalist Party

¹¹ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 108-09.

¹² Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity--China 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 292.

¹⁴ Thomas Heberer, *China and Its National Minorities: Autonomy or Assimilation?* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), 21-22.

¹⁵ Yat-sen Sun, *The Three Principles of the People: San Min Chu I*, trans. Frank W. Price (Taipei: China Publishing Company, 1924).

(*guomindang* 国民党) de-emphasized this conception of “nation” and focused on the original conception of all ethnicities contained within one *minzu*, one nation.¹⁶ From this influence, the Chinese people today call themselves the *zhonghua minzu* 中华民族 (literally the Chinese “nation” or people) which includes all those who live within the borders of China and ethnic Chinese abroad. The concept is distinct from the “state” and concepts of citizenship. In Chinese, the country is called *guojia* 国家 (literally the state’s family) and the citizens are called the *guomin* 国民 (literally state’s people), yet those people living within the state also belong to the Chinese *minzu* which ideologically exists somewhere beyond a state culture (imaginatively stretching back into history). In contrast, the neologism *guozu* 国族 (a contraction from *guojia* and *minzu*) has gained prevalence within the academic community and is seen to reflect accurately the oft used “nation-state” in the West.¹⁷

COMMUNIST PERIOD

In the early twentieth century, there was a growing effort to study the minority cultures of China, specifically in the southwest.¹⁸ This was sparked predominantly by western trained researchers that demanded “scientific” studies of ethnic cultures over traditional “descriptions” in gazetteers and albums of the imperial dynasties.¹⁹ It was perceived necessary to record the primitive cultures within the nation-state before they disappeared into the dominant culture. Thus, when the CCP came to power in 1949, they relied

¹⁶ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 108.

¹⁷ See Liu Deyi 刘德一 and Zhang Yonghong 张永红, "Shilun zuqun rentong he guozu rentong," *Zhongnan minzu daxue xuebao (renwen shehui kexueban)* 25, no. 2 (2005).

¹⁸ Litzinger, *Other China*.

¹⁹ Thomas S. Mullaney, "Ethnic Classification Writ Large: The 1954 Yunnan Province Classification Project and Its Foundations in Republican-Era Taxonomic Thought," *China Information* 18, no. 2 (2004): 215.

heavily on the Republican social science research which focused on linguistics to determine ethnic categories.²⁰ However, the CCP also instigated its own vastly different conception of ethnic cultures in China, stemming directly from its goal of socialist development. The CCP was intimately familiar with China's ethnic diversity and the challenges it would face in garnering their support.²¹ Basing its ethnic policies on the Soviet Union's model, the CCP utilized Stalin's four criteria for determining ethnic "nations": common language, common territory, common economic livelihood, and common psychology.²² Although according to this model the "nations" were given autonomy which included cession rights, any promises the CCP had made to ethnic groups during its weaker years were quickly rescinded when it came to power. In the early years of the PRC, however, the Party-state was generally unconcerned with identifying the ethnic cultures, and instead pursued a policy of non-intervention. It was only with the announcement of the creation of the People's Congress that the problem of ethnic classification became apparent.²³ The Election Law stated that every ethnic minority had to have one representative in the congress irrespective of population, and as the unofficial lists of ethnicities ranged in the hundreds, there was an obvious dilemma. In response, the Ethnic Classification Project (*minzu shibie* 民族识别) was carried out to classify the ethnic groups of China as ethno-political entities: *minzu*. In addition, the *minzu* were categorized according to Marx's theory of social development to one of five stages: primitive, slave, feudal, capitalist, and communist. By implementing policies

²⁰ Mullaney, "Ethnic Classification Writ Large", 217.

²¹ See Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Reflections on Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 20-21.

²² Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, 38-39.

²³ Mullaney, "Ethnic Classification Writ Large", 211.

appropriate to their development stage, the CCP envisioned itself as leading the minority *minzu* to the socialist stage (represented by the Han and the precursor to communism). It was under these conditions that the term *minzu* was literally stretched to encompass three intertwined notions from Marx to Stalin, namely the nation (die Nation, *narod* народ), the people (das Volk, *natsia* нация), and ethnic groups (die Völkerschaft, *narodnost'* народность). At the extremes, *minzu* became a blanket term for any concept related to nation.²⁴ Although according to precepts of the nation these peoples/ethnic groups were a part of the *zhonghua minzu*, it was sometimes unclear how they related to the national body. At one point during the 1960s the term *buzu* 部族 or *buluo* 部落 (tribe) was used to designate their ethnic status, but this was later determined to be discriminatory and was discontinued; *minzu* was the decidedly correct term.²⁵ The result was the official declaration that the new Chinese republic was a multi-*minzu* nation made up of fifty-six *minzu* (in this context translated as “nationalities” but in the sense of peoples).

It is in this context that *minzu* takes on its more common contemporary usage meaning the “minority ethnic groups” excluding the majority Han. For instance, in present day China there are academic disciplines called *minzu xue* 民族学 (roughly translated as ethnology, but generally excluding the Han) and *minzu wenxue* 民族文学 (meaning specifically the literature written by minorities). This meaning is also the focus of this thesis. I will now turn to how the *minzu* of China have come to be represented in contemporary times.

²⁴ Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 108-09, n. 41.

²⁵ Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, 41, n. 7.

Integration

Originating as it did from the process of nation building in both the Republican and Communist periods, the term *minzu* has come to constitute the modern Chinese “nation” while also designating its diverse “multi-*minzu*” construction. Although the Chinese empire has arguably been a multi-ethnic entity throughout its history, only under the PRC has China taken such great strides to officially recognize and support this representation within its nation-state or the appropriate Chinese equivalent: *guozu*. At a glance, China does not appear to be a “culturally diverse” nation with less than ten percent of its total 1.3 billion population being designated as minority *minzu*. Yet, the PRC has taken a disproportionate interest in its minority *minzu* and their welfare by implementing several policies designed to give them a more “equal” chance in Chinese society. For instance, in education minority children are given additional credit points towards the university entrance exam that all Chinese high school students must take to enter university. Competition is fierce in heavily populated China so that this type of “affirmative action” is not taken as a light matter.²⁶ Certain “autonomous” rights are also allowed by the Party-state in setting up “autonomous” regions, counties, and townships such as rights to language use, cultural customs, and tax relief, but complete autonomy remains an unapproachable issue with the politically sensitive Party-state.²⁷

²⁶ Colin Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalisation* (London ; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 126-32.

²⁷ Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalisation*, 37-41. It can be argued that the Chinese term *zizhi* 自治 (literally self-government) does not mean autonomy, but in practice actually means giving deference to local communities on certain aspects of local government. However, as stated above these do not include cession rights. In addition, the highest political position in the “autonomous” regions, the Party Secretary, is always occupied by a Han CCP member.

The result of these beneficial policies has been the positive reassessment of minority status within the population of China. Suddenly, being a minority *minzu*, historically equal to being uncivilized and “backward”, is increasingly being considered an asset and a practical way to gain benefits in the increasingly competitive market oriented society. Thus there has been a phenomenal increase of population within certain minority *minzu* due to self-reorientation of status. For instance, the *Gelao* 仡佬, a group considered to be almost completely assimilated to the Han, has had a growth spike of over seven hundred percent from the 1982 to the 1990.²⁸ Surprisingly, or maybe not, being a minority just like many other social positions has become social capital in the “new” China.

In observing the politicization and development of the minority *minzu* in the last fifty years, the question arises: how are they apart of the “new” Chinese nation-state?²⁹ To approach such an inquiry, it is necessary to further define the relationship of the Party-state and the minority *minzu*. According to the principles used in the Party-state’s original *minzu* identification project, the *minzu* were each recognized and ultimately defined according to their perceived progress on the materialist evolutionary scale from primitive to communist societies. Thus defined, the minorities were regulated by policies seen as appropriate to their evolutionary development. In the case of *minzu* that were considered to be at the feudalistic stage of development such as Tibet, it meant being spared from the land reform measures that were being put in place across the country.³⁰

²⁸ Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 20-23.

²⁹ I am using “nation-state” here as a term to describe the opening up of China and the changing composition of its body that now visibly includes the Han national culture, the minority *minzu*, and the Party-state. However, clearly the Party-state still possesses the greatest power and influence in China.

³⁰ Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, 49.

Although these designations were applied differently to each minority group and situation, by the time of the intolerant Cultural Revolution all “differences” were discouraged and a unilateral assimilative policy was enforced on the whole population.

The varied history of the minorities and their treatment by the Party-state reveals two important trends: first, that *minzu*, despite any ethnic reality that may or may not be reflected in that identification, is ultimately a political designation, and therefore is more sensitively connected to the Chinese Party-state than the majority population (with benefits also come restrictions). This is most visible in the Party-state’s monopoly over defining who and what are *minzu* in China. Second, that the term *minzu* is ultimately used to define the minority *minzu* as the less developed Others opposite the Han who represent the core of the Chinese “nation” or *zhonghua minzu*. This double meaning of *minzu* juxtaposed in these two arenas shows the paradox of the Chinese “nation” that perceives its success in comparison to its “backward” Others (minority *minzu*) while also reinforcing its monolithic body by disallowing those same minority *minzu* to express difference from the *zhonghua minzu*. Recently, scholars in mainland China have begun to draw attention to this dilemma of terminology within the Chinese language. In an article that attempts to step beyond the inconsistencies of the term *minzu*, Zhang Yonghong and Liu Deyi accept the term *guozu* as “nation-state” (the Chinese nation-state), and offer another term, *zuqun* 族群 (literally clan group), as the translation of “ethnic group”.³¹ In contrast, the scholar Zhu Lun criticizes the recent “confusion” of terminology in Chinese scholarship by stating that “ethnology” and “nationality” are fundamentally

³¹ Liu and Zhang, “Shilun zuqun rentong he guozu rentong.”

contained within two separate systems, anthropology and politics. He furthermore emphasizes that concepts like “ethnic group” are inappropriate for China: one, because it is not a nation of immigrants, and two, because it follows the socialist leadership of the CCP.³² Therefore, he reaffirms the fundamentally political nature of the term *minzu* in China. The absolute emphasis on *minzu* in China over other terms such as *guozu* and *zuqun* expresses a conscious maintenance of this ethno-political designation.

The Party-state reaffirms this designation with its official rhetoric about the concept of *minzu* as multi-faceted and unique to China. According to the official slogan of the Party-state, the Chinese nation is “a unified multi-national country” (*yi ge tuanjie duo minzu de guojia* 一个团结多民族的国家).³³ Key to the phrase and directly modifying *minzu* is the word *tuanjie* meaning “unified”. Thus, China is officially a nation of multiple nationalities (*minzu*) but unified within the borders of the country. However, if one continues the inquiry towards dissecting what the country consists of exactly, the same contradictions again make an appearance with references only made to the Chinese Communist Party and the *zhonghua minzu* but not multi-nationality. Ultimately, the unity of the Chinese “nation” surpasses any commitments to diversity. In a similar vein, the Party-state deals with the issue of *minzu zhuyi* 民族主义 (nationalism) by reproaching both *da han minzu zhuyi* 大汉民族主义 (Han chauvinism) and *difang minzu zhuyi* 地方民族主义 (local ethno-centrism) as extreme ideologies ill-suited to a “united” Chinese nation. Furthermore, *aiguo zhuyi* 爱国主义 (literally love-one’s-country -ism) is

³² Zhu Lun 朱伦, "Xifang de 'zuti' gainian xitong: cong 'zuqun' gainian zai Zhongguo de yingyong cuowei shuoqi," *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 4 (2005): 97-100.

³³ The State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the PRC, "What is Nationalism?" ([cited June 12 2005]); available from http://www.seac.gov.cn/cm/cm_bulletincontent.do?id=cm00559df26c8b6f&action=20.

designated as the proper patriotic duty rather than nationalism.

In viewing the minority *minzu* of China as primarily a political subject rather than an ethnic one (though not denying their ethnic identity), the Party-state's multi-*minzu* policies are clearly practical for its policies of unity and CCP leadership. For instance, the minority *minzu* populations in China inhabit over sixty percent of the land area.³⁴ Furthermore, that land contains the majority of the country's natural resources. Consequently, security of the borders and supplying of resources to greater China are two of the central issues in minority policies. In this sense, why the Party-state is so aggressively adamant about maintaining unity instead of encouraging greater diversity is politically logical. From another perspective, the Party-state giving lip service to a multi-national China is in line with portraying the "nation" as a modern multi-cultural society that gives all of its citizens equal rights. In contemporary times, having a "multi-cultural" society is increasingly a requirement of "modernity" in this globalizing world.

MINORITY MINZUS' STAKE IN THE NATION

The anthropologist Ralph Litzinger in his book *Other Chinas* aptly demonstrates the Yao's (a minority *minzu* in southern China) ability to use their special political relationship with the Party-state to re-introduce "ethnic" traditions as perfected models of the Party-state's policies.³⁵ This reverse cooption by the *minzu* of their political relevance effectively displays a new kind of being in the Chinese "nation". By being designated as *minzu*, the

³⁴ Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalisation*, 1-2.

³⁵ Litzinger, *Other Chinas*.

ethnic minorities are inherently tied to a nation that is dominated by the CCP (the political body) and the Han (the cultural nation). Although this maintenance of the ethno-political relationship is at times stifling to the expression of ethnic difference, it simultaneously provides a potent path for ethnic survival in China's party dominated nation-state; the minority *minzu* have an innately political identity within the nation. The outer boundaries of the term *minzu*'s meaning are cemented into the Party-state's rule (unification and development), yet the intricacies of identification within the *minzu*'s daily lives is open to wide interpretation. In this sense, the Ethnic Identification Project is still an ongoing process of identification and interpretation.³⁶ In Stevan Harrell's words,

Because they are parts of the Chinese nation, they communicate at least partly in the meta-languages of ethnic identification and of ethnology and ethnohistory. But because they also speak in their own languages, verbal and symbolic, and because their identity was differently constituted before and during the collective period, they have different approaches to being ethnic today.³⁷

In contemporary China, the political and potentially ethnic *minzu* are not only expanding ethnicity but more dramatically "Chineseness". At the crossroads of an increasingly developed and international Chinese nation (in terms of both economic power in global affairs and in internal exposure to outside influences) is the *minzu* subject constituting a different kind of "Chineseness". With a Chinese education, fluency in the Chinese language, and access to international knowledge through the Chinese language, this new generation of minority *minzu* present themselves as Chinese or *zhongguo ren* 中国人 (a term without reference to Han or *hua* ethnicity), and therefore stake a claim in

³⁶ See Kevin Caffrey, "Who 'Who' Is, and Other Local Poetics of National Policy: Yunnan *Minzu Shibie* and Hui in the Process," *China Information* 18, no. 2 (2004). And also Peng Zhaorong 彭兆荣, "Lun minzu yu zuqun zai bianqian yujing zhong de liehua yinzi," *Guangxi minzu xueyuan xuebao* 26, no. 2 (2004).

³⁷ Harrell, *Ways of Being Ethnic*, 54.

the Chinese “nation” and its international presence. However, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, there is of course a wide range of interpretation among the minority *minzu* on the values of this sensitive relationship. Yet, all minority *minzu* share at least some sense of difference from the Han and desire to preserve their own ethnicities. It is thus necessary to speak in terms of Hanification rather than sinification to more correctly describe the *minzu*’s willingness to participate in the Chinese “nation” but not become cultural assimilated to the Han. As Litzinger insightfully states, “For many of the Yao I worked with, ethnicity was not just about marking one’s difference from the Han or other groups. It was also about articulating how one belonged to different kinds of communities.”³⁸ Therefore, being a *minzu* in China has a much to do with participating and reimagining Chineseness as it does with articulating one’s own ethnic identity.

³⁸ Litzinger, *Other China*, 241.

Minority Literature: Chinese Literature and/or “*Minzu*” Literature?

Towards a “Minor” Literature

In the years following the founding of the PRC, the 55 minority *minzu* were officially inscribed into the nation-state by being endowed with the ethno-political title “*shaoshu minzu*” (minority nationalities). This designation began a new era for the minority *minzu* in China as they were now simultaneously politically empowered and subjugated to the nation. Although the visibility of minority cultures and difference is still limited in the dominant cultural centers of east China, through Party-state recognition the minority *minzu* have secured a place within the national cultural space. One of the less well known but earliest minority cultural productions in this space was minority literature (*minzu wenxue* 民族文学).³⁹ Influenced by both the Ethnic Classification Project initiative to document minority oral/literary traditions and the CCP’s emphasis on literature’s social function, minority literature in China garnered early support from the Party-state. It was first institutionalized in several minority universities such as the Central Minority University (*Zhongyang minzu daxue* 中央民族大学) in Beijing and Yunnan Minority University (*Yunnan minzu daxue* 云南民族大学) in Kunming with a specific focus on cataloging and translating the traditional literatures of minority *minzu* which was done in tandem with linguistic classification.⁴⁰ Many of the texts, however, were never published

³⁹ Although this term is technically *shaoshu minzu wenxue* 少数民族文学 (minority nationality literature), as said above this is now often shortened to *minzu wenxue*, literally “nationality literature”. I am translating this term as “minority literature” specifically because of its potent position as a “minor literature” in relation to expanding the conception of Chinese literature.

⁴⁰ For more detailed information on traditional oral/literature of the minority *minzu* see Mark Bender,

or were only published in the 1980s after the intolerance of the Cultural Revolution had subsided.⁴¹ Today, the bulk of scholarship and publications on minority literature in China are focused primarily on oral/folk literary traditions because of the institutional influence from ethnology, linguistics, and more recently ethno-tourism.⁴²

Although several of the minority *minzu* have long and distinguished literary traditions, the emphasis in China on Chinese translations and the Party-state's policy of "unity" within the Han dominated national culture simply lumps the literatures together as "minority literature" under the framework of Chinese literature. Therefore, though the field of minority literature is currently burgeoning with scholarship and publications on oral/folk ethnic traditions, these works often perform a translation of their subjects into both the Han language and the exoticized objects of the Han gaze.⁴³ Literatures of minority *minzu* that are produced in their ethnic languages are still allowed and encouraged by the Chinese Party-state under its policies of "autonomous" governance,

"Approaching the Literatures of China's Minority Nationalities," *China Exchange News* 21, no. 3&4 (1993), Mark Bender, "Ethnic Minority Literature," in *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), Mackerras, *China's Minority Cultures: Identities and Integration since 1912*, 184-95. For examples of general surveys of the field see Li Zixian 李子贤, ed., *Duoyuan wenhua yu minzu wenxue: Zhongguo xinan shaoshu minzu wenxue de bijiao yanjiu* (Kunming: Yunnan Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001), Liang Tingwang 梁庭望 and Zhang Gongjin 张公瑾, eds., *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu wenxue gailun* (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 1998), Ma Xueliang 马学良, ed., *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu wenxue bijiao yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 1997), Ma Xueliang 马学良, Liang Tingwang 梁庭望, and Zhang Gongjin 张公瑾, eds., *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu wenxue shi* (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 2001).

⁴¹ David Bradley, "Language Policy for the Yi," in *Perspective on the Yi of Southwest China*, ed. Stevan Harrell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 199-201. For examples of *minzu* specific studies see Li Li, ed., *Yizu wenxue shi* (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1994), Tian Bing 田兵, Gang Ren 刚仁, Su Xiaoxing 苏晓星, and Shi Peizhong 施培中, eds., *Miaozu wenxue shi* (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1981), Tong Jinhua 佟锦华, *Zangzu wenxue yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 1992).

⁴² One does not have to look too very hard in China to see the colorful displays of minority *minzu* invariably including "traditional" costumes, dancing, and, in the case of the publishing industry, ethnic pictorials and folk tales. Since the reforms this has been built into a robust tourist industry in China, which has come to include minority ethnic theme parks in Beijing, Shenzhen, Kunming, etc. See Gladney, *Dislocating China*, Dru C. Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994): 96-98.

⁴³ For an analysis of minority subjects in Chinese film see Paul Clark, "Ethnic Minorities in Chinese Films: Cinema and the Exotic," *East-West Film Journal* 1, no. 2 (1987) and Yingjin Zhang, "From 'Minority Film' to 'Minority Discourse' Questions of Nationhood and Ethnicity in Chinese Film Studies," in *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, ed. Sheldon Lu (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

but are generally hidden from the public view because of their lack of currency on the national scale. Thus, though the Uyghurs, for example, have an arguably strong traditional and modern literature in their native language, these works go almost entirely unnoticed in the Chinese language sphere, which has attributed to the expression of strong ethnic separatist sentiment in Uyghur literature.⁴⁴

MODERN MINORITY LITERATURE

Bound to ethnopolitics, the development of modern minority literature in China has been intrinsically tied to the Party-state's policies. Fundamentally, this consists of two main aspects: maintaining the unity of the Chinese nation-state and the modernization of the nation through following the example of the Han. The Party-state propagates that a minority *minzu* without modern writers and literature has not yet begun the modernization process.⁴⁵ Consequently, Party rhetoric emphasizes minority writers' need to fulfill their social obligation in leading their peoples towards modernization by instigating a modern literature. According to these principles, the growth of modern minority writers in China has specifically meant learning to write in the Han language. Similar to English becoming the language of globalization, Han Chinese is the language of modernization in China

For its part, the Party-state contributes to this modernizing recognition. Through the auspices of the Chinese Writers Association (*Zhongguo zuojia xiehui* 中国作家协会), the government sponsors nation-wide minority literature awards called the Courier Horse

⁴⁴ Justin Ben-Adam Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁴⁵ Liang and Zhang, eds., *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu wenxue gailun*, 55, 375.

Awards (*junma jiang* 骏马奖) every three years for excellence in minority literature.⁴⁶

Although the large majority of works considered for these awards are written in the Chinese language, these awards are arguably the only national exposure available specifically to minority writers, and provide institutional support for both writing in minority ethnic languages (though still few) and in Chinese. In recent years, two minority writers Malaqinfu 玛拉沁夫 (Mongolian) and Jidi Majia 吉狄马加 (Yi) have secured important places within the Writers Association's Party Council. Malaqinfu (1930-) was the Deputy Secretary of the Writers Associations Party Council and editor of the showcase literary journal for minority literature *Ethnic Literature* (*Minzu wenxue* 民族文学), but is now retired. Jidi Majia (1961-) was recently a member of the secretariat of the Chinese Writers' Association, which made him the official mouthpiece of the government for minority literature.⁴⁷

These two Party representatives were recently also the editors of a series of anthologies on the first fifty years of modern minority literature since the establishment of the PRC entitled *Anthology of Classics from Chinese Minority Nationalities 1949-1999* (*Zhongguo shaoshu minzu wenxue jingdian wenku* 1949-1999 中国少数民族文学经典文库 1949-1999).⁴⁸ Although these volumes are a great contribution to documenting and recognizing the achievements of modern minority literature, they also blaringly reveal the tendency of scholars and critics to continue the practice of either cataloging the work of writers (similar to the cataloging of folk traditions) or evaluating minority writers in

⁴⁶ "Shaoshu minzu wenxue jiang" (Zhongguo zuojia wang (chinawriter.org), 2005 [cited March 13 2006]); available from <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/zuoxe/jiang/ssminzu/ssminzu0.htm>.

⁴⁷ Jidi Majia 吉狄马加, "Jianxing 'san ge daibiao' zhongyao sixiang, fanrong fazhan woguo shaoshu minzu wenxue shiye," *Minzu wenxue* 4 (2004).

⁴⁸ Malaqinfu 玛拉沁夫 and Jidi Majia 吉狄马加, eds., *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu wenxue jingdian wenku 1949-1999* (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1999).

terms of their “modern” achievements in the Han language rather than critically assessing the significance of minority literature in the modern era, including the meaning of the literature to the minority *minzu* themselves. Although minority literature is often translated by the Han, the access to the Chinese language and the united ethno-political front provided by the inscription of “minority literature” as an institution gives the writers agency in choosing the type of ethnic and political vision they will display. By taking an active role in the translation process, modern minority writers are creating a discursive space to express their identity within the Chinese nation. As defined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the great potential of a modern “minor” literature exists because it is written in a “major” language with a deterritorializing impetus, is always political, and consistently represents collective values.⁴⁹ This is the charged “minor” literature that modern minority literature in Chinese has become.

Beginning in the 1990s a new wave of minority writers and scholars started widening the discursive space of minority literature beyond its labels as folk or socialist literature. Particularly in the southwest city of Chengdu, Sichuan, there has been a surge in studies on modern minority literature.⁵⁰ In particular, two scholar/writers based in Chengdu have led the push for reimagining minority literature for its ethno-socio-political potentials: Aku Wuwu 阿库乌雾 (Yi, also known by his Han name Luo Qingchun 罗庆春) and Liyuan Xiaodi 栗原小荻 (Bai). Aku Wuwu is a poet who writes both in

⁴⁹ Gilles and Felix Guattari Deleuze, “What Is a Minor Literature?,” in *Narrative/Theory*, ed. David H. Richter (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Publishers, 1996), 274.

⁵⁰ See Deng Jingwu 邓经武, “Minzu wenhua, diyu rensheng yu shijie shichao de jiaorong: guanyu xin shiqi Sichuan shaoshu minzu wenxue zouxiang de sikao,” *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 28, no. 1 (2001), Li Mingquan 李明泉 and Liu Yanwu 刘彦武, “Sichuan shaoshu minzu wenxue yanjiu de zhongyao shouhuo,” *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 23, no. 8 (2002), Luobu Jiangcun 罗布江村 and Xu Qichao 徐其超, “He er bu tong: xin shiqi Sichuan shaoshu minzu wenxue yu han wenhua,” *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 20, no. 6 (1999).

Chinese and in the Yi language, and has made great efforts to preserve his Yi native language while also analyzing “ethnic” strategies within the Chinese language.⁵¹ In contrast, the scholar Liyuan Xiaodi has written extensively on the trajectory of minority writers in China by specifically calling into question the relationship between their *minzu* status and becoming a nationally recognized writer in the Chinese language.⁵² He critiques the concept of “globalizing” in Chinese literature which creates the problematic on one side of ignoring or misreading the ethnic element in literature and on the other side appropriating “successful” ethnic writers into the cultural center.⁵³ His critique focuses on the recent novel, *Red Poppies* (*Chenai luoding* 《尘埃落定》 1998) by the Tibetan writer Alai 阿来, which received the Mao Dun Award for Literature (*Mao Dun wenxue jiang* 茅盾文学奖) from the Writers Association in 2000.⁵⁴ Liyuan presses the issue of how a novel like *Red Poppies* is interpreted by Han critics who acclaim it as “minority literature” yet know or say nothing about the development of “minority literature”. In addition, he questions the possibility of minority writers being recognized in the Han cultural center without them being overtly politicized. Liyuan well understands the fundamental socio-political dynamics in China that define minority writers as either “backward” and therefore the Other to (Han) Chinese literature or as “modernized” and Hanified contributors to (Han) Chinese literature.

⁵¹ See Luo Qingchun 罗庆春, "Shengming de tuwei yu shenmei de chonggou: lun dangdai shaoshu minzu xianfeng shiren de wenhua celüe," *Minzu xenxue yanjiu* 4 (1995), Luo Qingchun 罗庆春, "Yuyan shidai: Zhongguo shaoshu minzu hanyu shige dangdai xingtai," *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 3 (1996).

⁵² Liyuan Xiaodi 栗原小荻, "20 shiji Zhongguo shaoshu minzu wenxue zongheng lun," *Xibei minzu xueyuan xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)*, no. 1 (2003).

⁵³ Liyuan Xiaodi 栗原小荻, "Wo yan zhong de quanqiu hua yu Zhongguo xibu wenxue," *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 23, no. 5 (2002).

⁵⁴ The Mao Dun award for literature is one of the most highly acclaimed literary awards in China. Alai was the first Tibetan to receive this award, and the second minority writer. The first minority writer to receive this award was the Hui writer Huo Da 霍达 for his novel entitled *Muslim Funeral* (*Muslim zangli* 《穆斯林葬礼》).

Ironically, a few writers who are widely known and highly respected for their contributions to modern Chinese literature are in fact minority writers. Lao She 老舍 (Manchu) and Shen Congwen 沈从文 (Miao) are two greatly influential “Chinese” writers whose “ethnic” background is often either ignored or treated as primarily a “local” culture (local peculiarities but still located within Han culture).⁵⁵ Liyuan’s point strikes an important chord with the future of minority literature as within/out of Chinese literature and specifically the power dynamics between Han and minority cultures. By either exotifying minority literature as the literature of the Other or appropriating it into the simplistic concept of (Han) Chinese literature, the mainstream Han culture is practicing a maintenance of Han identity that solidifies it as both the unified “center” and superior model for the minority Others.⁵⁶

Although recently there has been a great amount of western scholarship on minority cultures and their exotification by the Han, there has been very little scholarly discussion on modern minority literature.⁵⁷ The multi-faceted instance of modern minority literary production occurring in the southwest provides a prime example for illuminating this new dynamic of Chinese literature and national culture. Two of the three poets I have chosen to study have participated in the institution of modern minority literature. And

⁵⁵ See Jeffrey Kinkley, "Shen Congwen and Imagined Native Communities," in *Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literatures*, ed. Joshua Mostow, *China section* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), Peter Li, "Lao She and Chinese Folk Literature," *Chinoperl Papers* 19 (1996). Although beyond the scope of this paper, asking the question, "Can Lao She and Shen Congwen be assessed as a part of Chinese minority literature?", is important to re-imagining Chinese literature.

⁵⁶ Nimrod Baranovitch, "Between Alterity and Identity: New Voices of Minority People in China," *Modern China* 27, no. 3 (2001): 370-71.

⁵⁷ For an early analysis of Chinese minority literature see A Dolezalova, "Nationalism and the Literature of National Minorities of the People's Republic of China," in *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on the Theoretical Problems of Asian and African Literatures* (1983). For introductions to the production of minority popular music see Baranovitch, "Between Alterity and Identity: New Voices of Minority People in China.", Nimrod Baranovitch, "From the Margins to the Centre: The Uyghur Challenge in Beijing," *The China Quarterly* 175 (2003), Rachel Harris, "Reggae on the Silk Road: The Globalization of Uyghur Pop," *China Quarterly* 183 (2005).

ironically, Jimu Langge, the one of the three who has not participated in the institution of minority literature, is the only one who speaks his native language, Yi. However, they each are representatives of the fractured conditions of minority writers in China by being recognized and ignored in various ways for being either too ethnic or not ethnic enough, or both. This thesis will focus on the constant interplay between ethnicity and society, and political implications of their work for national and global frameworks.

Postcolonial Inceptions and Global Forces

Modern Chinese minority literature has evolved into a discursive space in China by accentuating and exploring its dynamic position between local/native and global influences. In this trajectory Chinese minority writers are not alone. In many nation-states throughout the world, indigenous peoples native to the land and with their own cultures have also experienced domination and oppression by national cultures, and have tried to make their voices heard. The Native Americans and Aboriginal Australians, for instance, have experienced a similar domination, and specifically have adopted English as a language of modernization and global connections. This has led to the entombment of a global “fourth world”: indigenous cultures contained within modern nation-states.⁵⁸ “Fourth world” literature refers to the literature of indigenous peoples contained within modern world languages. Likewise, Chinese minority writers are

⁵⁸ Adam Shoemaker, *Black Words, White Page : Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988* (St. Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1989), 1-4.

participants in this kind of global nativism.

A body of theory that shares the same trajectory on the global scale is postcolonialism. In the case of postcolonial poets, there is a desire to, "... reclaim indigenous histories, landscapes, and traditions; and constitute 'imagined communities' in the wake of their threatened colonial destruction."⁵⁹ For the minority poets in China, the same desperation exists in "reclaiming" history, tradition, and sense of identity within and juxtaposed to the dominant Han society. Yet as postcolonialism has become a convoluted topic, it is necessary to define the relationship of this theory to indigenous literature in general but also specifically the case of Chinese ethnic minorities.

One of the most obvious dilemmas is how colonialism and "post-" apply to the indigenous contexts. Although some scholars have chosen to interpret postcolonialism as meaning either "after colonial settlements" or "global capitalism after the imperial era", neither of these fits well with the current paradigms of indigenous literatures. In the first instance, many indigenous peoples (including the Chinese ethnic minorities) of the world still live under colonialism, a seemingly perpetual state at this point, and therefore it is impossible to talk about a literature "after" colonialism.⁶⁰ In the second instance, because the indigenous peoples have usually been consolidated within their colonized/colonizing "nations", it is also impossible to talk about their literature in terms of first and third world systems; they are called the "fourth world" but are truly without a rung on the ladder because they are encapsulated by their "home" nation. Epidemically, indigenous

⁵⁹ Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse*, 3, 185, n.7.

⁶⁰ Arnold Krupat, "Postcolonialism, Ideology, and Native American Literature," in *Postcolonial theory and the United States : race, ethnicity, and literature*, ed. Peter Schmidt and Amritjit Singh (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 74.

peoples tend to function as the remote Other for the settler centered nation and thus have virtually no self-constituted visibility in the global arena.

On the other extreme, there is a real danger that the term “postcolonialism” actually further constricts the composition of indigenous literatures. The Canadian indigenous writer Thomas King makes a powerful rebuttal against postcolonialism by stating that

... the term itself assumes that the starting point for that discussion is the advent of Europeans in North America. At the same time, the term organizes the literature progressively suggesting that there is both progress and improvement. No less distressing, it also assumes that the struggle between guardian and ward is the catalyst for contemporary Native literature, providing those of us who write with method and topic. And, worst of all, the idea of post-colonial writing effectively cuts us off from our traditions, traditions that were in place before colonialism ever became a question, traditions which have come down to us through our cultures in spite of colonization, and it supposes that contemporary Native writing is largely a construct of oppression. Ironically, while the term itself – post colonial – strives to escape to find new centres, it remains, in the end, a hostage to nationalism.⁶¹

In its stead, King prefers the terms “tribal” (literature for a native audience) or “interfusalional” (hybrid mixture of indigenous and western literary styles), among others, that he feels are more accurate ways to discuss different aspects of what he calls “Native” literature. Although I agree with his criticism that a fundamentally elite European-American discourse like postcolonialism overlooks the specific circumstances and dynamics of indigenous literature, it still shares an important impetus and trajectory. It is a difficult tight-rope to walk, but indigenous literatures must be assessed as both “native” / “local” literatures while also being valued for their global impetus to exist against and beyond nationalism, first world dominance, etc. Often caught between

⁶¹ Thomas King, “Godzilla vs. Post-colonial,” in *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2004), 184-85.

attempting to translate the traditional “orality” of native literatures and combatting the “Romantic hyperbole” of indigenous imagines produced by the cultural center, indigenous literatures in national languages are simultaneously focused inward and outward, ethnic and political.⁶² As a result, indigenous literatures must be assessed for their ties to the native/local, the national culture, and also the global because by speaking multi-vocally (and inter-vocally) they simultaneously (and reflexively) bridge between all of these levels.⁶³ King makes a valuable point, however, that not all indigenous literature is polemical or even conceived in “postcolonial” terms, which highlights the need for greater comprehension of literatures and their value from the local to the global.⁶⁴ Readings of indigenous literatures should not be reduced to products of one single purpose or voice, even if that voice is assessed to be polemical.

POSTCOLONIALISM AND CHINA

In approaching the postcolonial nature of Native American literature, Arnold Krupat prescribes a precise term: “anti-imperial translation”.⁶⁵ The basis of this term is what Krupat describes as the “violent translation” of the Americas by the European powers in which the imaginings of the Americas were wrenched from the natives’ grasp. Therefore, Native American writers’ current techniques work to reverse this “translation” by reorienting the literature. For instance, “. . . it seeks to disrupt the habitual desire of that

⁶² Winfried Siemerling, *The new North American Studies: Culture, Writing and the Politics of Re/cognition* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 65-66.

⁶³ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 69-71.

⁶⁵ Arnold Krupat, "Postcolonialism, Ideology, and Native American Literature," in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, ed. Peter Schmidt and Amritjit Singh (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 74.

audience to use the text as an occasion to know about the Other . . . [and instead] can be a force moving us toward learning to live another form of life.”⁶⁶ These are the subtle (and at times not so subtle) forces that push the reader against the “translations” imperial colonization has instituted. King gives a similar example, “In the end, what is most apparent in these two books is not the information received but the silences that each writer maintains. Non-Natives may, as readers, come to an association with these communities, but they remain, always, outsiders.”⁶⁷ The concept of re-translating the indigenous home towards reclaiming the land is a helpful imagine in comprehending indigenous literatures, and lessens their inconsistencies with postcolonial theory. Most importantly, the translation is situated within the indigenous and is translated outwards to the “outsiders”. As Maureen Konkle aptly points out in her discussion of Native American treaties, “the struggle is not only land, but was and continues to be written English.”⁶⁸

The anti-imperial translation of modern indigenous literature is not a single path, but is a cross-lingual collision of the native and the colonizer: a hybrid struggle. Although the battle over what is the “authentic” literature of postcolonial countries in Africa, India and the Caribbean has raged unendingly over native and colonial language, purpose, and method, in the “fourth world” of indigenous literature the hybrid positionality is inescapable.⁶⁹ Within the struggling hybrid “. . . the crossings and

⁶⁶ Krupat, “Postcolonialism, Ideology, and Native American Literature,” 77.

⁶⁷ King, “Godzilla vs. Post-colonial,” 189.

⁶⁸ Maureen Konkle, “Indian Literacy, U.S. Colonialism, and Literary Criticism,” in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, ed. Peter Schmidt and Amritjit Singh (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 153.

⁶⁹ For a description of the dilemma of “authenticity” in postcolonial Africa see Adeleke Adeeko, *Proverbs, Textuality, and Nativism in African Literature* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 1998), 5-8.

conjunctures result in compound formation irreducible to either source.”⁷⁰ Therefore, the positionality of ethnic vision, where and how the indigenous writer positions the native land, people, and culture within the confluence of local to global forces in the text, is the underpinning aspect of the struggling hybrid. The images of the native presented in ethnic vision range from the focusing on place and natural surroundings to utilizing the methods of native styles of narration and figuration. Positionality of this vision reveals the relationships between the multi-vocal components in the writing and, furthermore, privileges those local/native as the framework of the text, the center. The hybrid struggle plays out between these multi-layered forces and often even extends to the writers own self-hybridity as within/out of the local/native center.

In China’s southwest, the hybrid path of modern indigenous literature is traversed by the Chinese minority writers who are caught squarely between the local/native, national, and global. Contained within the Chinese language but speaking from the ethnic vision of minority *minzu*, minority writers in China intone the hybrid struggle. Although postcolonialism has usually been applied to China as a nation that also suffered semi-colonial domination, in the case of the minority *minzu* it is necessary to address the Han’s own “imperial” colonization of the Chinese interior.⁷¹ Throughout the long history of the Chinese language and interaction between the Han people and the outlying *minzu*, the Han Chinese center has consistently inscribed the ethnic groups as barbarian

⁷⁰ Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse*, 104.

⁷¹ In this sense, by being gazed upon by the West and the Han majority the minority *minzu* are doubly the Other. See Wang Lixiong 王力雄, "Xizang miandui de liang zhong diguo zhuyi: toudi Weise shijian" (China Information Center, 2004 [cited February 2 2006]); available from <http://www.observechina.net/info/artshow.asp?ID=37800>. For English translation see Wang Lixiong 王力雄, "Tibet Facing Imperialism of Two Kinds: An Analysis of the Woese Incident" (Canada Tibet Committee, 2004 [cited February 13 2006]); available from http://www.tibet.ca/en/wtnarchive/2004/12/20_1.html. For an insightful discussion of the CCP’s ethnic policy and its relationship to China’s traditional existence as an empire see Harrell, *Ways of being ethnic in Southwest China*, 31-33.

Others and romanticized objects within the Han language.⁷² Imperial translation of the minority *minzu* was even reflected in the actual Han characters that were used to name the *minzu*. The characters sometimes contained the dog radical 犭, such as *luoluo* 猓猓 (the traditional name for the Yi), that was used to represent animals rather than the human radical 亻 (and later changed to *luoluo* 俚俚).⁷³ However, since the founding of the PRC fundamental changes have occurred in the relationship between the Han majority and its minority *minzu*, which contains them within the nation while also subjugating them to the Han national culture.

However, the minority *minzu*, particularly in the southwest of China, have begun to accept their place as Chinese (as opposed to Han) and take advantage of the educational and economic benefits the Han provide. In this respect, Arnold Krupat's term "anti-imperial translation" accurately describes the type of resistance to the colonization process that the *minzu* are adopting in China. The highly political nature of the classification *minzu* and the Chinese nation, however, creates a specific form of anti-imperial translation. Because of the political monopoly and oppression of the CCP, the minority *minzu* writing in Chinese employ a nuanced and bitingly subtle voice of ethnic vision that translates the Chinese language.

These Chinese minority writers and poets are culturally fluent in the "empire", positioned beyond China's center, and situate their writing in the postmodern world of

⁷² See Dikèotter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Kam Louie, "Masculinities and minorities: alienation in Strange Tales from Strange Land," *China Quarterly* 132 (1992), William Schaefer, "Shanghai Savage," *positions* 11, no. 1 (2003).

⁷³ Lolo or *Luoluo* in Chinese is the former name of the Yi *minzu* in China. Originally, the characters were written with the dog radical but this was later changed to the human radical. The name was eventually changed entirely to the more positive name of Yi. Baranovitch, "Between Alterity and Identity," 395.

global nativism.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ For a introduction to the dynamics of postmodernism and Native American literature see Gerald Robert Vizenor, *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

Woeser 唯色: Tibet in Chinese

Woeser, Weise, or Oser: three names, one woman, a Tibetan poet, a writer in the Chinese language. But which name is hers? The problem is one of languages and the gaps as well as transformations that are produced between them. For a reader of Chinese her name should be “Weise” based on the official Chinese transliteration system of Chinese characters, pinyin. However, the Tibetan government in exile at Dharamsala also have their own semi-official transliteration based on the Wylie system of Tibetan script transliteration, which renders her name as “Oser”. Neither of these two quite captures the pronunciation of this woman poet’s name in her native dialect of Kham Tibetan, therefore she claims another transcription: Woeser.⁷⁵ A combination of the two but somehow relegated to a language that she is only related to as a third party, English. Woeser writes in Chinese, lives in Tibet, and is translated in English. She has identities in each of these realms all attached to a quest to find her “native” self through writing her “native” home.

Woeser was born in Lhasa in 1966 but soon after returned with her family to Kham, the Tibetan area in western Sichuan province, to the city of Derge (*Dege* 德格). She received a Chinese education beginning from primary school and later in 1988 graduated from the Chinese department of the Southwest Minority Institute (*Xinan minzu xueyuan* 西南民族学院) in Chengdu. After living outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region for more than 20 years she finally returned to Lhasa in 1990 to work as an editor for the literature journal *Tibetan Literature* (*Xizang wenxue* 《西藏文学》). She has written poetry

⁷⁵ The name “Woeser” was specified by the poet as the name she wished to be known by in English.

and prose including several collections of essays on Tibet and its people.⁷⁶ In 2001, her poetry collection *Tibet Above* received one of the “Courier Horse Awards” (*junma jiang* 骏马奖) for minority poetry in China, which gave national level recognition by the Party-state to her poetic achievement. However, one of her later essay collections, *Notes on Tibet*, was banned by the Tibetan Autonomous government in 2003, and has since been banned throughout China.⁷⁷ A number of the essays in the book were deemed politically incorrect because they referred to some of the religious intolerance experienced by Tibetans and the ties of the people to the Dalai Lama. After her book was banned, Woese refused to undergo self-criticism and to renounce her religious beliefs, and therefore lost her job and all of its social benefits.⁷⁸ She then moved to Beijing for a period, but has now moved back to Lhasa. Since the banning of her book, Woese has been able to continue her ambition of writing about Tibet by publishing her work on the Internet. Most notably, in 2004 Woese published the long and politically charged poem “Secrets of Tibet” which was then also quickly translated into English by the supporters of the Free Tibet movement.⁷⁹ This type of political stance has resulted in her Internet blogs recently being shutdown, yet has also solidified the recognition of her cause in the West with an increasing amount of work being translated into English.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Weise 唯色, *Jianghongse de ditu* (Beijing: Zhongguo lüyou chubanshe, 2004), Weise 唯色, *Sha jie* (Taiwan: Dakuai wenhua, 2006), Weise 唯色, *Xizang biji* (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 2002), Weise 唯色, *Xizang jiyi* (Taiwan: Dakuai wenhua, 2006).

⁷⁷ Wang, “Xizang miandui de liang zhong diguo zhuyi,” Weise 唯色, “Secrets of Tibet” (Tibet Information Network, 2004 [cited June 12 2006]); available from <http://www.studentsforafreetibet.org/article.php>.

⁷⁸ Wang, “Tibet Facing Imperialism of Two Kinds,” Wang, “Xizang miandui de liang zhong diguo zhuyi.”

⁷⁹ Weise 唯色, “Xizang de mimi” (2004 [cited June 6 2006]); available from <http://www.peacehall.com/news/gb/pubvp/2005/05/200505080321.shtml>. For English translation see Weise 唯色, “Secrets of Tibet” (2004 [cited June 12, 2006]); available from <http://www.studentsforafreetibet.org/article.php>.

⁸⁰ Clifford Coonan, “China suppresses dissident Tibetan poet's weblogs,” *The Independent*, August 2, 2006. For several translations of Woese’s work see Weise 唯色, “Woese” (Tibet Writers.org, 2005 [cited April 10 2006]); available from <http://www.tibetwrites.org/articles/woese/index.html>. Weise 唯色, “Woese,” trans. d dayton, *The Drunken Boat* 6, no. 1-11 (2006) <http://www.thedrunkenboat.com/weise.html>. and Weise 唯色, “Predestined

CONFLICTED TIBET

Tibet today is conflicted; torn between the two polarized sides of the Tibetan government in exile and the PRC.⁸¹ I have argued in the previous section on “ethnopolitics” that in China *minzu* is an innately political classification thus directly affecting the production of minority literature. However, in the case of Tibet, the political atmosphere is so extreme that a writer who claims Tibetan ethnicity is unavoidably drawn into the political battle. Although with the banning of her book Woesser has more clearly joined the fight against the PRC government, her poetic voice presents a more thoroughly nuanced perspective of one caught between these combating sides. This immediately reflected in two issues fundamental to her identity: her name and the nature of her Tibetan ethnicity.

The issue of her name is first complicated by the fact that many diasporic sources (often associated with the Free Tibet movement) use “Oser”, the Tibetan script based transliteration, as the proper form of her name. However, she is one of a growing number of Tibetan poets and writers who write in Chinese. She is apart of a new generation of writers educated in Chinese institutions, and therefore, unlike earlier generations, uses the Chinese language natively. Furthermore, she is illiterate in Tibetan, though she is learning the language and puts personal emphasis on the need to write in

Beads," trans. Wang Ping and Lyn Hejinian, *The East Village Poetry Web* 5 (2002)
<http://www.theeastvillage.com/t5/wei/a.htm>.

⁸¹ It is not my intention here to simplify the complexity of the social, historical, religious, and political dilemmas involved in the relationship between Tibet and the PRC. However, because of the need to maintain focus on my present analysis, I am choosing to represent Tibet as “conflicted” and analyze its consequences for the poetry of Woesser. For an introduction to the complexity of this issue, I recommend Melvyn C. Goldstein, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet since 1947* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2000).

one's "native" language.⁸² Nevertheless, the context of modern Tibetan literature is as conflicted as its politics and at the present is regularly written in Chinese rather than Tibetan. This particularly accentuates the fact that a growing number of Tibetans are now using Chinese to write back to the cultural center's readership.⁸³

To access the poetics of Woese's voice her preface entitled "Tibet Above" of her banned book *Notes on Tibet* provides a rich starting point.⁸⁴ As this book has been the topic of much international attention and one of the reasons Woese has been noticed by the diasporic Tibetan community and its western supporters, I find it especially revealing of the intricacies involved in Woese's identity. The preface is a narration of Woese's journey back to Tibet, specifically Lhasa, after being away for twenty years. Therefore, it lays open the complicated and multi-dimensional way that she deals with these issues.

Woese writes in Chinese, therefore her name obviously only appears in her written voice in the Chinese form of "Weise" 唯色, which, she informs the reader in the preface, means rays of light in Tibetan.

When I use my heavily accented Tibetan to say "Bo"⁸⁵ (Tibet) or "Woese"⁸⁶ (rays of light), these two words seem to be the wings of a bird (its feathers have a kind of beauty that we have never seen before; can it be the sacred bird that all Tibetans hold in awe — an eagle?) that carries a formless substance connected to the soul towards that most wondrous and mystical destination!⁸⁷

⁸² Woese expressed these sentiments to the author in an email.

⁸³ See Yangdon Dhondup, "In search for their ancestors: Contemporary writing from Tibet," *Tibetan Review*, July 2001, Tsering Shakya, "The Waterfall and Fragrant Flowers: The Development of Tibetan Literature since 1950," *Manoa* 12, no. 2 (2000).

⁸⁴ Weise 唯色, *Xizang biji* (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 2002). Appendix A, 111.

⁸⁵ Wylie transliteration: *Bod*.

⁸⁶ 'Od zer འོད་ཟེར་ Chinese pinyin: *Weise* 唯色.

⁸⁷ Weise, *Xizang biji*. Appendix A of this thesis, 114. Chinese original on 117.

The two Chinese characters that make up her name in Chinese do not signify this meaning but only approximate the sound of the Tibetan name “Oser” in the Tibetan script. However, Woeseer says herself in that same paragraph that she too cannot properly pronounce her own name, as well as the word for Tibet in Tibetan. Furthermore, she provides Chinese transliterations of the words and not Romanized or transliterations in the Tibetan script. Woeseer is expressing her own position situated within the Chinese language while simultaneously inscribing her home Tibet vocally beyond the language. As she invokes these words written in Chinese and spoken in Tibetan, the metaphoric wings carry her to this destination, her home Tibet. Although in English she claims the name Woeseer as the spoken invocation of her Tibetan identity, in the Chinese characters on the page one has the visual reminder of the accented words she is speaking. This cross-lingual translation of identity over idea and language represents Woeseer’s conflict but also her ability to bind the two. Woeseer is stating that she is at situated in the Chinese language like her journey to her home Tibet as a place and culture: a conflicted hybrid.

The second and more complicated issue informing Woeseer’s identity is her ethnicity. Although ethnicity is a frequently contested issue, in China the ethnicities represented by the fifty-five minority *minzu* takes on a distinctive political significance. Thus, how Woeseer’s identity is presented has a great deal to do with political persuasions. In Chinese news publications which discuss Woeseer, the writers often state that she is of mixed Han and Tibetan blood.⁸⁸ Technically, she is one fourth Han and three fourths Tibetan. While

⁸⁸ Moli 茉莉, “Weise: Zen neng dakai wo de Xizang?” (Dajiyuan, 2004 [cited 2005 February 5]); available from <http://www.epochtimes.com/gb/4/12/16/n748958.htm>, Wang, “Xizang miandui de liang zhong diguo zhuyi,” Yao Xinyong 姚新勇, “Bei bangjia de “minzu yingxiong”: guanyu Weise shijian de sikao” (China Information Center, 2005 [cited February 18 2006]); available from <http://www.observechina.net/info/artshow.asp?ID=37721>.

not meaning to equate conceptions of race and blood with ethnicity and identity, her mixed-blood has implications for how “genuine” a Tibetan voice Woese expresses or is perceived to express. Furthermore, although she was born in Lhasa, her home of Kham is closer to Han culture than is central Tibet. In addition, her parents were government officials which gave her added benefits in integrating into Han society. In contrast, much of the news presented by Free Tibet websites state that she is simply “Tibetan”. Is she claimed quickly and absolutely by the Free Tibet community because she has now become a political dissident? Or, in contrast is she viewed as invalid in the Han Chinese sphere because she has taken up the Tibetan cause but is not fully Tibetan herself? According to the law of the PRC, individuals can choose their *minzu* if they are from mixed parents which will then give them certain privileges and rights in line with the government’s affirmative action policies.⁸⁹ Woese is thus officially Tibetan in *minzu*, but of mixed blood. In the preface, she also comments on this dilemma:

At the same time, I deeply felt (in the first place) small part of me that has Han blood, the subtle influence it has had on me all these past twenty years, and how it had now already nearly become the dominant part of my outward appearance and thinking. This is to say that when I returned to the place of my birth I was no different from a stranger.⁹⁰

Woese admits that she has Han blood, though a poetically diminutive amount. However, more importantly she describes herself as returning to Lhasa as a “stranger” because of the dominance of Han culture in her appearance and thinking. She at once recognizes her position as an outsider, calling herself at one point an “impure Tibetan”, yet this also generates the impetus for her journey. Woese is on a quest to reconstitute an identity

⁸⁹ See Colin Mackerras, *China's Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century* (Hong Kong ; Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁹⁰ Weise, *Xizang biji*. Appendix A, 110. Chinese, 115.

and cultural relationship she feels she has lost in her absence from Tibet, but additionally accentuates reconstituting the “place” that contains her mixed identity.

Within the jaded division of modern Tibet, Woese stands as an admittedly Hanified Tibetan. Yet, her passion for its religion and people drive her quest for renewal and reconciliation with her “native” self/place. Most influential and implicative in this quest is Woese’s usage of Chinese (the language of the Han) to describe it, which also includes a critical narrative of the government’s abuses previously not available in the language. Woese is purposefully sharing her experience of Tibet with a Chinese audience to reify the actual place of Tibet, and reclaim its sacred presence. This is a Tibet in Chinese yet through the power of religion and culture she inscribes a place that speaks beyond the language. Just as in her poem “Mixed-blood”, Woese is intoning her Tibet in the language fluent to her yet is attempting to reach beyond its limitations.⁹¹

15 Please bestow which plot of land
to allow her to aimlessly manifest
ever improvised and enchanting songs
The night the betrayal of youth completed,
those hot tears that flow in one’s surrender
beautified, swallowed like a pristine body
20 will be an unparalleled crown
This nearest symbol
A fear that empties the world
because her mission is to be a
prophet who spreads light
25 And within which lonely ceremony
can then only ask, “Is this the one?”
“Take this one along too?”

Endowed with a “mission”, the speaker of the poem is inscribed as a “prophet”. But, the

⁹¹ Weise 唯色, *Xizang zai shang* (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1999). Appendix A, 125.

imagery of “mixed-blood” emphasizes the uncertainty of the last line, “Take this one along too?” (27). Woese writes to connect to Tibet, yet also portrays her distance from the imagined native home she creates.

Dynamics of Hybrid Opposition: Woese’s Positionality in/opposite Tibet

In the poem “[After a Few Years](#)”, a potent dynamic of Woese’s writing is realized: opposition.⁹² This is not, however, the simplistic opposition of Tibetans and Han that the politically charged rhetoric of the “Tibet Issue” is often relegated to, but an opposition of two poles separate but bound together. The emphasis then turns to the distance between the opposites and their struggle at reconciliation. In navigating her positionality within/out of Tibet, Woese uses the imagery of opposition to describe the conflicted hybridity that is her poetic voice.

Opposition as a theme offers many possible readings of this poem from the personal to the political. Therefore, by first analyzing the structure of opposition in the poem, it will be possible to uncover the greater implications of opposition. “After a Few Years” is written as one long stanza, but this first line and title of the poem are repeated at intervals of six to eight lines. The poem, thus, has a lyrical feel that also accentuates the passage of time or possibly, by way of extension, a timelessness. Divided by the

⁹² Weise, *Xizang zai shang*. Appendix A, 119.

topical line, each section represents the journey of the speaker of the poem (entering in the third line after the second personal pronoun “you”) towards the “you” (2-3). The first section deals with the journey itself, riding on “planes” and “cars” from the place “at the opposite end” to the “original place” (2-5). The second section presents the characters after the change that time causes. In the fourth and fifth sections, the opposition of the speaker and “you” becomes clear in terms of cleanliness and purity. However in the final section, although the characters have reunited, the opposition of the two has not been resolved.

The journey of this poem does not offer a “return home” in the nostalgic sense. Nostalgia is denied mainly because there is no reference to “home” in the poem. In fact, the “original place” is left entirely unimagined in the poem, which sets it only as a marker of the distance between the characters of the poem. Moreover, the speaker’s relationship to the “original place” is expressed in terms of unfamiliarity. The speaker takes bones as jewelry but this action is revealed from the start as “importuning poise”, not the natural actions of a “native” (16-20). Building on this ironic sense, in the first stanza the journey has already been completed through the agents of the modern, i.e. “cars” and “planes”, yet the speaker has only begun her journey of reconnection with the “original place” and the “you” embodied by it. The result is a journey back that returns the speaker to the “original place”, but also uncompromisingly shows the distance between the two poles of the speaker and “you”.

A discomfort becomes pronounced through Woese’s associating the speaker with “dust” and “loosing her countenance” (14-15) while the “you’s” “appearance” is “clean”

and has the “air of books” (23-24), presumably meaning a youthful appearance. The poem furthers this metaphoric cleanliness of the “you” by connecting it to “luster” caused by internal “youthful”, and therefore pure, tears (26-28). However, again at the beginning of the poem in the second stanza the speaker and “you” are compared in terms of shared experience. They are both “aging”, “still young”, and “have tempers”. Thus, the journey of reconciliation is completed just as the poem starts and the two are figuratively face to face. The space is then filled with growing opposition afterwards when the social/cultural differences are displayed. The effect of this anachronistic structure is that the speaker and “you” are simultaneously portrayed as familiar yet disjointed in their connection. Woeseer wants her readers to immediately recognize the fractured relationship between the speaker and the “you”. But, she also wants to accentuate the speaker’s emptiness (“losing her countenance”) compared to the “you”.

Finally brought together in the last stanza, the speaker and “you” at first seem to be conclusively making their reconciliation. But, as the distance is traversed, first “distant” then “slightly” closer, the two are surrounded by “commotion” and “dazzle” which leaves them with no words, “What else can be said” (29-37). The journey does not complete and a silence lingers instead. There is a sense of irreparable differences contained in the opposition that “wish[es] to speak but refrain[s]” (35). Significantly, Woeseer uses two Chinese idioms (arguably pillars in the tradition of Chinese literature) in the middle of this last stanza to express the sense of “commotion” and “dazzle”. Placed as they are side by side it makes the stanza seem interrupted as the speaker and the “you” near each other. Suddenly, the colorful and “exotifying” language makes its presence felt

and the two lose their reconciliation. From another perspective, Woeseer seems to be using the speaker's unfamiliarity with the "original place" to express to the reader her own clash with her surroundings. Ironically, after the idioms Woeseer yet again has no more words, emphasizing the Han languages impossibility of completing the poem.

"After a Few Years", as a whole is a poem of oppositions framed most simply in a feminine speaker and a masculine "you", but extends far beyond this dichotomy. Most dynamically, the poem represents Woeseer's own relationship to Tibet. In this way, her distance from Tibet and journey back to the "original place" highlights her idea of her own impurity compared with Tibet. She is the fractured speaker rediscovering the distant self/place she knows, but in the end her words run out; she cannot describe it completely. Is it in the silence that her journey begins?

One must recognize, however, the reflective narrator that Woeseer plays paired to the speaker of the poem. In writing the poem, Woeseer is actually inscribing the words that bring the two together, though the speaker of the poem is the traveler and the impotent inscriber. She is portraying her "opposition" for an outside readership that makes a similar journey in the poem.

Religion as Place: Inscribing Lhasa and Tibet

Returning to Lhasa after twenty years, marks the starting point of a self-proclaimed religious, cultural, and self-perception transformation for Woeseer. Furthermore, this whole process is marked by the beginning of a proliferation in her writing that both

expresses her personal journey and also reveals the depth of her dilemma in creating an increasingly dissenting voice in the Chinese language. Woese is one, again self-admittedly, educated and “almost dominated” by the Chinese language and culture. Therefore, her re-discovery of her Tibetan self and new found devotion to her native religion has created a hybrid voice in her writings as one writing Tibet in Chinese. Specific to her religious journey was her desire to inscribe Tibet as both place, including landscape and people, and sacred. As expressed by Jamie Scott in his edited volume on postcolonial literature’s writing of geography and religion,

That is, encounter, conflict and accommodation in such matters involve not only efforts to possess land in the raw, but also efforts to dispossess other individuals and groups of their social cultural identity, insofar as landscape is the expression of the imprint of their social and cultural habits upon the land. As a result, economic, social and political issues having to do with the sacralization, desacrilization and reclamation of lands and landscapes permeate the writings under discussion. Often ambiguous and complex, such writings represent and dramatize the contested processes of colonization, resistance and decolonization by which lands and landscapes may be viewed as now sacred, now desacralized, now resacralized.⁹³

This is the Lhasa that Woese is writing and this process actually gives body to the place through her religious inscription.

Lhasa was the beginning of her journey and her first point of contact in her return to Tibet. Furthermore, Lhasa is her birthplace and the center of the Tibetan religious, as well as cultural, universe. Although her family home is in the Kham city of Derge, Lhasa is the immediate focus of her journey, and also becomes the representation of Tibetan cultural-social character in her writing. “[Night in Lhasa](#)” describes the multilayered relationship that Woese has with Lhasa as a distant home, a sacred site, and as Tibet

⁹³ Jamie S. Scott, “Introduction,” in *Mapping the Sacred: Religion, Geography and Postcolonial Literatures*, ed. Paul Simpson-Housley and Jamie S. Scott (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), xxvii.

itself.⁹⁴ These relationships are also expressed through the allusion of the death of a loved one and the process of loss, mourning, and hope of reunion. This allusion is specifically potent for Woeseer because her own father died in the years preceding her return to Lhasa. Her life changing decision to return to Lhasa and pursue her “lost” heritage was at least partly influenced by her father’s death. Lhasa is thus at once the setting of the poem while also embodying a fatherly character. It is a place in the full sense of location, atmosphere, and the heart of the people.

Setting the dark tone, the poem opens on a night in Lhasa. Night as the “dark side” of life fits well with the sadness of the poem. However, night also could represent a time of silence when the speaker can vocalize her pain. The pain of losing a loved one is divided over three stanzas each representing a phase of mourning. At the end of the first stanza, the speaker cries for, “. . . a loved one who cannot stay/” (8), the end of the second, “cannot call back a lost loved one!/” (16), and the end of the final stanza hopes that, “. . . you will ever be my loved one!/” (24) in the continual process of reincarnation. Clearly, these sentiments relate to Woeseer’s own loss of her father. Yet, her skill at situating Lhasa as a place pairs the central allusion of the “lost loved one” to this site. Therefore, this is Lhasa that is experiencing loss: lost life of Tibetans, lost sacred power, lost cultural cohesion. In a sense, the Lhasa is a place being emptied, drained of its value and power. For instance, Lhasa has “A few lotus flowers never blooming/ A few glasses easily broken/” (2-3) as well as “A few bluebirds never singing/ A few coats covered with dust/” (10-11). For Woeseer, this could mean the missed opportunity to return with her

⁹⁴ Weise, *Xizang zai shang*. Appendix A, 120.

father to Lhasa and solidify their own familial bond as well as cultural heritage. In this “night in Lhasa”, Woese bemoans the emptiness of being in Lhasa alone after the “loved one” has already departed.

However, besides Woese’s own personal relationship, this “lost loved one” is a powerful allusion for the Tibetan people. Lhasa has lost its people to “self-exile” (6), “diseases” (12), “drowned self-expression” (14), and “bloodlines gradually intermixed” (19). Each stanza negates the possible fruition of beautiful events, as if spring and potential were unobtainable. Lhasa is thus losing its glorious presence as the center of Tibetan culture because its people are being disposed, silenced, and diffused. “By whom” the poem asks. Even its power as a sacred site is reduced, “Those innumerable bewitching images/ cannot call back a lost loved one!” (15-16). The beautiful and “bewitching” Buddhist images that have inscribed Lhasa’s religious potency are losing their sacred power under the pressure of tourism. And yet, the Tibetan people cannot say a word as “self-expression” has been blocked leaving only “Those unseen torrential tears/” (7). The night in Lhasa is one of sobering pain and unfulfilled possibilities.

In the last stanza, however, like “lightning” (21) the possibility is fulfilled and “the fated chance of affinitive coalescence/” (22), throughout “transformations” the reunion of Lhasa with its people will occur. Although it is a “rare night” (17), it is “pre-ordained” that these two parts will again come together. Pointedly, the hope of the future is carried forward specifically by the religious beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism. It “overarches” (21) all the changes and sadness that has come before to again make Lhasa and its people inseparable. With this ending of only hope, Woese seems to be expressing the

impossibility of complete reconciliation between Lhasa and its torments, yet there is still strong hope of reunion. The Tibetans will never be ripped from their sacred home.

The obvious proponent of the sadness in Lhasa is the political and cultural dilemma that has been predicated by the Han's presence in Tibet, and specifically Lhasa. Although the poem does not make direct references to the Han, the allusion of the "lost loved one" is an overtly strong theme. Taken to a political level, the poem could be interpreted as portraying the loss of the Dalai Lama to exile. The "illusionary night" (1) of the first stanza that gives the people a "demeanor" (4) from an unknown source and takes place in "a paradise in self-exile/" (6) are all fitting allusions to the Dalai Lama and his importance to the Tibetan people. Yet, the night is "illusionary" and in the end the "loved one cannot stay/" (8); Lhasa is still without its leader.

As this is one of Woese's earlier poems (before her book was banned), she may have wanted to disguise her criticisms of the Han presence in Tibet. Yet, the strength of the poem still conjures up two pivotal aspects: first that the grief of losing a loved one is a deep and powerful force that is not simply forgotten, and second that Tibetan Buddhism underlines the place that is Lhasa and provides the path to revival. These two points serve as the basis of her reclamation of Tibetan space, specifically Lhasa, within a Chinese reading audience.

Turning the Gaze: Woeseer Speaks Out to Her Readers

Banned in 2003, *Notes on Tibet* was a provocative political move for Woeseer, but not necessarily strictly as fodder for the Free Tibet cause. Woeseer, though referring to several politically sensitive issues such as Tibetan political dissidents and the Dalai Lama, never crosses the line into direct criticism of the Chinese government or calling for an independent Tibet. Why is this? Besides her possible political intentions in writing about Tibet, there is a strong case for the importance of audience in Woeseer's writing. She is a Tibetan woman writing in Chinese. Furthermore, her integration into Han society includes her education, occupation, and even marriage to a Han man, Wang Lixiong 王力雄 (an activist for democracy and scholar of Tibet). Simply put, Woeseer has strong connections to Han society that serve as an outlet for her expression of the torment she feels as a part of Tibet. This is not to say that the Han are her only audience, but they easily make up the largest contingent.

One of the more strikingly Han-audience-oriented pieces in this collection is called “Don't Photograph!”⁹⁵ As so boldly stated in the title, the piece is directly challenging a specific behaviour: photographing. Although this behaviour is carried out by many different kinds of people, the piece makes specific commentary on the Han who come to Tibet as tourists: “These people are all tourists from the Central Plains who are completely infatuated with Tibet.” It is these people that Woeseer is talking to loud and clear. Beginning with the title, she is already telling them not to photograph. It is the mentality of “ . . . first just being curious to then *hunting* novelty is an obvious and natural

⁹⁵ Weise, *Xizang biji*. Appendix A, 128, Chinese 130.

one for them while traveling in the frontier,” that she wants to challenge. Therefore, in fairly direct terms Woeseer has a specific audience in mind as well as message she wants to convey to them.

However, “Don’t Photograph!” is not just simply a diatribe against the curious Han. Woeseer is not just criticizing the Han for their poor behavior but attempting to speak to her audience about the conflicts present between Tibet as a place, people, religious lifestyle and Han misconceptions and arrogance. Of course, her sympathies clearly side with Tibet, but not to the extent that she whitewashes the complex interactions that embody modern Tibet. She, instead, uses these sympathies to portray a Tibet that is colorful, vibrant, sacred, and ultimately changing. This is actually the story of the interaction of these two peoples spread over the fracturing dichotomies of religion/tourism, ancient/modern, and Tibetan/Han. Woeseer is not only demanding her audience to change their ways but also nudging them in the right direction. Her nudging comes in a few forms: her use of diction and rhetoric, her narration of the story with pointed dialogue, and her referencing of significant events and phenomenon that reveal the complex relationships between the Tibetans and the Han.

From the start of the story, Woeseer employs a repetitive diction of photography to immediately make its disruptive presence felt by the reader: “[they] . . . hold up cameras in our faces flashing again and again.” In the next line the continuous presence of this kind of event introduces the characters of the story by way of their predicament, “Nyima and the others are used to these kinds of people.” It is through these kinds of coding that Woeseer is able to generate sympathy from her audience. The constant

presence of the photographers and their tourist zeal show just how out of touch they are with the surroundings. Under the imagery of “hunting” that she employs, the photographers scour Tibet for its treasures yet do not realize their victims suffering. Further on, Woese deny the ability of the photographers to subjugate Tibet by simply but powerfully expressing in words what the men wish to capture on film,

. . . rows of burning yak butter candles, huge bronze urns brimming with crisp water, passing old Lhasa women with their curly haired dogs in tow, Amdo women or Kham men with pious faces bearing khabtags, and of course the most typical, lamas wearing the crimson kasaya.⁹⁶

Woese is waging a battle of words over photography to portray Tibet. As part of the authentication of her Tibet, she uses several Tibetan words transliterated into Chinese. Although not frequent, these occasional inclusions of “native” material also contribute to the readers’ (re)positioning in the Chinese language. These Tibetan words not readily understood verbally invoke a sense of place with specific religious meaning in the story. For instance, Woese invokes the “nangkhor” which is one of the most important ritual sites at the Jokhang Temple. Almost automatically, the reader pays special attention to this unfamiliar word accentuating the significance of this place in Tibet. Furthermore, as a foreign word in Chinese, “nangkhor” also works to remove the Han readers’ colonization of the Tibetan imaginary through Hanified terminology. It subtly shows the Han that they are the foreigners in Tibet.

Woese makes her most dramatic use of diction at the end of the story by using the word “expelled” in reference to the two photographers. Innately aggressive, her use of

⁹⁶ Weise, *Xizang biji*. Appendix A, 127. Chinese, 130.

this word is very calculated because she modifies it with the word “graciously”, which lightens its impact but still leaves the power of invoking expulsion. In the next line, she further lightens and reinterprets this word for her audience saying, “Of course they were not ‘expelled’ but it almost seemed like it.” Woese is balancing the sensitivity of the issue of “expulsion” while still letting its greater force be felt by her readers. It is usually the Han that are doing the “expelling” and Woese is using this terminology to tweak her readers’ perceptions of place and questions of authority.

Another important technique that Woese employs in this piece is the careful positioning of the characters and the inclusion of anecdotal facts. One of the strongest ways that she does this is to paint “realistic” portraits of what modern Tibet looks like including the dilemmas that are encountered from the collision between tradition and modernity. For instance she says, “The lamas that everyday have to serve as the ticket sellers and guides to the Jokhang temple, this tourist destination, are constantly pulled into all kinds of viewing angles that are in fact not common.” The conflicts are blindly apparent with lamas being guides and the Jokhang Temple, Tibet’s most sacred temple, being stated simply as a tourist destination. Furthermore, the last portion that says, “[this is] . . . in fact not common.” Woese is brandishing these contradictions to allow her audience to taste the depth of the dilemma. Later, when she speaks of the Serthar Buddhist Institute (which was torn down under government action) a similar purpose is achieved by revealing a sensitive political issue yet relating it as a devout Han woman’s story. This is the Tibet of today, full of contradictions, conflict, and new bonds.

However, the most striking element of the piece and the anecdote that concludes it

is Woese's reference to the expression in Sichuan dialect , "You've eaten too much!"

Why this is so effective is because it captures two things that are integral to modern Tibet:

the modernizing presence of the Han (in this case represented by the Sichuanese) and

the right and space that Tibet has to speak back: the meaning of the anecdote, "you've

crossed the line!" In both cases Tibet has changed, has become something intricately tied

to China, and has struggled to find its new identity caught in the middle of many forces.

There is, of course, also a sense of absurdity and frustration that Tibet, officially an

autonomous region with special linguistic privileges, has become regionalized into its

Han neighbor: Sichuan. However, Woese's use of this phrase shows the fluency that

Tibet has to speak for itself and define its own associations and cultural progression.

This finally returns to the question of audience and who is interpreting this last anecdote

of the story. Woese is speaking the language of change and narrating to Han society the

need also for their change, a change of perception. Tibet has had enough!

He Xiaozhu 何小竹: a Tea-leaves Miao and his Leftover Identity

Born in 1963 to a Han mother and a father of Miao descent in Pengshui 彭水 county, Sichuan (now within the municipality of Chongqing 重庆), He Xiaozhu grew up between two cultures.⁹⁷ He grew up in a Han language environment that did not include knowledge of his *minzu* language and customs. In reality, he did not even become “Miao” until there was special action taken by the local government to recognize Hanified descendants of minority *minzu*.⁹⁸ This is not unusual as it may seem as statistics show that many of the minority *minzu* have grown exponentially since minorities have received greater privileges.⁹⁹ However, He Xiaozhu from early on was already looking for ways to differentiate himself. To his parent’s dismay (both were teachers), he did not take the entrance exam for university but instead joined the local arts troupe as an *er’hu* 二胡 player.¹⁰⁰ Almost ten years later, he carried his eccentric vision to a national level as a poet in Chengdu with the avant-garde poetry group “Not-Not” (*feifei* 非非).

⁹⁷ The Miao, also known as the Hmong, are an ethnic group spread over southeast Asia in several groups, as well as now having a strong overseas community. The Miao are unique among ethnic groups in China for having been largely converted to Christianity in the 19th and 20th centuries by western missionaries. For research on the Miao and their religious communities see Siu-woo Cheung, "Millenarianism, Christian Movements, and Ethnic Change Among the Miao in Southwest China," in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. Stevan Harrell (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), Norma Diamond, "Defining the Miao: Ming, Qing, and Contemporary Views," in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. Stevan Harrell (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), Louisa Schein, *Minority rules : the Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics, Body, Commodity, Text*. (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).

⁹⁸ Pengshui was designated as a Miao and Tujia autonomous county in 1983. For details on government policy on *minzu* see Mackerras, *China's Minorities*.

⁹⁹ Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 20-23.

¹⁰⁰ Yang Li 杨黎, *Canlan* (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 2004), 530-35.

“Sorcerous” Beginnings

“SORCEROUS POETRY” (*wushu shige* 巫术诗歌)

Between becoming a young *er’hu* player and an avant-garde poet, He Xiaozhu explored several aspects of his mixed background and identity to find his poetic voice. In his early writing period, He Xiaozhu participated in many minority writers’ conferences and events such as the second “Sichuan Miao Research Conference” in 1987.¹⁰¹ His poetry of this period often took on semi-mystic themes loosely related to Miao culture. Critics at the time and since have praised this style as a “sorcerous poetry” that they claim blends postmodern linguistics with “mystic” ethnic culture.¹⁰² With this growing reputation, he received an award for new writers in the third minority writers awards for his poetry selection “[Black Forest](#)”.¹⁰³ In the fourth minority writers awards he received another award for his poetry selection “Ann Dreams about Apples and Fish”.¹⁰⁴ Although culturally distant from his *minzu*, He Xiaozhu was warmly praised for his ethnic writing style which solidified his place in the circle of minority writers burgeoning at the time.

After He Xiaozhu chose to officially become “Miao”, he was inspired to learn about his Miao heritage. To further embrace his ethnic roots, he travelled to “traditional” Miao areas to learn the language and customs. However, he was not well received by the locals because of his Han background. He was also unable to learn the Miao language as there was no institutional support. At the time, He Xiaozhu was called a “tea-leaves” Miao

¹⁰¹ He Xiaozhu 何小竹, “He Xiaozhu dashi nianbiao” (Koopee.net, 2004 [cited February 6 2006]); available from koopee.net/wk/krf4/b001.htm.

¹⁰² Li Zhen 李震, “Yanzhe yuyan de bianyuan buzhuo bu zhiming de kunchong: He Xiaozhu he yuan yuyan xiezuo,” *Shi tansuo* 3 (1996).

¹⁰³ He Xiaozhu 何小竹, “Hei senlin,” *Renmin wenxue* 9 (1986). “[Black Forest](#)” and “[Water of the Mulberry](#)” in Appendix B, 141 and 142-143.

¹⁰⁴ He Xiaozhu 何小竹, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), 147.

which in the local language means a “fake” Miao.¹⁰⁵ Although this represented the limitation he faced in expressing his ethnicity, He Xiaozhu later embraced this contradiction as a marker of his “alternativeness”: his self-positioning within the “cracks” between different cultures, languages, and places.¹⁰⁶ Tea-leaves are a powerful metaphor for the “impure” and “leftover” state of his identity. This “leftover state” is a trope formulated in He Xiaozhu’s poem “[Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels](#)” which reduces language and things to “sounds” and “peels”. The fracturing the poem exercises on its own words is the same code he uses on his identity.¹⁰⁷

In tea-leaves, He Xiaozhu is embodied as a “leftover” (descendant) of the Miao, and an “impurity” which he translates into an ironic, fractured self-reflection and a subtle expression of his locally centered gaze. Now, several years later in the age of the Internet, he embraces his “leftover” ethnicity by using the username “I am Tea-leaves” as one of his Internet identities. In his quest for differentiation, He Xiaozhu met with some barriers because of his innate “impurity”. Though he later gave up actively using ethnic influences in his poetry, the leftover nature of his ethnicity and identity has been the driving force beneath the surface of his poetry.

The literary critic Li Zhen 李震 in his influential article on He Xiaozhu accentuates the paradox of his poetic voice,

He Xiaozhu’s mother tongue should be Miao, but he grew up entirely in a Han language environment. Although he was never able to receive his mother tongue’s full nourishment, within his lack of ancestral knowledge there flows the mother tongue’s blood. This enables him to retain a potential distance from the Han language, and grants him the intuition to

¹⁰⁵ “[Internet Chat with He Xiaozhu on March 6, 2005](#)” in Appendix B, 165.

¹⁰⁶ Xiao Weisheng 肖伟胜, “Youyi yu Han, Miao wenhua xiayi zhijian de gezhe: lun Miaozu shiren He Xiaozhu de quyu wenhua tezhi,” *Tangdu xuekan* 21, no. 3 (2005).

¹⁰⁷ He, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo*. Appendix B, 140.

enter into the possible formlessness of language's periphery.¹⁰⁸

Quoting He Xiaozhu, Li entitles his article "Catching Unidentified Insects along the Margins of Language: He Xiaozhu and Meta-lingual Writing" which at once captures both He Xiaozhu's conception of poetry (marginal language) and his poetic practice (imagery of the micro, i.e. locality). Introducing the concept of meta-language, Li Zhen argues that He Xiaozhu occupies a unique place in poetry writing as a non-native Han writer writing natively in the Han language. He believes the "potential distance" is the most important aspect of He Xiaozhu's poetry because it allows him to gain a "meta-" perspective on language that generates a poetry beyond the Han's language confinement.

However, Li Zhen cannot leave He Xiaozhu's poetics only to issues of language and therefore incites the ancient "Ba" cultural sphere as the source of his ethnic expressions in his poetry. The Shu-Ba 蜀巴 culture that is generally represented by the cultural areas of Sichuan (Shu) and Chongqing (Ba) have maintained certain customs and historical traits ethnically unique to these areas.¹⁰⁹ As He Xiaozhu grew up in the area of Chongqing it seems obvious that he would also come under some of its influence, but how much and to what effect? Because He Xiaozhu's lack of knowledge of his "native" culture cannot suffice as the ethnic influence in his poetry, Li Zhen introduces the "Ba" cultural sphere as the true ethnic influence that he grew up within. Yet, Li Zhen's insistence on finding an "authentic" source for He Xiaozhu's ethnic style actually misconstrues the complexity of his identity and ethnicity in his poetry, and furthermore verges on negating Li's original premise of meta-language. Suffice it to say, that He

¹⁰⁸ Li, "Yanzhe yuyan de bianyuan buzhuo bu zhiming de kunchong," 115.

¹⁰⁹ See Li Yi 李怡, *Xiandai Sichuan wenxue de Bashu wenhua chanshi* (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997).

Xiaozhu is not Han in ethnicity or purely in culture, but he is very much a hybrid of several cultures, spheres, and even of a literary movement in his participation in “Non-ism”.

To return to Li Zhen’s first point, and also his strongest one, He Xiaozhu’s aim in poetry is one of language not of ethnicity. He Xiaozhu says of his poetry,

It was at this time that I was considered to be a poet with a distinct style [ethnic expression]. This so-called ‘distinct style’ was really just that other people could read in my poems many potential ‘things’. But I personally think that besides the presentation of language there isn’t that much more that someone can read into. My original purpose was still very much one of ‘form-ism.’¹¹⁰

“NON-ISM” (非非主义)

He Xiaozhu claims that his purpose throughout his poetic process was truly one of altering poetic language, and that his earlier poems with mystic and ethnic imagery were really only a phase in which he was influenced by critics and readers appeal for “hidden things” in his poetry. The above quote is taken from the preface of his recent and definitive poetry collection *6 verbs, or Apples* entitled “[Methods of Addition and Subtraction](#)” which outlines how he sees his poetic development between an excessive early period of “addition” and a later concise period of “subtraction”. In the preface, He Xiaozhu claims that he gave up this additive process as early as 1987 and that his previous sorcerous poetry style (including its ethnic mysticism) disappeared after this time. In correlation with this change in style, He Xiaozhu received important positions for his poetry in the unofficial poetry journal “Not-Not” sporadically published

¹¹⁰ He, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo*. Appendix B, 135. Chinese, 137.

(unofficially) by “Non-ism” founders Zhou Lunyou 周伦右, Lan Ma 蓝马, and Yang Li 杨黎.¹¹¹ The Non-ism style (1984-1992) was actually quite broad in spectrum taking in many new poets who were unable to be published in other more stylistically regimented journals.¹¹² However, it too had its own ideology; simply stated it was one of linguistic deconstruction and concision.¹¹³ Therefore, as He Xiaozhu grew closer to Non-ism’s doctrine he became increasingly subtractive, culminating in 1992 after his move to Chengdu and close work with other Not-Not writers. This poetry He Xiaozhu calls his “new composition” and entirely reflects the disappearance of sorcery (among other things) from his poetry.

As He Xiaozhu continued down the Non-ism path some critics lamented his turning away from the vibrant combination of ethnic mysticism and a postmodern sensibility. The critic Tu Hong 涂鸿summates, “In truth, He Xiaozhu as an explorative poet, and his poetry also have a defect: for example his excessive pursuit of ‘Non-ism’ in his treatment of language, his poetry’s scarcity of earth-shattering spirit, as well as the large number of his work’s thematic obscurity and evasiveness.”¹¹⁴ In most critical circles, he went from being a pioneer in the preservation of ethnicity and more importantly expressing the modern ethnic (minority *minzu*) dilemma, to submitting to another kind of assimilation by joining an avant-garde poetry group whose ideas and goals were at best obscure. In Tu’s words, He Xiaozhu’s “new” poetry had effectively cut out the

¹¹¹ Day, *China's Second World of Poetry*, 336-38.

¹¹² Ibid., 322-46.

¹¹³ Zhou Lunyou and Lan Ma were especially influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1857-1913) semiotic system and Jacques Derrida’s (1930-) deconstruction. See Ibid., 313-17 for an overview of Non-ism’s theoretical influences.

¹¹⁴ Tu Hong 涂鸿, “Linghun de ziyou yu yishu de chaoyue: Miao zu shiren He Xiaozhu shizuo de xiandai yishi toushi,” *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 19, no. 6 (1998): 67.

“earth-shattering” part of his poetry and made him into just another avant-garde Han poet (Not-Not had only one other prominent minority poet: Jimu Langge). Therefore, even in a very recent article on He Xiaozhu the author Xiao Weisheng 肖伟胜 though arguing Non-ism had a positive affect on his ethnic expression, still does not analyze any of his poems written after 1992 which He Xiaozhu believes to be the true beginning of his “new composition”. Adding to this break in composition, his self-edited poetry collection *6 Verbs, or Apples* covering the period from 1984 - 2001 is heavy in pieces from the later period (after 1994) and light in earlier pieces, including the omission of some of the important poems in his sorcerous style such as “City of Ghosts” and “Black Forest”.¹¹⁵ In his preface, He Xiaozhu states that he was not pleased with much of his work from the 80s and claims that this became the fundamental principle of his addition-subtraction method: “adding new work, deleting old.”¹¹⁶

“LEFTOVER” (剩下)

“Black Forest” was a selection that received his first minority poetry prize, and therefore its omission has obvious reflection on how He Xiaozhu perceives his earlier sorcerous poetry. Yet at the same time, he includes some of the second prize-winning selection “Ann Dreams about Apples and Fish” in his poetry collection. Overall, it is impossible to claim that He Xiaozhu has turned his back on his ethnicity in his later poetry only because his style has experienced a dramatic shift after his encounter with Non-ism.

Although in his preface he attributes his earlier poetry’s ethnic mysticism to the

¹¹⁵ He Xiaozhu 何小竹, “Gui cheng,” *Caoyuan wenxue yuekan* 2 (1986), He Xiaozhu 何小竹, “Gui cheng,” *Zuojia wenxue yuekan* 2 (1987).

¹¹⁶ He, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo*. Appendix B, 135. Chinese, 137.

encouragement of readers and critics and says nothing about how he perceives his ethnicity contributing to his poetry, I propose that this should not be interpreted as a rejection by him of his ethnicity or even ethnicity in his poetry but requires a closer examination of how He Xiaozhu defines himself, “I am Tea-leaves”, and how this leftover imagery plays out in his poetry.¹¹⁷

When one applies the trope of tea-leaves to He Xiaozhu, his ethnic identity solidifies as a poet of the dregs; the saturated and colorful after-mass of a process. The absolute hybridism of his identity caught between several cultural spheres and a society of competing “authentic” centers (Han and other *minzu* such as the Miao) only gives him space as a leftover. Not a pure Miao he is tea-leaves, and consciously separate from the mainstream he is again tea-leaves, the thing leftover after the pure tea. Although possibly overextending the metaphor, the leftover tea-leaves also being the source and thus root of the tea tropes ideas of “true authenticity”. He Xiaozhu’s ethnicity functions on the level of a hybrid leftover with a trope of relative essentialism. When asked by a reporter “. . . [A]fter canceling out the expression of meaning and the flow of poetic meaning, what is leftover?” He Xiaozhu’s reply was “poetry”.¹¹⁸ What is leftover is his poetic process of hybrid tropes that portray his fractured identity.

Yet, he claims his own subtractive process centers solely on the deconstruction of the Han language, and therefore requires the reader to first engage the meta-lingual process of leftovers in his poetry.

¹¹⁷ See “[Internet Chat with He Xiaozhu on March 6, 2005](#)” in Appendix B, 167. In this conversation with the author, He Xiaozhu agreed that his ethnicity played a role in his poetry. However, he also placed the overwhelming emphasis on language leaving ethnicity as an undefined or unconscious element.

¹¹⁸ He, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo*. Appendix B, 135. Chinese, 137.

Hybrid Identity and Meta-lingual Practice

Written after his move to Chengdu and his inclusion in the Not-Not group, “[Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels](#)” is described by He Xiaozhu as contributing to the beginning of his subtractive process.¹¹⁹ It is a long poem written in a numbered series. This poem displays a simplification of language to its parts in obvious contrast with his more thematic and expressive earlier “sorcerous poetry”. But what exactly is subtracted in the poem? According to the He Xiaozhu, it is the words that the he uses in the poem to literally write down his poetry. Therefore, I will first analyze his subtractive language process to engage his poetic intention. However, in keeping with the figuration of the poem, there are things “leftover” after one has pinpointed his language method. Thus, carrying out a potentially additive process I will assess the ethnic implications of the poem for He Xiaozhu’s identity and cultural consciousness.

LEFTOVER AFTER THE “POETRY”

From his sorcerous poetry to Non-ism, He Xiaozhu went through a subtractive process that entirely cut out his sorcerous style which also contained ethnic elements. This ethnic style was contributed to by his Miao ethnic identity and the Ba cultural sphere where he grew up (and sometimes both). Thus, the disappearance of his sorcerous style was seen

¹¹⁹ He, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo*. Appendix B, 140.

by critics as his abandonment of his ethnic cultural heritage caused by his desire to become an avant-garde poet. Conversely, He Xiaozhu emphatically denies that his original intention was anything but deconstructing language, and claims that the ethnic mysticism in his sorcerous poetry was mainly influenced by the critics of that period. He believes he grew out of sorcerous poetry after joining Not-Not. As a conjunction of styles, “[Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels](#)” provides a revealing entry point into the nature of He Xiaozhu’s ethnic identity and consciousness.

In the meta-lingual poetics of “Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels”, three main points can be easily reaped: the process of a hybrid leftover, margin between language and poem, and importance of the signified in figurative language. These three issues are the main aspects in which He Xiaozhu expresses his ethnicity in his poetry, although he claims that his ethnicity only plays an “unconscious” or “unintentional” role in his poetry.¹²⁰ However, because “Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels” is an early poem he admits there was a greater inclusion of ethnic consciousness. “I am not Han, and am also distant from my own ethnicity/” (52) directly states an ethnic perception. It firmly suggests a strong negation of a Han association. However, the line continues by visually stretching the distance between the poet and his “own ethnicity”. In other words, he is definitely not Han and does not have easy access to his own “native” ethnicity, which is also never inscribed in the poem as either Miao or Ba. This leaves his identity to the silence of the poem. Furthermore, the speaker says, “I don’t understand my mother tongue, those songs/ in the Han language are only ever guests/” (53-54). Ironically, the

¹²⁰ “[Internet Chat with He Xiaozhu on March 6, 2005](#)” in Appendix B, 165.

speaker still claims his “mother tongue” as his own, though he does not understand; negating the native sense of a “mother tongue”. However, reverting to the original meanings of both “mother” and “tongue” (the same in both Chinese *mutu* 母语 and English) the term has the sense of a language that nurtures. Thus, the speaker is literally nurtured by a mother he does not understand. In returning to the second half of the line, another association is formed between “songs” (a folk/ethnic type of poetry) and being a “guest” in the “Han language”. Again, irony envelops the line as the “mother tongue’s songs” (not understood by the speaker) are only “guests in the Han language” (a similar position to the speaker), while He Xiaozhu’s own first language of poetry is of course this same Han language. A foreigner to his “mother tongue” and a “guest” in his native language, He Xiaozhu is constituting an identity of refracted multiplicities. This a poet who wishes to write the “songs” of a “mother tongue”, i.e. a meta-language, but cannot understand it except through the flawed language of poetry: the Han language, which then also exercises a translation of the poet into a “guest”. He Xiaozhu is describing the leftover nature of his identity as he is caught between fractured cultural heritages. He is the hybrid leftover of a ethnic literary collision.

It is the struggle to produce undiluted poetry that He Xiaozhu describes in his “Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels”. True to the nature of words, He Xiaozhu uses two concise similes at the end of the first section that simply and tangibly contrast with the ineffectiveness of the language above. In an ironic parallel, the “feathers” and the “leaf” (9-10) as figurative language are linguistically more effective than the clumsy “conversational” tone of the beginning half with its repetition of the dangling pronoun

“that”(3,5). This paralleling of tones also exhibits the distance language faces from its signified sources: the feather and leaf. According to He Xiaozhu, language is the tool of poetry, but is also its greatest limitation as the poet can never speak the meta-language. Abstractly, this becomes a meta-language which the poet both is spoken through and listens to in an internal, innate, and dreamlike language, “because after falling asleep language becomes cluttered/ difficult to control and command/” (25-26). Beyond a theory of poetic language, however, this dichotomy fundamentally schematizes He Xiaozhu’s ideological perspective: a poet linguistically, geographically, and culturally on the periphery. He is marginalized in Chinese literature by living in Chengdu, and by being officially Miao. Although he is a hybrid leftover, he also pursues an oblique positionality to the Chinese cultural center.

In the poem “Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels”, two sections exhibit He Xiaozhu’s perception of his relationship with the Han language and by association the Han center. In “Chinese class” (11) “munching literature gnawing words, that starving look of/ swallowing the jujube and even its pit/” (14-15), the speaker is describing both his appetite for the Han language as well as precluding the toll it would extract on him. “Only now do I know that/ from early on language was like a sharp blade/ Cutting up my heart/ never to be mended again/” (16-19). In his now mature years (“After all these years” [1]), the poet realizes the cost he paid for his appetite as the “language” enacted an act of violence on his “heart”; the damage is irreversible. He Xiaozhu is accentuating that something is lost in the process of being pulled into the Han language sphere, including its culture. As the Chinese in these lines denotes a written language (“Chinese

class” literally ‘literature’ class) rather than a spoken one, He Xiaozhu is implying that the traditionally glorified sign of civilization, Chinese characters, tarnished his natural language ability, alluding to the sensitivity lost to indoctrinization by society. Therefore, he pursues the remnants of the natural language state in the borderlands. Further on, He Xiaozhu again returns to childhood but this time it is the speaker that practices violence on the Han language by “break[ing] up Chinese characters” (50) looking for “hidden secrets” in those “meaningless brush strokes” (51). Attempting to rediscover his lost language, the speaker searches for the deeper meanings. However, He Xiaozhu inscribes them as “meaningless”; only facades of meaning. The child is lost to the assault of the Han language, but He Xiaozhu also demonstrates his alternative poetic practice by denying the monopoly of the Han language. He recognizes the destructive linguistic hegemony and aligns himself in the ideological periphery.

What does the periphery look like? He Xiaozhu’s simplest but also most effective method of displaying his difference is by using signs of the details to frame the locality of his ethnicity. Through the practice of the poem, the signified “birds” (9), “mulberry trees” (10), “cows” (20), “fresh grass” (22), “apples” (27), “apple trees” (28), etc. are pointedly contrasted with the empty words of the preceding lines. He Xiaozhu often employs these elements in the figurative device of a simile, which is innately self-reflexive because of its clear designation by the words “like” or “as”, unlike the hidden form of a metaphor. The simile wishes the reader to see the association that is being made and the difference between the juxtaposed signs. Obviously, these elements are not usually references to specific ethnic environments, but they literally frame a setting,

predominantly rural, that grounds the poem. For instance, in the fourth section the “fish” (38) is an elusive abstract companion of the speaker which provides a connection to the natural environment. By its “swishing” movement (40), the speaker arrives at the “headwaters”, the one true destination in the poem that doubles as an authentic source. However, the “source” quickly disappears as “leftover sounds” (47). Unlike sentimental minority writers who pursue a sense of ethnic authenticity (Romantic hyperbole) in their work, He Xiaozhu creates a simplistic but dramatic locality predicated by its immediacy and refracted through meta-lingual poetics. At the end of “Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels”, for instance, He Xiaozhu invokes “whirling maple leaves” (56) as his final metaphor. By concluding this section which accentuated the issue of ethnic identity with “listening” to the “maple leaves in my heart”, he inscribe the meta-lingual source of his ethnic voice. Maple trees are a prominent feature of the usually mountainous Miao areas and are a revered culture symbol because they serve as the progenitor of mankind in some Miao creation myths.¹²¹ Thus, even though his focus is on his poetic practice with language, He Xiaozhu still claims a connection to his ethnicity, and furthermore inscribes it as the source (meta-language) of his poetic practice. The “whirling” of the leaves summates the allusion well by making it blurred and ephemeral; the leftover sounds and peels of ethnic vision.

He Xiaozhu claims that his focus in poetry is only language, and further extricates this ideology by comparing his poetry writing to a “game” in his preface.¹²² Poetry writing to him is a language “game” that has its rules, and therefore he as a poet just

¹²¹ Tian, Gang, Su, and Shi, eds., *Miaozu wenxue shi*, 53-57.

¹²² He, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo*. “[Methods of Addition and Subtraction](#)” in Appendix B, 135. Chinese, 138.

plays within those boundaries. He Xiaozhu's meta-lingual practice is apparent as a "game" in his poetry. However, in every "game" there are winners and losers, and ultimately things at stake. It is this latent and intrinsic aspect of He Xiaozhu's poetry that completes the poetic substance; the maple leaves though hidden away in his heart, represent the ethnic drive that inscribes his poetic voice.

Beyond "Sorcery": "Non" Poetry of Local Details

From an eccentric young man devoted to his own Otherness to an avant-garde poet, He Xiaozhu has experienced some dramatic shifts in his poetic style and voice. The sorcerous poetry of his younger years grew into a subtractive poetry of his later years linguistically dissipating the sorcerous mist that he had cast in his earlier poems. He is no longer writing a poetry that yearns to cling to an unknowable mother tongue, but attempts to reach beyond the traditional Han cultural poetics, and even beyond himself, to portray local (and ethnic) sites of poetry.

WRITING THE NON-ETHNIC

Since the end of the 80s, He Xiaozhu's poetry has altered dramatically in both style and content primarily under the influence of Non-ism. The subjects and themes of his poetry are generally unadorned and straightforward often making them seem obscure and elusive. However, his subtractive purpose predicates the simplicity and scarcity in his

so-called “non-poems”, emphasizing the escape from the semantics of traditional poetic language. Particularly after 1994 and his “non-self” emphasis, He Xiaozhu’s poetry has lost much of its figurative language creating an emphasis on the “things” of a poem. An additional loss in this process is the ethnic (specifically Miao) imagery and symbols in his poetry. This extends even to his previous exploration of identity that was so prominent in poems like “Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels”. He Xiaozhu is no longer writing “ethnic poetry”, or poetry directly related to Miao culture and his own struggle with his ethnic identity. His own relationship to Miao culture and ethnicity in China is distant at best. Therefore, it may seem a natural separation because of an originally false claim. Yet, after taking into account Non-ism’s influence on He Xiaozhu, his new poems also become instances of writing non-ethnicity. This means writing a poetry that on the surface displays the absence of ethnic qualifiers, but through “meta-” language and style the poetry’s purpose acts upon its readers. The ethnic component primarily exists after the poem in the leftover space of He Xiaozhu’s poetic voice.

How does one write a non-ethnic poetry without entirely negating ethnicity? The question, however, is not actually one of negation but rather absence as it is necessary to invoke the presence of something before it can be negated. Therefore, leaving out ethnic as well as other figurative elements actually creates the possibility of their existence in the oblique angle of a poetry that is “non-poetry”. Stated more succinctly, He Xiaozhu is attempting to un-write the poem as he writes the words to the page. His poetry is an attempt to escape the semantics of the term “poetry” as well as its language: a

“supra-semantics” in his words.¹²³ Yet, the words on the page are in the end still called “poetry” with all possible semantic deconstructions and stratifications included. In the same vein, He Xiaozhu’s ethnicity is still apart of his poetry; at times hidden, and others semantically inconsequential yet integrated into the purpose of his poetry.

He Xiaozhu accomplishes his reforming of poetry through a discursive narrative voice and the privileging of subjects over observers (including the readership). His poem “Whose Cow is This” is a prime example of a subject (the cow) encompassing the poem rather than the poem encompassing the subject.¹²⁴

Whose Cow is This

Down along the small road
came a cow
In the distance followed
a person
5 Whose cow is this?
asked a passerby
The person following in the distance
yelled out in reply
It’s the Xie family cow
10 Oh, we had a look at the Xie family cow
It had already gone up the road
A smallish heifer

The poem’s title is a question that immediately calls attention to the nature of the “cow”; how is the cow defined? The assumption behind this question in the poem is that the cow can only be defined by association with “a person” (4). However, the poem works to display the “distance” of this association which culminates in the existence of the real world literally beyond the view of the poem. He Xiaozhu shows the reader

¹²³ He, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo*. “Methods of Addition and Subtraction” in Appendix B, p. 135. Chinese, 137.

¹²⁴ Ibid. Appendix B, 144.

through this process that the poem comes after the cow; a leftover impression of the cow's real existence. Furthermore, the other characters of the poem, the "person", "passerby" (6), and the eventual "we"(10), are all left behind as they attempt to pin the cow down by defining it. This also includes a discursive narrative voice that literally speaks in two voices in lines 5 and 9, and manifests the speakers only vaguely. The narration is constantly subjugated to the movement in the poem predicated by the cow. Ultimately, this challenges the authority of the narrator to observe the cow as the observatory act is diffused between several incoherent speakers that can only solidify into the answer of the title's question, "It's the Xie family cow/" (9), after being "yelled" (8) from afar. It is at this moment that the third person pronoun "we" finally appears in the poem, which semantically extends to the reader. Yet, as the power of "our" defining gaze attempts to turn on the cow, "It had already gone up the road/" (11). The subject of the cow is the privileged element in the poem that resists attempts at being possessed by the observers of the poem. But, by the last line there is approximation of imbuing the poem with the essence of the cow, "A smallish heifer" (12). Although not quite as effectively ironic as the original Chinese which reads literally "a not big [de] yellow cow" (a negation and addition to the original "cow"), this last line works to summate the narrator's observations with the cow's presence, which finally diminutively gives meaning to the poem.

Short yet effective, this poem calls for a more concerted look at the accomplishments of He Xiaozhu's words. He recalibrates the Han language and ideas of poetics through a concise imagery and diffusion of narrative observatory power. As a

result, his poetry reconstitutes the relationships between language, subjects, and reader. Yet, how does this process relate to He Xiaozhu's ethnicity; his ethnic culture and identity? Equating the rural setting with ethnicity is of course a hyperbolic suggestion that far exceeds He Xiaozhu's original purpose of concision in the semantics of poetry. However, in another thematically similar poem, "Not one Cow, but a Herd", the privileging of the subject expands beyond the "cow" to their "peasant" (2) owners.¹²⁵ The poem presents the dissonance between the "assistant country magistrate" (8), "reporters" (10) and the "peasants'" "cows" which is similar to the issue of exploitation by authority in ethnic regions. In a more clear case of authority (observer) over subjecthood, the peasants in the poem want to manifest their cows by having the pictures taken, yet "The assistant country magistrate said, 'Enough, enough/ don't bring anymore/ The reporters have no more film'/" (8-10). Similar to "Whose Cow is This", the poem works to privilege the subjects' manifestation in the last lines of the poem, "But the peasants still brought out every cow/ They all wanted to have their cow's/ picture taken/" (11-13). Although not with film, the poem still accomplishes the "peasants'" desire; despite the restriction of authority, the cows are the last image in the poem. Furthermore, this poem incorporates a unique conversational style that is intrinsically tied to "peasants" and their words. Therefore, the poem starts with the rhetorical line, "That was really just like this/" (1) as well as the news spreading among the peasants by word of mouth (4). The oral nature of the poem further satirizes the picture taken of the reporters, which are again defined as the inclusive "we" (7). The

¹²⁵ He, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo*. Appendix B, 145.

poem, ultimately, gives voice to the peasants and their “herd” by configuring the dynamics of authority and minor voices.

The two “Cow” poems are good examples of He Xiaozhu’s ability to construct poetry that is innately/organically tied to the subjects of the poems. The poems ethnic sentiment, however, is lacking besides oblique ethnographic displays. But his process of poetry reveals an ability to create qualities that are intrinsically ethnic in their reforming of a dominant language and poetic conception towards the privileging of the subject; the same exploited role of the exotified Other that the minority *minzu* often play in the poetry of the Han.

He Xiaozhu does sometimes write directly about his ethnic perceptions in his later poetry. One of his later poems that deals with “minority literature” in China is also one that satirizes the whole institution. The poem called “[Conch Gorge Writing Conference](#)” is a narrative poem about a trip through the mountains after a minority literature conference.¹²⁶ As mentioned in the introduction to this section, He Xiaozhu was regularly involved in minority literature events in his earlier years, though this poem is not in the style of that time. In a conversational tone, the poem outlines in almost mundane detail the speaker’s journey through the mountains. Ironically, when the “travel agent” (9) (another authority figure) asks the minority writers including the speaker to name a mountain, “After a long while/ We still couldn’t think of a good name/” (13-14). The impotence of the poetic voices of the minority writers clashes with the purpose of the minority literature conference: to produce poetic expressions of ethnicity. In contrast,

¹²⁶ He, *6 ge dongci, huo pingguo*. Appendix B, 146.

the speaker invokes a deeply poetic moment (22) not associated with the minority writers or minority ethnic identity, but rather a “. . . Japanese couple/ wearing raingear/” (18-19). The “goal” (25) of the journey, however, is a “coagulated falls” (30) which produces the imagery of concentrated poetic potential. This concentrated potential is predicated by the Gongga mountain, again a subject privileged over the observer. In addition, the Conch Gorge and the Gongga mountain are in an area inhabited by ethnic Tibetans and other ethnic minorities. The natural and ethnic imagery of the Gongga mountain literally dominates the view of the poem and the speakers search for poetic potential.

He Xiaozhu has moved away from his sorcerous poetry and its ethnic connotations, yet with a poem like “Conch Gorge Writing Conference”, he is further removing himself from that project by satirizing its poetic impotency. Although clearly an ethnic poem, “Conch Gorge Writing Conference” shows the ironic dilemma He Xiaozhu perceives in writing an ethnic poetry that is true to its poetic value. In this sense, the two “Cow” poems are vibrantly more poetic than the rambling tone of “Conch Gorge”. However, it is still only possible to say that He Xiaozhu is implicitly ethnic; an element that adds to his poetic view, yet is often absent from his poetry.

POETIC IMPLICATIONS OF NON-ETHNICITY

The poetry of He Xiaozhu’s “new composition” is a definite break with his earlier ethnic pieces. But this does not predicate his complete break with a desire and practice of reorienting Chinese poetry through ethnic-valued perceptions. His skill in language deconstruction is arguably a consequence of his ethnic background. A native speaker and

writer of Han Chinese, He Xiaozhu is still a metaphoric guest to this language. Yet, this also does not mean he has an unproblematic view of identity and ethnic expression. A poem with a Tibetan theme sheds a discursive light on He Xiaozhu's cultural perceptions.

Listening to Zhang Yuguang Talk about Tibet in Kunming¹²⁷

Zhang Yuguang used to be the editor of *Tibetan Literature*

I ran into him in Kunming

He invited me to play tennis, and invited me
to have Yunnan food

5 Zhang Yuguang lived in Tibet for five years

He says that in December

Lhasa's sun is still quite fierce

because the atmosphere is thin there

Finally, he tells me

10 that many Sichuanese have opened restaurants there

We start to laugh because

in Lhasa you can speak Sichuanese wherever you go

Similar to Woese's piece "Don't Photo", this poem approaches the same sharp issue of speaking Sichuanese in Lhasa, but with very different results. *Tibetan Literature*, ironically, is also the journal where Woese was previously employed before her book was banned.

Although nothing like Woese's re-enacting the language of "exile" on the Han readership, He Xiaozhu does play with the dissociative process of language being stretched over several spatio-temporal realms: Tibet, Yunnan, Sichuan. The final two lines press the question of a Lhasa which speaks Sichuanese; is this the Lhasa of December (6) with a "fierce sun" (7), the same Lhasa associated with *Tibetan Literature*?

Yet, the act of laughing lightheartedly about the changing patterns of language, is vastly

¹²⁷ He, 6 *ge dongci, huo pingguo*. "Listening to Zhang Yuguang Talk about Tibet in Kunming" in Appendix B, 147.

different from Woese's use of the Sichuanese phrase "You've eaten too much!" to speak back.

He Xiaozhu's ethnic expression is ultimately implicit rather than active. The leftover nature of He Xiaozhu's poetry embodies his own poetic detachment from the direct championing of an ethnic voice.¹²⁸ His language is one caught in-between; one of amalgamation, not of fissures. Woese, for her part, sees He Xiaozhu as not a true "ethnic poet" because of his abandonment of active ethnic expression.¹²⁹ She goes as far to say that ethnic writers should ultimately write in their "native" language, though she herself currently does not have that ability.

These criticisms of He Xiaozhu, however, fail to recognize the hybrid nature of his identity and poetic expression. Caught in the debate of "authentic" cultural sources, critiques in China have been unable to appreciate the multifaceted nature of his poetic practice which he brilliantly tropes in the poetics of leftovers. He has never claimed he was "pure" and instead works to inscribe the essence of localized "things" by disrupting cultural semantics and producing a leftover space for poetics. In China, He Xiaozhu represents a new kind of Chinese language not because he adds ethnic material to the language or specifically a Miao vision, but because he so masterfully reforms the language with the poetics of difference.

¹²⁸ He Xiaozhu expressed to the author that writing about one's ethnicity can often be exploitive, thus he chooses not to. See "[Internet Chat with He Xiaozhu on March 6, 2005](#)" in Appendix B, 167.

¹²⁹ Woese told this to the author in an email.

Jimu Langge 吉木狼格: a Yi tropes the Chinese Nation

The poet Jimu Langge is a Yi (Nuosu subgroup) from Ganluo county of the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in southern Sichuan. The Yi are a widely dispersed minority *minzu* in several provinces in the southwest of China with a total population of over 6 million. The Nuosu are the largest subgroup and are conceived as the traditional center of Yi culture primarily because of their isolation until the founding of the PRC in the 1950s. Born in 1963, Jimu started writing poetry at the age of twenty and gained recognition as a poet with his inclusion in the avant-garde group “Not-Not” (非非 *feifei*) in Chengdu.

Jimu Langge grew up in the Liangshan that had opened up to the outside world. Predicated by the spread of the Han language, this transition included education and greater opportunities for Yi children to access the modern, dominant culture. As a son of a government official, Jimu was in-between these intersecting and colliding cultural worlds. Although he was raised with the Yi (specifically Nuosu) language, he was also from an early age initiated into the Han language, and by his own account it is now his dominant language.

I am a Yi but my main language is Han – in my dreams I think in Han. This is because in Liangshan villages Yi language is dominant and in places that are farther away than that, like in the mountains, there is only Yi language. However, in the Liangshan government offices the two languages exist side by side, but Han is dominant – the state's policies are dominant.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Jimu Langge 吉木狼格, “Mengzhong de yuyan” (2004 [cited June 8, 2006]); available from <http://jimulangge.blogchina.com/blog/368109.html>. Appendix C, 177. Chinese, 178.

This excerpt from Jimu's blog entry entitled "[The Language of Dreams](#)" highlights the collision of forces and meanings that permeate his poetry in the Han language. He is at once distant from the isolated Yi language, yet also recognizes the dominance of Han as a language of modernity, specifically the "state". Therefore, his poetry is characterized by a style and vision that reach beyond the apparent Han characters on the page.

For me, Han is dominant but I don't need the customary "translation" and instead directly enter the Yi world. Actually, it seems there is a path that I freely use to come and go. I am in the Han language, yet I have never left Yi.¹³¹

In his book *Canlan* 灿烂 (Splendor), the poet Yang Li 杨黎, one of the founders of the poetry group Not-Not and friend of Jimu Langge, comments on Jimu's special sensitivity to language and ability to surpass the traditional forms of Chinese poetry.¹³² As the Not-Not group's original ambition was to divorce poetry from a stagnant tradition and return it to its source: authentic language, Jimu's fresh and unique poetry easily fit in. However, this also points to another important characteristic: his fluency in the Han language and culture that allows him to both communicate and integrate into the highly rhetorical world of modern Chinese poetry. One of the clearest signs of this is his previous usage of the Han name Ma Xiaoming 马小明 among his poet peers. When his poetic career was not certain, Jimu identified himself with this Hanified name. Yet, as he matured as a poet and secured his place as one of the main contributors to Not-Not he made the significant switch to his Yi name Jimu Langge. Although both of these names are still written in Han characters, Jimu Langge is a Han transliteration of his Yi name

¹³¹ Jimu, "Mengzhong de yuyan." Appendix C, 176. Chinese, 178.

¹³² Yang, *Canlan*, 519-29.

and therefore is obviously non-Han. A minor change like this has the great effect of accentuating his difference as a writer to the readership of the cultural center. As observed by Yang Li, Jimu Langge or Ma Xiaoming makes no difference to him, yet is undeniably part of Jimu's relationship to the Han language and ultimately the Han culture.

The significance of Jimu Langge's poetry lies in the same vein: hybridity that highlights difference in subtle but distinct (dis)associations. For Jimu, the process of language is not just an exercise in the succulent expression of words, but is actually a translation between worlds and their ideas. Therefore, though situated in the Han language and its framework, the meanings and conceptions of his Chinese poetry stretches the language into new associations and dynamic collisions. The collisions of Jimu's poetry often take the form of paraded ironies that reflect the absurdity of language's tendency to define. In addition, his poetry often reveals a specific sensitivity to positionality and constant inter-references of a hybrid universe. This includes his own relationship to his poetry, a Yi writing in Han, but also extends to the greater tensions between the Chinese nation, his ethnic group, and the world beyond. A local to global journey, his poetry expresses the dynamic and conflicted process of modernization centered in the local and driven to the global through the modern nation.

Jimu Langge's poetry is only on occasion directly related to ethnic themes, and even then is quite distant from the exotic and sentimental style that ethnic poetry often employs; the Romantic hyperbole.¹³³ Jimu's poetry is, instead, written in the more

¹³³ Siemerling, *The new North American Studies*, 65.

conversational and minimalist tone that characterizes the avant-garde style of Not-Not poetry, while ethnic difference reflects the implications behind the words. In accordance with his poetics, Jimu Langge has rarely participated in the government sponsored minority literature programs nor has he ever received any kind of award from that institution. His recognition has instead entirely come from his participation in the Not-Not group, and therefore he is generally conceived as just an avant-garde “Chinese” poet; swept into the larger mainstream (Han) conception of a poet. Although Jimu has generally been ignored among Chinese critiques except for the occasional lip-service for his participation in Not-Not, recently the critic Xiao Weisheng took notice of Jimu’s unique usage of language.¹³⁴ However, in this article Xiao Weisheng also propagates the simplistic conception of minority poet’s as either “ethnic” and thus exotic and sentimental or “modern” and therefore Hanified. He states that although Jimu Langge is an ethnic poet, his ethnicity is entirely absent in his poetry and therefore assumes he can only be analyzed as an avant-garde poet.

Jimu Langge’s greatest achievement is this very dynamism that places him between the two categories of minority and avant-garde poet. Therefore, to appreciate the full potential of his poetry it is essential to focus on the play and tension between these aspects: the hybrid struggle. But this is also not a hybrid of equals. Jimu’s poetry develops these dynamics as a struggle between unequal parties; the struggle that accentuates a privileging and centeredness of a minor voice and worldview in contention with both national and global forces. In addition, he shows a startling self-referentiality that

¹³⁴ Xiao, “Mingsi moxiang de shaoshu minzu shiren Jimu Langge.”

parodies his own tension with the poetic process and entrapment in the modernizing trajectory of the Han language.

Leaving Malayida, the world is developing; humanity is advancing, including construction and environmental protection, transportation and communication industries. In the quest for fortune, people have increasingly sped forward. Collisions are impossible to avoid, as is competition and rivalry, as also is rashness. Society is like an enticingly made bed. Can one not be anxious?

Yet, I believe that poetry has a kind of force, a force of the people but different from them. It can be infinitely big but also infinitely small. I read a good poem and it makes me feel happy, moves me. When my spirit and inner-workings are rattled, it gives me solitude and peace.

I drink with my friends who don't write poetry, and a new one among them (I don't know if he writes poetry or not) looking blankly asked me, "What is poetry?" If I had said a poem is just a poem that's bullshit. If I had said poetry is inside a poem that's the alcohol talking. But if I had said that poetry is of the people, or even in the flower of the people, that already doesn't seem like speech; it's already metaphoric, allusive, and symbolic.

While people from Xichang ponder over how to express themselves, Malayida preserves a long held brevity. Only things that follow the natural way Malayida music was inherited will continue down from one generation to the next.¹³⁵

In this section from his [Preface](#) to his recent (and only) poetry collection, *The Silent Revolver*, Jimu outlines his perspectives on both poetry and his ethnicity. At the end of the piece, Malayida (a small village in Liangshan) as a site of Yi cultural preservation serves as the penultimate model for both people and poetry in combating the pervasive forces of development and competition. Although Jimu Langge is a poet that strives to write the meaningful words of “solitude and peace” in a “rattled” world, he pales his abilities in comparison to the “long held brevity” of a Yi cultural preserve.

Jimu Langge is an ethnic avant-garde poet in the modern age of the Han language

¹³⁵ Jimu Langge 吉木狼格, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002). Appendix C, 174-174. Chinese, 175.

and global interchange. This includes the dynamics of hybrid play and tension and the privileging of the local/ethnic. To comprehend the meanings of these intersections/collisions, it is necessary to concentrate on three different aspects of his poetry: avant-garde poetics and positionality, ethnic centeredness and the poetics of place, and (dis)association with Han culture and the Chinese nation.

Among the Avant-garde: Poetics and Positionality

As said above, Jimu Langge gained recognition as a poet through his contributions to the avant-garde poetry group Not-Not. His style, therefore, was highly influenced by their deconstructive impetus with language, and like many of the other Not-Not poets, his tone is often conversational and unadorned. This is a language that attempts to capture the substance of a moment yet through irony create new meanings within the play of words. It is an associative process where words are paired and parodied through the clashes of imagery and sign.

Rhyming is an Addiction¹³⁶

Luckily I only smoke,
don't rhyme
I will by no means say
Eeny, meeny, miney, moe
5 Catch a tiger by the toe
The rhyme that this knife cuts is so excessive
No matter if its eeny or miney
The tiger is the most miserable, loosing its toe
it is left with a moe

¹³⁶ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. “Rhyming is an Addiction” in Appendix B, 183.

In this poem entitled “Rhyming is an Addiction”, Jimu Langge parodies the poetics of rhyme of many modern poets by comparing it to a nursery rhyme and the “excessive” process that translates the tiger into an absurdity. In the original Chinese this is a direct process as the tiger (*laohu* 老虎) is transformed into the nonsense “old five” (*lao wu* 老五) because of their association in the rhyming scheme. This clash of association between the tiger, as the signified, and its abstract signifier, *laohu*, and consequent meaningless because of this associative process reflects the sensitivity Jimu gives to the translative power of language (sign) in poetry. His poetry is characterized by images that are both immediate and tangible, yet also are troped into the meaning of the poem. For instance, in the trope of a simile Jimu associates his poetic aims with the “chaos” of water, “I want to make my language/ flow like water/” (10-12). The simile is a distinct device in his hands because he uses it to both accentuate language’s distance from the signified by separating the two with the preposition “like”, and associating them as sign and referent in the parallel structure of the sentence. Jimu’s poetic language is literally reflected in the water while also preserving each individual aspect’s innate composition: water is still just water and language is still just language yet they are now associated. It is this kind of positionality of images in his poetry that produces the significance of his poetics.

Jimu Langge narrates the in-between-ness that language exercises in culture and its individual producers. The speaker-self of his poetry often plays the main role in this discursive pairing. Lost in the words and translated by them, the speaker is also unable to determine his position in reference to language and the cultures producing them. “When

not in culture/ where am I?/ This question actually has no answer/ I'm in myself, this amounts to what?/" (1-4). These four lines of interrogatives from the beginning of the poem "[When I'm in Culture](#)" immediately blurs the boundaries between "I" and "culture".¹³⁷ Is it the self that exists within culture or the culture that exists within the self? Jimu's poetics of position is shown by the rhetorical melding of the individual's voice (the one asking the questions) and the culture that provides the words. Bound together, the speaker is troped metaphorically "Opposite culture/" (15) in the reflection of a mirror. Yet, the speaker is not entirely lost as the mirror is "smashed" and he cannot "follow into the pieces" (17). He cannot follow into the scattered signs of words. Although the speaker wishes to "denounce" culture, this disruptive process only produces the eventual, "I just denounce myself/" (22). Jimu Langge's positioning of things within things connected by "reflections" illustrates his own relationship to his poetry and its words. The speaker's wishes to "denounce" culture are ultimately turned on the self; as one is within culture, "See, what is worth opposing in this world/ is already very little/" (25-26). Jimu is demonstrating the need to recognize the distance between self and culture and to fight its translative processes, yet the self is at the same time a product of culture. Jimu shows that poetry is the inscription of self/cultural production.

In taking this concept of positionality beyond the processes of figurative language, Jimu Langge also gives voice to a geographically "positioned" poetics. His poem "[Friends from the Lowlands](#)" moves away from an abstract play on language to tangible

¹³⁷ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 187.

“difference” rooted in place, specifically the mountains or the lowlands.¹³⁸

Friends from the Lowlands

I was born in the mountains,
grew up in the mountains

I think that one's environment is really important
as it guides my thinking
5 and emotions, virtues and shortcomings
When my lowland friends and I
are together, I don't recognize
how I am different from them
This goes against my point of view that
10 a fish is a fish, and a bird is a bird
Only crazy people and some poets
can make a fish into a bird
and a bird into a fish

The speaker of the poem takes “environment” as paramount and uses this concept as the basis for narrating his position in relation to his “lowland friends”. By paroding the ability of poets to “. . . make a fish into a bird/ and a bird into a fish/” (12-13), Jimu is again both accentuating the signified of words and also describing their translation through the play of language. As the poet of this poem, he is further inscribing his own poetic process of blending these two signs; is there a difference between fish and birds in poetry, high and lowlands in friends?

However, the imagery of the poem associates the speaker and his friends in a common society and interactions. Jimu in a sense is contrasting his own simplistic use of “high” and “low” environments and their creation of perception with the lack of difference in a common life of shared social experience, especially in drinking (23-25).

Each sign of language is not as rooted in “environment” as one might suspect, and

¹³⁸ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 184.

drinking (like poetry) migrates those meanings. The poetic process that plays on language (and reflects the world) is a shared experience. Although at the end of the poem the speaker cannot find a difference except for “I try to dig up differences/ and they probably never would/” (34-35), Jimu is making an important emphasis on his poetic language of difference. One who is aware of difference, though also migrated into common language, is able to maintain a distinct perception of poetry and specifically the relationships of things; association. In this sense Jimu Langge’s poetry can be seen as a poetry of divided associations, a poetry of accentuated distinctions.

In a world of difference, Jimu uses the positioning of both language and place to accentuate a distinct perception in poetry. The speakers of his poems are often doubly contained within the common (language, culture, society) and distinct categories of difference (ethnicity, environment). Although they are trapped in this hybrid tension of dual positions, they also perform a retranslation of traditional conceptions by pursuing a poetics of difference. Jimu uses the voice of irony coupled with authority to migrate signs away from traditional, stagnant poetic meaning and towards a process of reconception.

“[Xichang’s Moon](#)” is a fine example of being positioned in poetic difference.¹³⁹ The moon is a classic topic of Chinese poetry, symbolizing feminine beauty, nostalgia, etc., and continues to be an oft serenaded subject in modern Chinese poetry. By initially placing the moon in Xichang, Jimu is already giving it a distinction as Xichang is the capital of the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture. This is not just the Han moon, yet

¹³⁹ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 185.

Jimu proceeds to parody the traditional Han diction at the beginning of the poem. “If I say Xichang’s moon/ is like a harlot/ Respectable gentleman will call me a hooligan/” (1-3). By contrasting words like “harlot” and “respectable gentleman”, Jimu is deliberately attempting to tarnish the poetic schema of the moon. While still following the traditional form by referencing the moon’s beauty and size, he also interrupts the poetic flow by adding an aside “(sitting is ok too)” (8). In the last two lines, his emphasis makes the definitive claim on this moon, “Xichang’s moon isn’t like anything/ It’s just really big/” (11-12). Undoing the traditional poetic process of moon writing, Jimu skews the words in a sense back down to earth, and literally the earth of Xichang. Although following a traditional Chinese form (Han), he strips the poem of its semantic limitation and additionally centers it in an ethnic locality. Jimu Langge’s poetry expresses his ideas of difference often through an ethnically centered poetics of place.

Ethnic Centeredness: The Poetics of Place

Jimu Langge is a Yi writing in Han, thus though his poetics fit into the disruptive practice of avant-garde Chinese poetry, it also often centers meaning in a Yi vision behind the poetry. This process specifically privileges the Yi cultural place as the site of meaning in the poetry. The speaker and even the readers are relegated to the role of outside observers, and even at times are consumed by the place itself. In the most representative poem of this process “[The Coming of the Bimo](#)”, Jimu writes the traditional religious

practices of the Yi.¹⁴⁰ A Bimo is a traditional male religious figure in Yi culture who orates a number of religious ceremonies such as healing, marriages, funerals, etc. “When feeling jinxed/ I go invite the Bimo/” (1-2).¹⁴¹ The speaker in the first two lines summates the simplicity of his motivation for calling the Bimo. With a general connection to superstition, “jinxed”, the speaker intones a focus on the process of the ritual rather than its meaning. In addition, the ritual is described in a conversational language that maintains the accessibility of an outside audience. “Actually, people and sheep are different/ People in a lifetime, have to experience many times/ this spectacle/ but sheep only have one chance/ after which they will be slaughtered/” (14-18). This register of language leads the readership along through the processes of ritual: “leading of the lamb” (10), “recitation” (with a reference to black people’s singing for outside observers) (22-24), and “ringing of bells” (26-27). However, the register changes in the fifth stanza to a language of recitation, “The Bimo has come/ Ghosts and goblins will be subdued/ Man and beast will live in harmony/” (30-32), which acts as a sudden pronouncement of the Bimo’s potency. This rhetorical device serves to mark the translative process that the poem is actually playing on the readership. The last stanza summates:

The famous Bimos are all very busy
In other villages
35 the same sound
resonates with the serenity of the evening
Even if outside cultures
are like the cows and sheep at nightfall

¹⁴⁰ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 188.

¹⁴¹ See Stevan Harrell, ed., *Perspectives on the Yi of Southwest China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Li, ed., *Yizu wenxue shi*, 10.

entering the mountain villages in waves

Jimu writes this poem as centered in the Yi “villages” and the poetic power of the Bimos, “Even if outside cultures/ are like cows and sheep at nightfall/ entering the mountain villages in waves/” (36-37). In a skillful trope, Jimu Langge suddenly translates the readership into the “sheep” which are “slaughtered” and consumed by the villagers. In the modern era, interest in superstitious rituals of the Yi by “outside cultures” is predicated by both an attraction to the exotic and the disdain of backward cultures. However, this poem effectively tricks/tropes the outside readers to participate in the translative practice of the poem. In spite of their imagined superiority and knowledge, the continued popularity of the Bimo in the present day still has the power to turn the outside readers into passive “sheep”. Jimu thus masterfully centers this poem in a Yi cultural place, which is prosperous and competitive with the outside world.

Jimu turns the tables on poetic description and the power to inscribe meaning by constructing a poetry of a Yi world-view. Although the readers might not initially realize the process, the centering in Yi literally tropes their outsideness. In another poem, “[Dahuozhali](#)”, Jimu contrasts the artificiality of a modern pop-song with a vibrant traditional Yi folksong of the title.¹⁴² This contrast is deliberately constructed with reference to place as the speaker hears the pop-song in a car (a modern translative vehicle) (4-5) while on the road to Butuo (a place cited in his piece called “[Yi Festival of Fire](#)” as an authentic site of Yi culture) (2).¹⁴³ In a competition of modern and tradition, Jimu

¹⁴² Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 190.

¹⁴³ Jimu Langge 吉木狼格, “Huoba jie” (2004 [cited June 8, 2006]); available from <http://jimulangge.blogchina.com/blog/373912.html>. Appendix C, 180. Chinese, 181. This festival is also often rendered as the “Torch Festival”.

construes the pop-song as “spectacularly promoted”, while the folksong is “almost shouted” by “a Yi boy wearing traditional tights/” (9). Although the folksong “doesn’t have that melodic sweetness of the stage/” (20), it is still able to overcome the “promotion” of the stage. Jimu Langge again specifically centers the poem in the Yi place by using the natural surroundings of the Butuo highlands as the “promotion” (25), “accompaniment” (26), and “spotlights” (27). This trope of place allows Jimu to further center Yi culture within the powerful natural surroundings. Modern society pales in its competition with the world of Jimu’s ethnic poetics.

However, Jimu Langge does not only practice his ethnic poetics on outside cultures. In a voice of self-referentiality, he shows his own dilemma as a participant in the alienating process of modernity. Jimu’s speaker-self is caught in his own translativ process as his world is complicated by an outward trajectory predicated by his learning of the Han language. In a poem called “[Ganluo, A One-street Town](#)”, Jimu describes his own growing distance from his native place.¹⁴⁴ “After leaving Ganluo/ I’ve gone to many places/ But when I get the chance I always go back to Ganluo/” (1-3). The speaker’s conflicted identity surfaces in the initial contrasting imagery of “many places” he has gone versus the linear simplicity of a “one-street town” from “north to south” of the title. The speaker feels the absence of “settling in” (20) that occurred in the past when eating noodles among his acquaintances. However, the place of Ganluo is now inhabited by “cars” (8) (again a modern translativ vehicle), which chaotically disturb the “leaves silently laying” (19). As one that has traveled outside and now returns in those same

¹⁴⁴ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 192.

“cars”, the speaker is a contributor to the chaotic motion. The poetic process of the poem places the speaker as “one of the strangers” who can no longer discover the linear (one-street) rhythm of “ten years” before (22). In this unsettled imagery of native place, Jimu shows his own loss of centeredness in Yi culture, now only an occasional visitor. Along a similar theme, the poem “[October’s Sentimental Lines](#)” uses the nostalgic imagery of native place to trope the speaker-self’s inability to authentically connect to his native Yi place.¹⁴⁵

October’s Sentimental Lines

Returning to the native village
 Only then seeing the color of earth
 And the every-year return of the white cranes
 In the mood of reminiscing on the past, I look out
 5 On the opposite mountain
 Houses and fruit trees
 The road that is possible to see
 Below the mountain is the small river
 It flows towards the distant county seat

Colored by sentimentality, the speaker paints a latent picture of his native home where one can finally see the “color of earth” and the “every-year return of the white cranes” (2-3). However, this view is also tainted by “reminiscence” (4) which predicates the speaker’s distance from the native place. Jimu Langge is playing on the Han tradition of sentimental writing about the native place by privileging the colors and visual substance of the place. “Mountain”, “houses”, “fruit trees”, and “road” are all naturally integrated into the place. In contrast, the speaker’s view drifts to the “river” (7), following it to the “county-seat” (8) and the outside world. The nostalgic dream is shattered in the

¹⁴⁵ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 193.

speaker's reference to the outside and the fact that this is only his "return" (1). In the poetics of native place, specifically ethnic place, Jimu plays on the sentimental coloring of the nostalgic speaker to depict his distance from its authenticity. The holistic combination of nature and place that is the native is at best a backward looking imagine for a distant speaker-self. Sentimentality predicates attachment, yet the distance is always present in his vision.

Jimu Langge is well aware of his own distance from Yi cultural sites. Therefore, his poetics work to frame a holistic picture of Yi place while also troping the multi-layered gazes that peer on these places, including himself. Jimu displays his own disrupted process in participating in outside cultures, but attempts to center his poetry on the settled and powerful foundation of his ethnic culture: a "holotrope". A holotrope, in the words of the prolific Native American Literature critic Gerald Vizenor, means "the whole figuration", which "is a consonance in tribal discourse. . . Comic signs and tragic modes are cultural variations, the mood and humor in a language game; but they are not structural opposition."¹⁴⁶ In this way, Jimu Langge is infusing a distinctly Yi world-view situated in ethnic place that plays between tradition/modernity yet is not strictly oppositional. The "consonance" of his poetics between self, ethnicity, and place tropes the multiplicity of gazes that perform in his voice. The privileging of the ethnic and distinctly non-modern in his poetry reconstructs the relationships of Han and Yi in poetic language.

¹⁴⁶ Gerald Robert Vizenor, "Introduction," in *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, ed. Gerald Robert Vizenor (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 9. See also Gerald Robert Vizenor, "Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games," in *Narrative Discourse: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, ed. Gerald Robert Vizenor (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

(Dis)association: the Chinese and the Nation

Jimu Langge is one of the only poets in China who not only tropes ethnic centeredness but also tropes the Chinese nation and his own participation in its poetic process. The rarity of these dual tropes shows the depth with which he expresses the journey of local to global and vice versa. Jimu is a master of trope and multi-vocal irony that at once shows the integration of Yi into Han, yet parodies that process with the holotrope of place. His own configuring of distance from the ethnic place reveals the dimension of hybrid trope in his work. However, when applied to the Chinese nation his parody of nation-centeredness resonates as a striking satire. An example of this ability, the poem “[Humility](#)” is a biting critique of the Cultural Revolution (a nation wide period of turmoil in modern Chinese history, 1966-1976) and its rhetorical excesses.¹⁴⁷

- 10 If not humble then nothing was possible
 Humility was a moral virtue
 Only with moral virtue could you become an important person
 and not being humble was arrogant
 Arrogance would not make an important person
- 15 Not becoming a big important person
 meant you were an unimportant person
 A little unimportant person was just
 a fucking peon
 Nothing else could be written
- 20 See, one step out of line
 and again I'm being influenced by that era
 It was such a rebellious era
 because it was so humble

¹⁴⁷ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 197.

Displaying his gift for rhetoric, Jimu at once speaks the language of the nation he is apart (and suffered with), but also writes back against the Han cultural center. Verging on the political, this poem gives voice to a dually minor voice in China, both ethnic and “rebellious” (22). Although the poem does not speak in these specific terms, the question of “humility” in relations between the Han majority and the minority *minzu* is an obvious and pervasive one. The excesses of the Cultural Revolution were felt particularly hard by the *minzu* as they were suddenly forced in many ways to give up their culture and traditions. “A little unimportant person was just/ a fucking peon/” (17-18).

It must be remembered, however, that Jimu Langge is speaking a language that is both situated within Chinese and without. Therefore, this poem largely does not fall just along ethnic lines. The speaker of the poem actually likes “arrogant chaps” and even says to his son, “After you can think for yourself,/ the first thing I want you to do is/ not be humble.’/” (38-40). A play on the extremes of humility and arrogance that have plagued Chinese history, Jimu is attempting to migrate their values to more significant meanings. The poem ends with “Of course if you say something forced/ you will eat your own words/ But this already has nothing to do with humility/” (43-45). In an ironic turn, Jimu defines the excessive behavior of arrogance and its specific tie to “words”. Yet, this is something completely unrelated to “humility”, which cements the distance the Chinese language has from “humility”. This figuration shows a distinct sensitivity to the power of words, and the exacting ability to use them in a fluent language that critiques the very power domination that frames it.

Jimu Langge is an active participant in China’s national narration, including the

excesses in its history. He is less fighting the imperialism of the Han over minority *minzu* cultures than he is fighting the imperialism of a Han voice in Chinese. This is a voice within Chinese but not Han. In the poem “I Love China”, this irony in (dis)association is extended further to include China and the globe.¹⁴⁸

I Love China

China's history
 a history of war
 of ideas, of literature
 The Chinese have no causes,
 5 won't rashly make an attack
 Everyone holds to the principle of the counter-attack
 China has theories of Daoism
Records of the Peach Blossom Garden
 Buddhism grew its root once it came to China,
 10 showing that the Chinese people
 are looking for the enemy of real life
 But the ideal is peace
 I am against any large or small country
 that infringes upon China
 15 Only in art
 do I not have a nationality
 That is to say, only after more of China
 can there be more of the fucking world

The title of this poem didactically lays open the complexity of the poet's relationship with the Chinese nation. The speaker-self passionately states his connection to “China”, listing the stereotypical achievements and characteristics of the Chinese nation. Yet, Jimu's diction speaks beyond this tone. The subtle ironic tension created between “war” (2) and “peace” (12) and denoted by “attack” and “counter-attack” (5-6), *Records of a Peach Blossom Garden* (a depiction of a utopia) (8),¹⁴⁹ Buddhism (9), and “enemy” (11),

¹⁴⁸ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 196.

¹⁴⁹ *Tao hua yuan ji* 《桃花源记》 written by Tao Yuanming 陶渊明 [365-427].

reveals Jimu's own poetic tension with his national subject. The speaker-self is directly paralleled with China in the title and the two are bound together by the momentum of love. Expressing his nationalist fervor, the speaker announces, "I am against any large or small country/ that infringes upon China/" (13-14). However, in the next two lines Jimu tropes this aggressive passion by turning to "art" as the international language. As a poet, the speaker has no "nationality", therefore diluting his national sentiment. Jimu is configuring the local/global landscape predicated by an international language: art. But this also is specifically parodying the nationalistic exaggeration that China produces in participating in internationality. "That is to say, only after more of China/ can there be more of the fucking world/" (17-18). In a world that is both local and global, the tension and competition between these forces plays out even in art, or more specifically the power of words. By troping this simplistic reaction to the complex phenomenon of globalization, Jimu Langge is highlighting his own tension with the Chinese nation and furthermore the world. The speaker of the poem is undeniably within China, yet the poem itself speaks far beyond his "nationalistic" location. The poet, Jimu is connected to the intercommunication that exists in practicing his art. Yet, how does he relate to the nation? An allegory for the dilemmas of the concept of "world literature", Jimu is specifically satirizing ethnocentric nationalism's inability to connect to the world yet also demonstrates the glocal impetus that literature specifically follows in global dynamics.¹⁵⁰

Finally, in the poem, "[Chinese Poets](#)", Jimu Langge focuses on the very

¹⁵⁰ David Damrosch, "World Literature Today: From the Old World to the Whole World," *sympleke* 8, no. 1-2 (2000).

(dis)association that specifically defines his art: himself as a Chinese poet.¹⁵¹ “They are a bunch of smart people/ They make the Chinese language shine/ and also make Chinese poetry distance from the masses/ I can’t leave them/ No matter I like it or not/” (1-5). In these few lines, Jimu summates his entire poetic process. The poets are presented in third person plural “they” juxtaposed to the first person singular “I”. Yet, the two are connected by the “Chinese language” and “poetry” which creates “distance from the masses”. In this parallel, the speaker is associated with the “smart people” and the “shining” of language of the Chinese poets, though these things predicate a separation. Caught between these two worlds, the speaker laments his inescapability from poetic elitism. However, by practicing an associative process between the “they” and the “I”, Jimu places himself within the hybrid struggle between the two. He is a “Chinese poet”, bound to their language and intellectual positioning, but his poetic practice works to trope the struggle in-between and the redefining of poetry.

Similar to the poetics of opposition presented in “[Friends from the Lowlands](#)”, Jimu configures the poetic process of association between poets without reference to their background. “If the poets that I like suddenly disappeared/ I’ll have to go find poets that I don’t like/ Drink with them or take them out for drinks/ This is the smart thing to do, because/ writing is done at home, while exchange is done in the bar/” (6-10). Jimu shows the essential quality of association in poetry; the need to “exchange” and specifically find a community. Poetry is language, it binds people together and speaks in several voices. This is the main concern of Jimu as a poet, a Chinese poet, yet a poet

¹⁵¹ Jimu, *Jingqiaoqiao de zuolun*. Appendix C, 200.

attached to a discursive impetus. As a Yi both inside and outside the Chinese nation, he particularly works to accentuate the dynamic process that disrupts and beautifies its language. It is language that develops the community from the smallest (local) to the largest (global), the glocal, and demands the constant need for exchange in-between. This Jimu embodies in his poetry. “I don’t like hot topics/ but I like artistic talent/ Its wonder exceeds words, thus/ your lines of poetry just leap onto the page/” (34-37). Centered in the masses (more specifically the ethnic) and sparked by the tension of the hybrid, Jimu Langge’s poetics attempt to reach beyond the very “words” that limit its “leaping onto the page”. It is a poetry of Chinese, but figuratively “leaps” out into the world.

Conclusion: Multi-vocal Chinese

In the southwest corner of China, the confluence of cultural diversity and national integration have produced a new kind of voice in the Chinese language: an ethnic voice. Speaking fluently in the Chinese nation's language and culturally beyond its Han foundations, minority ethnic writers in China are inciting a challenge to the traditional conceptions of Chineseness. In the PRC, the re-imagining of the boundaries between ethnicity, nation, and the globe is being produced in ethnic voices that resist the monopolizing narratives of the CCP and the Han cultural center. Furthermore, in the West where the antiquated conception of China as a monolithic Other is often employed, the existence of these ethnic voices of difference demands a (re)cognition of its multifaceted and interwoven ethnic, political, and social composition.

Caught between the paradigms of local/ethnic vision, national culture, and global connections, the three ethnic poets that I have examined in this thesis occupy a dynamic role in accentuating the multi-vocality of Chinese and Chineseness. Although each of them maneuvers within the ethno-political-cultural paradigms of the Chinese language differently, they each practice a kind of Chinese poetry that plays between the multiple levels of language and society which they are apart of. By being within/out of the Chinese nation and culture, they express the hybrid struggle that exists in the collision of minority *minzu* and the Han cultural center. This is a collision that cannot be reduced to its parts, yet also privileges the glocal impetus of ethnically centered vision. Ultimately, the poets' voices speak the voice of difference within the Chinese language. A pointed challenge to the overarching narratives of political dominance and cultural superiority

that are regularly produced by the CCP and the Han Chinese national culture. However, these challenges are also not often spoken directly as political or cultural critique. Manifesting their innate hybridity, the poets speak in the nuanced voices of irony and play in language that displays the defiant tension within minority *minzu* politics in China. Often humorous, this irony projects the conflicted interconnectedness of different cultures. As succinctly expressed by Ramazani, “Laughter purifies from dogmatism, from the intolerant and the petrified; it liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naiveté and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality.”¹⁵² Each of these poets expresses this ironic tension in different ways.

Woeser’s voice is tied fundamentally to Tibet and its religious significance. As Tibet is the most politically contentious ethnic issue in China and is further politicized by the West, Woeser’s recent political intensification after the banning of her book directly reflects the intensity of the conflict. However, as a hybrid between these cultures and writing in Chinese, she produces a multi-vocal narrative in her work that expresses the “mixed” nature of her identity while also inscribing the sanctity of Tibet in Chinese. But to write Tibet as sacred, Woeser also re-claims the Tibetan terrain and culture. In her penultimate example of ironic figuration in the piece “Don’t Photography!”, Woeser invokes the Sichuanese saying, “You’ve eaten too much!”, to express the conflicted nature of Tibet that can still speak back to its oppressors. Although she is unable to publish her work in China anymore, her turn to the Internet has produced a global

¹⁵² Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse*, 139.

implication to her work and the meaning of Tibet abroad. The issue of Tibet is politically tumultuous, yet Woese's writing configures its multi-vocal and conflicted existence.

He Xiaozhu stands on the other side of the spectrum from Woese as a "mixed" descendant of his minority *minzu*, the Miao. He is literally and figuratively distant from his ethnic culture and its language. However, he also does not attempt to claim any kind of "purity" in his poetics, and instead fully embraces the impetus of un-pure hybridity. As an ethnic and non-ethnic, He Xiaozhu configures his voice within the poetics of the margin in language and culture. Exemplary of this practice is his ironic figuring of the "leftover" in the poem "Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels" that tropes the Han language's oppression of his poetic voice by being overcome by his "leftover" ethnic voice, i.e. the vision and power behind the language. He Xiaozhu writes a Chinese voice that is not explicitly ethnic but reveals the multiplicity of conceptions and representations that exist behind language. A hybrid voice that inscribes the poetics of difference by practice and not by content.

Jimu Langge is an ethnic poet of humor and satire, and best embodies the hybrid struggle's ironic figuration. He speaks from the ethnic locality to the Chinese nation and intertwines the voices that each speaks. However, his voice is also centered in his ethnicity and privileges that ethnic vision. Significantly, Jimu often inscribes his own ironic positioning in/out of his ethnic home. Through revealing his own conflicted journey, he expresses the underlining tension between the locally focused ethnic place and the increasingly globally oriented Chinese nation and language. His ingenious poem

“The Bimo is Coming” recreates this interconnected universe of Yi religious practices and outside cultures. The ironic impetus of the poem, however, actually lies in the poem’s translating of the outside cultures into the “sacrificial cows and sheep”. In this poem, the cultural dominance of the Han (and the West) is translated back against their imperial view. Jimu Langge is a master of multi-vocal translations of the ethnic place that redirect the Han gaze.

With the founding of the PRC, the minority ethnic groups of China have received more recognition than ever before in Chinese history. However, this recognition also equates to a type of political control under the CCP. It has classified them as *shaoshu minzu* (minority nationalities), supported their development, and institutionalized studies like “minority literature”. But, it has most dramatically guaranteed a space in the Chinese national culture for ethnic identity. At this conjunction of ethnic and political recognition, the minority writers have the ability to disrupt the CCP’s constant defining of China’s multi-ethnic substance (“A unified multi-minzu country”). By being dually contained in both ethnic and political potentialities, minority writers are able to speak back to the nation in the voice of ethnic difference that disrupts the imperial gaze of the Han center and its exotification of peripheral Others. Like postcolonial and indigenous writers, the Chinese minority writers embody the play between being both fluent in the center’s language and disrupting domination by imperialistic voices. Their words are not the Han language of the cultural center but instead inscribe a Chinese language that manifests a vast spectrum of diversity and difference. This intones the Sinophone world of literature as not a mono-vocal narrative of Hanification but a discursive space where the dynamics

of Chinese culture, society, politics, and identity can be expressed to their fullest potential.

The voice of Chinese ethnic minority poets embody this glocal trajectory of literature in the world that speaks beyond the hegemonic narratives of nation-states (including Communist China). Its multi-vocal composition imbues China's policies of "multiculturalism" with a narrative substance of multi-vocality. Ethnic poetry in China speaks beyond its socio-political containers and embodies the multi-valued power of glocal vision.

Appendix A

Translations of Woeser 唯色

Selections from the poetry collection

Tibet Above 《西藏在上》

and the prose collection

Notes on Tibet 《西藏笔记》

Translations of Woesser

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Tibet Above

At the beginning of spring in 1990, in the words of a writer of poems who lives for dreams, I was deeply embedded in a destiny-like imagining because I thought that in far off and most heaven-bound Tibet it may be possible to hear the sound of my dreams — I had, verging on superstition, decided that Tibet was definitely the only place I could hear this sound. It came from “above”, or at least closer to the “above”, and under the enticement of this sound I turned into one those people surrounded by the likes of priests, witches, and shamans. To say it more metaphorically, this sound was a ray of light coming down from above that, though I was shrouded in flesh, was in the end able to make my body gradually glow. I personally think that this is the poet in tune with truth. Furthermore, this kind of poet cannot be in the central plains, and especially cannot be produced in the central plains of easily amassed calamities and suffering. I believe in the saying “People head for the heights,” it contains the simplest of truths. I also love the idiom “Travel far and reach the sky.”

When the sacred yet old palace with a “golden roof like flames” was becoming clearer in my vision, I habitually brought my hands together to make a small wishful prayer. At the same time, I deeply felt the (in the first place) small amount of Han blood in me, the subtle influence it has had on me all these past twenty years, and how it had now already nearly dominated my outward appearance and thinking. This is to say that when I returned to the place of my birth I was no different from a stranger.

In reality, in the out with the old, in with the new Lhasa, early in 1966 on a midsummer night when the daily noises of the roaring revolution gradually calmed, a seed-like power unintentionally but evidently unceasingly, like Buddhism's metaphoric “karma-wind”, was brought to the people. Looking at the photos of the four year old child wearing a little Tibetan style gown, that famous old palace is always the background. In gloriously blooming fields, she does several poses that are steeped in a “red” childhood (a copy of Mao Zedong's quotations and a Mao pin were absolutely essential props). The endlessly burning sun baked the cheeks so red that even in the black-and-white photo they brightly shown.

At that time, she was such a typical Tibetan child, but was also a Tibetan child that already bore the brand of the era.

Twenty years later, as she rides on silver metal wings to fulfill her wish of returning to Lhasa she feels like she cannot open her eyes. The ten-thousand rays of light from a humongous, flaming, and nearby sphere are like

ten-thousand tiny silver needles sharply stinging her flesh; very painful at first but then quickly numbing. "This subtle injury is difficult to detect," she writes on every letter that is sent towards central China. But, there are also those springtime sandstorms that fill the heavens with twisting chaos! Looking out the window, Lhasa looks like it is being completely consumed by a terrifying disaster. A gigantic hidden creature is roaring and howling fiercely; it fills the earth and sky. Who knows how many lives are caught in its clutches, bones shattering in its grip, and then swallowed whole one after another, fresh blood. And the blood-red heart? She at the edge of desperation is unable to hold back, she yells:

Is this the most glorious village center?
The blinding fierce sun,
The children tumbling all over the earth,
Not seeing any shadowy old houses,
Dogs barking madly —
When a sheet of dirt hits your face,
Run quickly, women so sorrowful,
Is this the place where you entrust your life?
Is this the place where you will ultimately die?
Your fleeting shadows
Will still pass through what other lands?

But on that day, at that time of encroaching twilight a miracle happened.

The day's storm had already ceased. Within the air fermented by a peculiar odor and spread by the thick gloom of mulberry ash, I first started off towards the sacred place in all Tibetans' hearts, or more exactly, the sacred place of all sacred places — Jokhang Temple.

Heaped on the horizon, the clouds at dusk transform into a picture of many wonders, a beauty that shatters the senses. On the courtyard, people leading the sheep redeemed from sacrifice through the prayer wheels and the people selling these non-sacrifices rub shoulders, but continue side by side peacefully. Several dogs nip and play as they run and scuffle from one side of the courtyard to the next; often turning to bark a few times as they go. A group of children from the countryside holding hands dance and sing as they happily watch the hat thrown on the ground fill with coins and notes. Seven or eight nuns sit in a circle ringing bells and beating drums with voices slow and deep. These young women who look as if they cannot be more than about twenty have worn and dusty old kasayas, but still cannot cover up their clear and peaceful eyes. Passing by their missing jet-black hair and beautifully shaped heads, I head upwards gazing at the pair of shimmering golden deer on the lofty temple's roof. Knees bent in an extremely meek stance, they seem

to be wholeheartedly listening to something. Between them towers the wheel of the dharma that is symbolically ever in motion. At this very moment, it bore a brilliant color.

I received a white khabtag from an old person and followed the stream of people slowly walking towards Buddha into the temple. Suddenly, an incredibly unique and complex feeling started to spread from the bottom of my heart, as if a drop of ink had poured down a coarse piece of paper. My eyes filled with tears. My throat choked. Yet at the same time, reason told me that my inexplicably emotional appearance was laughable. However, when I now think of it, that enormous and dark temple interior with rows of slightly flickering lamps, voice after voice of quiet scripture recitation, and statue after statue of silent Buddhas that certainly possess a kind of unfathomably infectious mysterious nature; and there's still that odor mixed with yak butter, barley, and incense! But, in the end what was it that really struck me?

I looked at those people, those herdsman, farmers, and city-dwellers that shared the greater part of my blood; those in the flow of death and rebirth, common people related by flesh and bone. They raise both their hands above their head, place them on their forehead, on their chest, and then kneel on the ground, and finally lay flat upon it. This is done three times in procession, or maybe more. Many more people, shuffle in front of the long table which holds clear water and yak butter, and softly, bringing both feet together, they rest their left hand on the edge of the base that is emitting the luster of aging. Then, softly but deeply they touch the crest of their head on the floor in front of this symbolic enlightened one's Buddhist statue. In an instant, the tears that I could now no longer hold back streamed down my face.

I finally silently cried!

Ah! This life, this incarnation, I've never before suffered like this!

But I am this kind of impure Tibetan! Although I've already arrived at this place not far from the heavens and have even already heard the voice my dreams yearned for, that voice has nothing for me because I am horribly ignorant, as if my ears are deaf to it.

When can I be like them, ever holding that prayer in their hearts, peacefully accepting the countless reincarnations of this one reincarnation?

Tibetans say: A bird resting on a stone is purely by chance of fate.

— But if there has not been flight, would there ever be resting?

— But at the very beginning, I can only fly in the vast darkness of the night.

I had a string of rosaries on my left wrist: predestined, perfectly round, one hundred and eight beads. Packed in my bag was a prayer flag, “lung tra” (scripture printed on paper of five colors), and “dzang/sang” (sweet grass). Full of passion, I stepped onto the path of endless circumambulation. The air was freezing, the sky dark, yet my lone heart was boiling hot. I knew I was very clean as I had already bathed under the clear water. At home, I had made a vow before my brand-new Buddhist shrine. It was like I had never grown up, but also like I had turned into another person.

I walked. At first, I thought I was walking alone. But, the feeling of trudging along alone in the long night seemed like a huge risk for me with my poor eyes but sharp ears. The black night was full of all kinds of strange noises; noises that are completely hidden by the machines’ daytime monopoly. There seemed to be the cries of wild animals shrill and ferocious; animals without names coming and going fluidly, or relentlessly panting, or ghoulishly whispering no different from the lonely souls of wild ghosts. Gradually, an inexplicable fear bred feelings of regret. I steadily lost my courage to continue on. But, I had already walked so far and the road of retreat was just as succumbed with peril. I miraculously remembered an incantation; one six word phrase that every Tibetan can recite from childhood. Thereupon, I began to rapidly chant while diligently thinking of Guanshiyin whose mouth retains a hidden smile. Then, from behind me a person specter-like suddenly appeared, holding in one hand a yak butter candle with a swaying weak flame, while the other turned a prayer wheel that seemed a bit heavy. This was a man quite advanced in years, but took each step with such poise, silent and unswerving. The wind was blowing randomly one gust after another; why did it not blow out that tiny candle flame? Could it be possible that his Tibetan parka covered in oil stains could block the force of the wind? I followed in the wake of the old man's light and my formerly unsettled heart received comfort. It was then that I obtained a true view of the area's darkness. The blackness was spinning like a whirlpool, creeping, deepening, and ultimately swallowing so many mortals’ meager pleas and sobs. It seems as if this old man came especially to lead me; but who was he? Someone who maintained the “ge long” (monks’) inhabitance? A poor pilgrim from the remote countryside? Or was he truly an incarnation of “Chenrezig” (Guanshiyin)?

I walked. My heart was full of deep gratitude for this person sharing the road. That never faltering ancient palace; the deep night and, from a distance, the lanterns glowing dimly yet perceptible greatly accentuated its silence and emptiness. Tears filled my eyes. This was that year's first tears. I walked. I finally saw the light and that slow but never stopping path. Actually, there were originally many people just like a wandering and winding river coming

out of the night. I joined its flow, and flowed into another life's sweet aroma.

Lives with the same yearnings face the same direction as they gather together. It was the direction of the rotation; the endlessly turning “kora” (circular paths). Amidst the growing sound of resounding prayers, — light, the incredible light glowed. It lit upon those successively flowing postures of devoted prostration like flashing upon magnificent and beautiful fresh flowers!

Thereupon, I believed as I circled clockwise following the “kora” within the extraordinary light of Tibet that I had truly come upon a mystery! Does this ponderous and subtle mystery include an incantation passed down from mouth to mouth, the shadowy figure that wept and fled in the night, a bunch of flower-like handprints, and a few rusty “tugcha” (meteorites)?

When I use my heavily accented Tibetan to say “Bo” (Tibet) or “Woeser” (rays of light), these two words seem to be the wings of a bird (its feathers have a kind of beauty that we have never seen before; can it be the sacred bird that all Tibetans hold in awe — an eagle?) that carries a formless substance connected to the soul towards that most wondrous and mystical destination!

— — Let my body follow that trace of the passing bird; it was a projection in the sky, an evanescent track on the earth, in between the primeval buildings fill in like star clusters: form archaic, colors vibrant, like stone after stone of invaluable rubies. It is even more like many bright signs leading all desires to absolution, pursuing the enlightenment of all living creatures. The expansive land of snows is even itself a natural grand temple!

In other words, when one is on the road, heart facing the light, you will in the end unexpectedly encounter a kind of predestined mystery! I now finally know this.

Therefore, please let me set out.

May, 1999 in Lhasa

西藏在上

1990年初春，对于一个以梦想为生的诗歌写作者来说，我深深地陷入一种宿命似的幻觉之中，以为远去离天最近的西藏，可以听到我梦寐以求的声音，——我近乎迷信地认定，只有在西藏才能听到这种声音，它来自“上面”，或者说更接近“上面”；并由这个声音引导着，变成介于祭司、巫师和游吟者之间的那种人。说得形象一点，这声音犹如一束光，自上而下，笼罩肉体，最终使自身得以逐渐地焕发。我自认为这才是真正意义上的诗人。而这样的诗人，是不可能在低处，尤其是在容易积聚污泥浊水的低处产生的。我相信“人往高处走”这句老话，它自有其最朴素的道理；我也喜爱这个成语：远走高飞。

当神圣的却是往日的并有着“火舌般的金色屋顶”的宫殿，在我的视野里越来越清晰时，我不禁双手合掌，为小小的愿望祷告。同时，深深地感觉到原本在我身上不多的汉族血统，由于整整二十年的潜移默化，已几乎成为我外表与内心的主宰了。也就是说，在我重返我的出生之地的時候，我无异于一个陌生人了。

实际上，早在1966年，在旧貌换新颜的拉萨，在白昼里嘈杂、轰响的革命之声渐渐低落的某个仲夏之夜，一粒已种子看似无意却显然是被从未止息的、在佛教里喻为“业风”的力量带到人间。从4岁以前的照片来看，那个穿着小小的藏式长袍的孩子，总是以那座著名的旧日宫殿为背景，在繁花盛开的草坪上，做出沉浸在红色童年之中的各种姿势（毛泽东的一本语录和一枚像章是必不可少的道具）；被持久而灼热的阳光烤得通红的脸颊，甚至在黑白照片上也晕染得分外明显。

那时候，她是一个多么地道的西藏孩子啊，可也是一个已经被打上了时代烙印的西藏孩子。

二十年以后，当她乘着银灰色的金属翅膀如愿重返拉萨时，却有些睁不开眼睛。从一个巨大、炽烈、邻近的球体那儿放出的万道光芒，像一万支看不见的小小银针，生硬地扎着她的肌肤，起先很疼，但马上就麻木了，——“这一微妙的伤害难以察觉”，她在每一封发往内地的信中都写了这句话。而且，那春天里满天乱卷的风沙啊！透过窗户往外看去，整个拉萨像是陷入了一场可怕的灾难之中，一个巨大的隐形魔鬼狂呼乱叫，横挡一切，有多少生命会被它一把抓住，拧碎筋骨，囫圇吞下一颗颗鲜活、红艳的心呢？她几乎绝望至极，忍不住放声叹道：

这就是最好的庄园吗？
刺目的烈日，
遍地乱滚的孩子，
看不见一寸阴影的老房子，
狂犬乱吠……
当一阵尘土打在脸上，
快跑吧，满怀忧愁的女子，
这是你寄托生命的地方吗？
这是你终究死亡的地方吗？
你的疾步如飞的身影啊？

还要掠过哪些异乡？

但在那一天，那暮色四合的时分，一个奇迹发生了。

白日里的风暴已经止息，在由浓郁的桑烟所散发的奇异香味酝酿的气氛里，我第一次走向所有藏人心目中的圣地，确切地说，是圣地中的圣地——大昭寺。

晚霞堆积在天边，变幻着各种奇异的图像，美得惊人：广场上牵着放生羊转经的人和做买卖的人掺和在一起，却互不扰：几只狗拖着曳地的长毛东跑西窜，不时轻吠几声：一群乡下孩子手边跳边唱，乐呵呵地着扔在地上的帽子里堆满了硬币和角票：那七八个盘坐成一圈摇铃击鼓、慢声低吟的尼姑，看上去不过 20 岁左右的年轻女子，风尘仆仆的旧袈裟却遮掩不住她们澄澈、宁静的目光。掠过她们落净乌发、形状优美的头颅往上望去，高高的寺院顶上的那一对金光闪闪的小鹿，双膝弯曲，相向而卧，以一种极其温顺的姿态蹲伏着，仿佛在专心地聆听着什么，而在它们中间矗立着的一轮象征永远转动的法轮，此刻也披上了炫目的色彩。

我从一位老人手中请了一条洁白的哈达，随着朝佛的人流缓缓步入寺院。突然间，一种非常奇特而复杂的感觉，一点点地，一点点地在心底弥漫开来，犹如一滴墨汁落在一张质地毛糙的纸上。我的眼睛湿润了。我的喉咙哽塞了。但与此同时，理智告诉我，我莫名其妙地激动的样子是可笑的。现在想起来，那庞大而幽暗的寺院里，一盏盏微微摇曳的灯火、一阵阵低低诵经的声音、一尊尊默默无语的佛像显然具有一种神秘莫测的感染力：还有那混合着酥油、青稞与梵香的气味啊！可是，究竟是什么真正地击中了我？

我看见那些人，那些与我的主要血脉相同的牧人、农夫和市民，那些在生死流转中彼此骨肉相关的凡夫俗子，将双手合掌举过头顶，从顶到额再至胸前，继而跪在地上，继而全身伏在地上，如此三次，或更多次；更多的人，在供奉清水和酥油的长案前驻步，轻轻地把双脚靠拢，把左手扶在泛着岁月光泽的供台边沿，然后，轻轻地、沉重地，把前额低俯到象征觉悟者的佛像跟前，霎时间，我再也无法忍住的泪水一串串地滚落下来！

我甚至失声哭泣！

啊，今生今世，我从未像这般痛苦过！

可我是这样一个不纯粹的藏人！尽管我已经抵达了这个离开天最近的地方，即便我已经听到了梦寐以求的声音，但那声音，对于我来说也毫无意义，因为我惘然无知，如充耳不闻。

什么时候，我才能像他们一样，时时坚持那发自内心的祷告，平静地接受无数次轮回中的这一次轮回呢？

藏人答道：鸟落在石头上，纯属天缘。

一然而没有飞翔，那有落下？

一然而最初，我只能在茫茫黑夜飞翔。

我在左手腕上套了一串念珠：前定的，圆满的，一百零八颗；背包里装着经幡、“隆达”（印有经文的五色彩纸）和“桑”（香草），满怀激情地踏上了迢迢转经路。天气寒冷，天色黑暗，我的一颗心却是滚烫的。我知道自己很干净，我已经在清水下沐浴过，在家里崭新的佛龛前

许了愿，像是从未长大过，又像是重新换了一个人。

我走着。最初我以为是独自走着。但独自在长夜里跋涉的感觉，对于自小患有眼疾却听力敏锐的我来说，就像是太大的冒险。黑夜里充满各种奇异的声响，那是些在被机器垄断的白日里彻底消匿的声响，似有野兽的尖啸，凄厉，凶狠；又似有无名生物飘来荡去，或不住唏嘘，或阴森森地私语，无异于孤魂野鬼。渐渐地，莫名的恐惧随着悔意滋生心头，我一点点地失去了继续向前的勇气。可我已经走了很久，往回返的路上同样危机四伏。我自然而然地忆起了一句真言，那是每一个西藏人从小就会念诵的六字真言。于是我快速地默念着，努力地观想着嘴角含笑的观世音。这时候，从我的身后，幽灵似的，忽然出现了一个人，一只手举着一盏要曳着微弱火苗的酥油灯，一只手转动着略显沉重的转经筒。这是一个男人，年纪很大，却步态轻盈，无声无息。而风，一阵阵地刮过，为什么吹不灭一盏小小的酥油灯？难道他那沾满油污的藏袍能够阻挡风的力量？我尾随着老人带来的光明，先前不安的心得到了抚慰，并得以正视周围的黑暗，那黑暗像漩涡一样翻卷着、蔓延着、深入着，竟吞没了人世间多少细微的乞求和啜泣啊！看来，这个老人是专门引领我的；可他是谁呢？一个保持着“格隆”（比丘）品质的居民？一个来自偏僻乡下的贫穷香客？或者，他根本就是“坚热斯”（观世音）的化身？

我走着。内心里对这同行的人儿深怀感激，而那座永远不倒的往日宫殿，在深夜，在远处闪烁着依稀可辨的几点灯火，愈发地突出了它的寂静、寥廓。泪水涌上了我的眼眶。这是那年的第一场泪水！我走着。我终于目睹了光明那缓慢却不可阻断的历程。而且，从黑夜里走出来的人原来是那么多，宛如一条历经千转百回的河流，我融入其中，也就融入了另一种生活的芬芳气息里。

有一样渴望的生命朝着一样的方向聚拢了。那是有绕的方向，是一圈圈永无止息的“廓拉”（转经路）。在一片越来越响亮的祈祷声中，一啊光，格外的光焕发了，它照耀着那纷纷展开的顶礼的姿势，犹如照耀着一朵朵盛大而美丽的鲜花！

我因而相信，我和一个秘密将在右绕的时候，在转“廓拉”的时候，在西藏那格外的光中真正地相遇！这个重大而婉转的秘密，包括了一串口耳相传的真言、半夜饮泣而遁的背影、几种花朵般的手印、几块生锈的“妥伽”（天降石）吗？

当我以本族的口音不甚准确地念诵着“蕃”（西藏）、“唯色”（光芒），这两个名词仿佛有了两只翅膀的鸟（它的羽毛有一种我们从未见过的美；它难道正是藏人所敬畏的神鸟——鹰鹫？），要把一种与灵魂有关的无形的物质携往那最美妙、最神秘的所在！

——且让我的身体追随那飞鸟掠过的痕迹；那是空中的投影，在大地上形成若隐若现的路线，其间布满繁星似的原初建筑，形状古朴，色彩强烈，宛如一粒粒珍贵的红宝石，更如一个个鲜明的标志，引导着所有渴望解脱、追求觉悟的众生。甚至辽阔的雪域大地，其本身就是一座天然的巨大的寺院！

换言之，当人在路上，心向光芒，某个注定的秘密，终究将与你不期而遇！我终于知道这一点。

因此，且让我走。

1999年5月于拉萨

几年以后

几年以后
你在原地
我在原地的那一头
坐飞机

5

汽车
也就到了原地

几年以后
你长了几岁
我长了几岁
我们像是同时在长
依然年轻

10

有脾气

几年以后
我一身尘埃

15

又被破相
还硬要大方
把一些骷髅

当作饰物
挂在胸前
似乎漫不经心

20

几年以后
你的容颜
多么干净
书卷气
好象十七岁
好象内心的泪珠

25

更加晶莹
谁也擦不干

几年以后
终于坐在一起

30

先远些
再稍稍近些
周围人声鼎沸

光怪陆离
我欲说还休

35

你欲说还休
还有什么说得下去

After a Few Years

After a few years
You are at the original place
I am at the opposite end
Ride on a plane
in a car
and I have already arrived there

After a few years
You've aged some
I've aged some
We seem to have been aging at the same time
still young

have tempers
After a few years
completely covered in dust I
again lose my countenance
Yet importuning poise
I take some bones

as jewelry
Hang them on my chest
as if without a second thought

After a few years
Your appearance
so very clean
An air of books
as if seventeen
As if the innermost teardrops
added a luster
that no one could out shine

After a few years
At last sitting together
First a little distant
then slightly closer
The voices carrying on around us
sights strange and colorful
I wish to speak but refrain
You wish to speak but do the same
What else can be said

拉萨之夜

噢拉萨！虚幻的夜晚
个别的莲花从未开放
个别的酒杯容易破碎
个别的人啊，谁赋予的
气质，将流动的盛宴
当作自我放逐的乐园
那看不见的汹涌的泪水
只为一个留不住的亲人

5

噢拉萨！伤怀的夜晚
个别的蓝鸟从未啼叫
个别的衣裳沾满尘土
个别的人啊，谁散布的
疾病，将飞逝的时光
当作自我表现沉沦的深渊
那数不清的妖艳的幻影
也难以唤回转世的亲人！

10

15

噢拉萨！稀有的夜晚
个别的爱情从未降临
个别的血统逐渐混杂
个别的人啊，一道怎样的
闪电，将弥漫的前定
当作彼此聚拢的契机
在那没完没了的轮回中
但愿你是我永远的亲人！

20

Night in Lhasa

Lhasa! an illusionary night
A few lotus flowers never blooming
A few glasses easily broken
A few people, this demeanor given by
whom, make the flowing feast
a paradise of self-exile
Those unseen torrential tears
are only for a loved one who cannot stay

Lhasa! a sorrowful night
A few bluebirds never singing
A few coats covered with dust
A few people, these diseases spread by
whom, make the fleeting moments
pools of drowned self-expression
Those innumerable bewitching images
cannot call back a lost loved one!

Lhasa! a rare night
A few affections never arriving
A few bloodlines gradually intermixed
A few people, like what kind of
lightning, make the overarching pre-ordinances
the fated chance of affinitive coalescence
Yet, amidst that never ending transformation
I wish you will ever be my loved one!

"不要忘了从前-----"

"不要忘了从前-----"

哪一夜，哪一场梦中
月亮胜似每日的月亮？
他的耳语令人不安
他变了，动辄昏倒在地
甚至铅印的文字也不翼而飞
他焦灼地跳起一种舞步
姿势倒还优美
谁也学不会
呵月光下，他已成为幻影
正在掠过寺院
犹如一把钥匙隐隐发光
却已生锈
怎能打开我的西藏？
我仍然喊着他白天的名字
但在白天
当我和他错过
落叶金黄，像远逝的好日子
在脚下粉碎！
他那无可挽回的脸
嶙峋的骨架
往昔，呵，往昔就在我的怀中
我悄悄回头
不禁暗暗心惊
突然，一束更强的光线斜斜打来
像打在一件宽大的僧袍上
尘埃飞舞
颜色闪耀
西藏竟在时间之外

"Do not forget the past . . ."

"Do not forget the past . . ."

In which night, which dream
was the moon more splendid than the daily moon?
His whisper makes people unsettled
5 He's changed, easily fainting to the ground
Even the etched writing has disappeared
He burningly leaps into a kind of dance
postures contorted yet marvelous
No one could ever learn it
10 Under the moonbeams, he has turned into a specter
just now passing over a temple
like a key faintly glowing
but already rusted
How can I open my Tibet?
15 I still scream out his daylight name
But during the day
when he and I cross paths
falling golden leaves, are like long passed beautiful days
crushed underfoot!
20 His unrepairable face
bony frame
The past , the past is in my chest
I silently look back
and cannot help but secretly feel awe-struck
25 Suddenly, a burst of light angles in
as if it was shining off a monk's loose robes
Dust dances skyward
Colors flare
Tibet is ultimately beyond time

六月二日的傍晚

说是傍晚，那一个寺院的上空格外亮
照耀多久的光啊，才能让我们察觉什么？
神气与俗气，是否这样的建筑最沉默的目的？
如果下雪，部落周围的山也变了模样
平素真像一座山，山上的东西
悄悄地生长，最后又是另外一种
我们从来叫不准每一个名字
这样的变化细腻，突然，痛彻心肺
幸而在我们的远方
像那一个寺院，在祷告中冉冉升起
日深月久，变化莫测
我看得见它非凡的外表
我每一次路过，它顶上的卧鹿如泣如诉
是否应该若即若离？
比如下雪了，窗外的山像是别的国度
我恰恰是在这个傍晚，被寺院的里面击中要害

Evening on the Second of June

It was said to be evening, but the sky above the temple was especially bright
Light shining for so long, and we just started to detect?
Impressive and vulgar, isn't this the deepest aim of architecture like this?
If it snows, the tribal mountains also have this appearance
5 The temple usually looks like a mountain, something on top of the mountain
silently growing, and finally is another name that
we have always said imperfectly
This kind of transformation finely, suddenly, penetrates to the heart
Fortunately, in our distant place
10 Like that temple, we gradually ascend in prayer
In the passing days and months, in unending transformation
I can see its immortal face
Every time I pass by, its hidden deer on the peaks are tears and pleas
Should one keep it all at an arm's length?
15 If snow is falling, the mountains outside the window are like another country
I am in this very evening, centered by the temple's inner space

藏历四月十五日零点

一个一尘不染的卓玛
从上至下，混迹于人群
太多的悲悯，让她摇身一变
是不好看的女子
抓住我的手
凭借昨日的光
娓娓道来何为因缘

密密麻麻的鹰鹫啊
象曲均的声音
让魂飞魄散
让东来的紫气一路指引
以某处的声音
简单，多义
挽救一个个坠入红尘的神童

而这里，天天向上的西藏
神气喂养的白天
鬼气又至
小气的他们反对异己
又暗自侥幸
为破不尽的幻影动心
输不起
唯有这个玄妙的卓玛
走在谁的后面
怜惜这一类人--
偶然一睹谁的手印
毕生就在天才和凡人之间
犹豫、徘徊
当阳光普照，她也遁去
一切灰飞烟灭

Midnight, on the Fifth Day of the Fourth Month in the Tibetan Calendar

A stainless Dolma,
from top to bottom, blended with the people
Too much tragedy makes her suddenly transform
It was not a pretty girl that
grabbed my hand
and tirelessly spoke of karma
with the force of yesterday's sunlight

10 Flocks of eagles
like an inflected sound
let the body and soul drift away
let the purple clouds advance from the east
A sound from a certain place
simple, meaningful
rescuing numerous blessed children lost to the red earth

15 But here, in the Tibet that is daily ascending
daylight nurtured by the gods' ether
the devils' fumes also arrive
The miserly them fight against consensus
and even secretly imagine themselves lucky
20 But motivated by an unbreakable illusion
they are lost
Only this miraculous Dolma
walking behind
will take pity on this type of person --
25 Coming upon someone's hand print
all their lives just between the brilliant and the common
hesitating, pacing
As the sun lights the world, she also relinquishes
to the swirling dust and smoldering smoke of everything

仓央嘉措

捧起木碗，在夜里，这茶或山顶的雪
被怎样的手倾注？怎样的手
在得到加持之前，靠近这双手？

风在吹，经幡在动
谁的声音在群山之间回荡？
当你双手合拢，或者充满她们
当你一只手放在耳边，另一只
高举杯盏，欲诉还休
宛若不经意种下的树
因为饮的是茶或山顶的雪
长得就不一般，就易折

我伫立着，屏息，凝神
偶尔有一片树叶落下
就发疯似地扑去
抓在手心里的是碎屑
脸上是泪，这也就够了

呵，怎样的手中珍藏着一颗心？
如幻化而出的小鸟
在夜里，兀自飞翔，鸣叫着
仿佛绝唱，终究羽毛散尽
飘往那不知所向的人间各地

随即转世，但再也不是那一个肉体的你！

但我捧起木碗，在夜里
这茶或山顶的雪仍然一样多！
就一个天才，内心的图画
还差一笔！

Tsangyang Gyatsuo

Lifting wooden bowls, in the night, this tea or mountain peak snow
were poured by what kind of hands? What kind of hands
were close to these pair before they received support?

The wind is blowing, prayer flags are moving
5 Whose voice reverberates in the mountains?
When your hands are folded, or you fill them
When you put a hand next to your ear, while the other
raises a glass, wishing to speak but refrains
If the tree carelessly planted
10 grew unusually because it drank tea or snow
from the mountain peak it is easily uprooted

I am standing, holding my breath, meditating
Occasionally a leaf falls
and insanely whisks away
15 Held in the palm are the shattered pieces
On the face are tears, this is enough

What kind of hand treasures a heart?
Like a transforming and disappearing little bird
in the night, loftily taking flight, cooing
20 like a eulogy, in the end feathers scatter
floating towards those secret places in life

Immediately reborn, but it will never be the you of flesh and blood again!
Yet I hold up a wooden bowl, in the night
this tea and mountain peak snow has not decreased!
There is only one genius whose inner portrait
25 still lacks a pen!

混血儿

失色的这一个幻影
贫穷的、秘密的那些部落的后裔
在空怀大气的高山流水里
从不够用的形容词中
放开为他们所妒的好嗓子
听上去一串亮晃晃的金币
比金币更昂贵的牺牲
至少换来一些欢乐
是她被欲望所醉
突出的前额又被落日所焚
羽翎一支支散失
骨头弯曲
仍然在一切之上

请赐予哪一方水土
允许她无目的地实在
曾经即兴的、哀婉的歌唱
那一夜青春散尽的背叛
那为自弃而奔涌的热泪
美化了、吞没了如初的身段
将是一顶无与伦比的王冠
这最邻尽的象征
腾空对世俗的畏惧
因为她的使命，是做一名
焕发自身的祭司
而哪一个孤独的仪式上
才能问：“是它吗？”
“把它也带走吗？”

Mixed-blood

This vision that has lost its color
Those poor and secretive descendants of the tribe
In the running water of the mountains in the barren atmosphere
from among insufficient adjectives
5 release their envied beautiful voices
They sound like a string of brilliant golden coins
but are more valuable a sacrifice than coins
and at least exchange for some happiness
It is she that has been made drunk by her desires
10 Her prominent forehead was also burned by the setting sun
Feathers dispersed one by one
Bones were bent
And yet she still was on top of all existence

Please bestow which plot of land
15 to allow her to aimlessly manifest
ever improvised and enchanting songs
The night the betrayal of youth completed,
those hot tears that flow in one's surrender
beautified, swallowed like a pristine body
20 will be an unparalleled crown
This nearest symbol
A fear that empties the world
because her mission is to be a
prophet who spreads light
25 And within which lonely ceremony
can then only ask, "Is this the one?"
"Take this one along too?"

德格--献给我的父亲

这部经书也在小寒的凌晨消失！

我掩面哭泣

我反复祈祷的命中之马

怎样更先进入隐秘的寺院

化为七块被剔净的骨头？

飘飘欲飞的袈裟将在哪里落下？

我的亲人将在哪里重新生长？

三柱香火，几捧坟莹

德格老家我愿它毫无意义！

我愿它无路可寻！

一万朵雪花是否另一条哈达

早早迎接这个灵魂

在人迹不至之处，仙鹿和白莲丛中

最完善的解脱！

兄弟姊妹痛不欲生

我反复祈祷的马儿

既然大限未到，不如仆伏在地

戴着二十一个戒指

银光烁烁，照亮阴间

吉祥的幢幡将浮动暗香般的祝福

来生我们又在一起

承受一切报应

绛红色的小城空空荡荡

一声碎响把最快的一颗流星

印在我的额上——

这个尖尖的指甲已经折断的女子

眼前一片模糊

心头幻象重迭

为什么受苦，却说出口

为什么摇一摇清凉的小铃却唤来过去的情感？

我啊，我要骑着命运之马回家

将满满的"隆达"撒向天上！

Derge - Dedicated to my Father

This book of scripture also vanished in the chilly early morning hours!

I covered my face and cried

The Horse in Fate I repeatedly pray to,

How does one enter the hidden monastery even earlier

5 and change into seven pieces of bare bone?

Where will the kasaya waving in flight's desire fall?

Where will my loved one be reborn?

Three sticks of incense, several prayers to the tomb

Derge, old home, I wish it had absolutely no meaning!

10 I wish no road could find it!

Are ten thousand snowflakes another khabtag

receiving this soul even earlier

In the distant realm untouchable by footprints, amongst celestial deer and white lotus

The most consummate release!

15 Siblings pained do not wish to live

The Horse I repeatedly pray to,

Since the time of death has not come, it is better to prostrate

wearing twenty-one rings of

brightly shining silver, illuminating the underworld

20 Propitious flags will float on pungent blessings

In a future life we again will be together

Enduring all retribution

The crimson red little town sits empty

A crashing sound emblazed the fastest shooting star

25 On my forehead -----

This woman with sharp nails already broken

A blur before her eyes

Her mind's illusion repeats

Why is there suffering? but nothing can be said

30 Why does ringing the clear bell only call back past feelings?

I . . . I want to ride the Horse of Fate to return home

And scatter the fulfilled "lung-ta" towards heaven!

惆怅与憧憬

惆怅

唉！风儿轻轻，草儿深深
我要守住这剩下的家园
我要等待每一位流浪的才子

我们治不了的怀乡病啊
优雅，可贵，一见倾心
在黄昏，在喝不够的酒中
爱情是过去的爱情
诗歌是过去的诗歌
唉！我仍然要放弃这唯一的家园
我无法避免那死亡的下场！死亡的下场！

憧憬

唉！青春和桃花都谢了
我仅仅埋葬在庄园的各处
我仅仅变成一匹逆流而上的马
马背上那小小的公主啊
目不斜视，一心要还愿
让每天，让四面八方
又一次落空，断送
又一次妙不可言

唉！我仍然要放弃这唯一的的庄园
我无法避免那死亡的下场！死亡的下场！

Melancholy and Longing

Melancholy

Ah! The wind is gentle, the grass is thick
I will keep watch over this remaining home
I will wait for every roaming gifted-scholar

5 The homesickness that we cannot cure
Elegant, admirable, like love at first sight
At dusk, in the midst of not drinking enough wine
Love is bygone love
Poems are bygone poems
10 Alas! I still will abandon this one and only home
I cannot avoid that finale of death! Finale of Death!

Longing

Ah! Spring's bloom and peach blossoms wither
I only bury the dead about the courtyard
15 I only transform into a horse against the current
That little princess on the horse's back
Eyes unaskew, wholeheartedly still wishing
Allowing each day, allowing near and far
To again come to nothing, to forfeit
20 To again be miraculous

Alas! I will still abandon this one and only home
I cannot avoid that finale of death! Finale of Death!

“Don’t Photograph!”

Two middle-aged men covered in lenses hold up cameras in our faces flashing again and again. We are used to it; more precisely, Nyima and the others are used to these kinds of people.

These people are all tourists from the Central Plains who are completely infatuated with Tibet. The progression of first just being curious to then *hunting* novelty is an obvious and natural one for them while traveling in the frontier. And the tool for hunting novelty? Besides one's eyes, there are the other optics such as photographic equipment. The lamas that everyday have to serve as the ticket sellers and guides to the Jokhang Temple, this tourist destination, are constantly pulled into all kinds of viewing angles that are in fact not common. Nyima and the others have long since ceased to notice.

Thus, these two men in the temple courtyard incessantly use long and then short lenses to capture what they think holds the “Tibetan flavor”: rows of burning yak butter candles, huge bronze urns brimming with crisp water, passing old Lhasa women with their curly haired dogs in tow, Amdo women or Kham men with pious faces bearing khabtags¹⁵³, and of course the most typical, lamas wearing the crimson kasaya¹⁵⁴.

Two Han women and myself are sitting next to a few lamas. I came to the temple to light some candles. Those two plainly dressed women with fingers counting rosaries are laywomen from central China, but have studied at Nyingma¹⁵⁵ temples in Kham for a long time. One of them had studied for seven whole years at the Serthar Buddhist Institute¹⁵⁶ before not long ago her self-made shelter was forcefully torn down by the authorities, and she was forced to leave the seminary. These two are incredibly pious; everyday they circle the Jokhang Temple on the “*nangkhor*”¹⁵⁷ a hundred times. I have gotten to know the two of them at the Jokhang Temple and we all are friendly with Nyima and the others. Every time before facing Buddha, we sit in a corner of the ticket collecting area to chat and drink some sweet tea.

Maybe it was because they saw lamas and women, or should I say Tibetan lamas and Han women, freely talking and were curious that these two photographers quietly turned their “hunters” lenses in this direction. Nyima saw them and lightheartedly said, “Don't photograph. This is top secret, don't take pictures.” He is a very humorous yet profound lama. Once a

¹⁵³ Khabtags are the white silk scarves given to pilgrims as they enter the temple.

¹⁵⁴ A kasaya is the crimson colored robe worn by the lamas.

¹⁵⁵ One of the sects of Tibetan Buddhism.

¹⁵⁶ Also known in Tibetan as *Larung Gar*.

¹⁵⁷ The nearest of three paths that pilgrims use to circle the Jokhang Temple.

young person from central China that had not studied Buddhism long asked him with some concern, "Master, you're so busy everyday, when will you go to live in seclusion?" "In the next life, in the next life I will live in seclusion," Nyima candidly answered. There you see; Nyima's reaction was so fast that he was able to make even people's un-meditated words reveal Buddhism's truth.

"What top secret, take it out to be photographed." One of the two photographers was a bit shameless. It was like everything he photographed here was being given the greatest honor. We did not answer him and continued our discussion of how in years past there had been a pool hidden underneath the Jokhang Temple.

Time passed. We seemed to cast the men to our backs. But in reality, those two were still slyly taking pictures from behind us. In the end, it was Phurbu who realized what they were doing. Phurbu's Chinese was less fluent than his English, and when he was angry his vocabulary was even further decreased. "Don't photo. Don't photo, you. Why you need to photo?" he said unhappily. "I didn't take your picture, I took hers," said the one of the pair that was now even more shameless. In obvious chicanery, he pointed to a Tibetan woman who had been discussing the arrangement of a Buddhist ceremony with Phurbu. Maybe the Tibetan woman being pointed at did not understand Chinese because her face was blank. Phurbu was then really quite angry and said, "She is my sister, also don't want photo."

At this moment the other person spoke up. The anger that that face suddenly shown seemed to be more than anyone else. No, it was not only angry but aflame making his whole face glow red. "Why can't we take photographs? What right do you have to not let us take photographs?" His voice boomed with aggression.

Rights? Without using this word he had already crossed the line, but once he said that he just sparked our defiance. We shot back, "What right do you have to take photographs?"

"Don't you know this is a public place?" the man rattled on.

"This isn't a public place, it's a temple," I also chirped in. "Furthermore even if you think this place is public, we aren't public figures, and more so aren't gallery pieces. What rights? Haven't you ever heard of portrait rights?" Carried between Nyima and Phurbu's voices my words held a lot of force.

Nyima said justly, "Temples have temple rules." And Phurbu's Chinese, Ah!, he was definitely frustrated into exasperation. He was only able to

repeatedly and loudly say, "You've eaten too much, too much!" I couldn't help but want to laugh. This phrase, "Eaten too much", was learned from the Sichuanese and means something like, "You're looking for trouble." Just like the time I heard a Living Buddha sigh and say, "My back's got a crick in it," in today's Lhasa Sichuan dialect is definitely more the standard language than Mandarin.

"We have the right to take photographs. We have rights." Those two were brandishing their cameras as if they were fists.

"You've eaten too much," Phurbu said as he stood up.

"Temples have temple rules." Nyima also stood up.

"Based on what exactly do you have rights?" I too stood up.

The two Han laywomen also stood. They did not say anything but walked over and encouraged the men to leave the temple. It was almost like they were graciously expelled from the premises.

Of course, the men were not "expelled" but it almost seemed like it. Though they had a large sense of their own rights, they certainly seemed to be making a grand retreat. This security in their own rights seemed to come from the lenses draped on their bodies, or maybe was rooted in their way of thinking. — "Originally, while traveling on the land where one of the fifty-six official ethnicities lives one could do as one pleased. If we don't have rights then who does? Who would dare keep track of if we have eaten too much!"

Lhasa, September 2001

“不要拍照！”

两个浑身摄影头的中年男人端着相机在我们眼前晃来晃去。我们已经习惯了，确切地说，是尼玛他们已经习惯了这样的人。

这些人都是对西藏充满好奇的内地游客。由好奇到猎奇，这在于他们是边疆旅行中一个理所当然的过程。而要猎奇的工具，除了眼睛就是相当于另一种眼睛的诸如相机之类的机器。作为每天都要在大昭寺这个旅游景点售票并兼讲解的喇嘛们，被常常纳入各种各样的视力范围实在平常不过。尼玛他们早已视而不见了。

所以那两个男人在寺院的小庭院里用这个长镜头那个短镜头不停地捕捉着他们认为具有西藏风味的画面：燃着火苗的一排排酥油灯，盛满清水的巨大的铜制水缸，牵着卷毛狗转经的拉萨老妇，捧着哈达一脸虔诚的安多女子或者康巴汉子，当然，最为典型的裹着绛红色袈裟的喇嘛们。

我和两个汉族女子坐在几个喇嘛的旁边。我是来寺院点灯的。那两个手捻佛珠、一身素净的女子是汉地的居士，都在康巴的宁玛寺院里学习过很长时间，其中一个曾在色达五明佛学院学习了整整七年，但在前不久刚被当局强行拆除了自己盖的小屋，驱逐出了佛学院。她俩非常虔诚，每天要在大昭寺转“囊廓”一百圈。我和她俩正是在大昭寺里认识的。我们都跟尼玛他们很熟。每次朝佛之前总要先在被设作售票点的一隅坐一会儿，说说话，喝几杯甜茶。

或许是见到喇嘛和女人，或者说见到西藏喇嘛和汉人女子无拘无束地聊天很好奇吧，那两个摄影者猎奇的镜头悄悄地转移过来。尼玛看见了，开玩笑说，不要拍，这里有绝密不能拍照。他是一个很幽默的喇嘛。有一次，一个从汉地来的学佛不久的年轻人有些忧虑地对他说，师傅你每天这么忙，什么时间去闭关啊？来世吧，来世我再去闭关。尼玛爽朗地答道。看看，尼玛的反应就是这么快，让人开怀的话语里有透着佛家的道理。

什么绝密嘛，拿出来拍一拍。那两人中的一个有点无赖了。好像是这里的任何一样被他一拍都是莫大的荣幸。我们没有接他的话，继续谈论着几十年前大昭寺的地底下据说还潜伏着一个水潭的话题。

有一会儿。我们几乎把那两人抛在脑后里。事实上他俩就躲在我们的脑后又在悄悄地拍照。结果普布发现了。普布的汉语不如英语流利，一生气词汇量更是急剧减少。不要拍。不要拍，你们。为什么要拍嘛。他不高兴地说道。没有拍你。我拍的是她。那两人中的一个人更无赖了。他指着普布旁边一个正跟他商量办佛事的藏人女子狡辩道。那被指的藏人女子可能不懂汉语，一脸茫然。普布真的生气了，说，她是我姐姐，也不要拍。

这时候，另一个人说话了。那脸上突然冒出来的气愤好像比谁都多。不，不只是气愤，还有非常炽盛的气焰，把他的脸都烧红了。为什么不能拍？你们有什么权利不许我们拍照？他的声音很大，口气很是咄咄。

权利？这两字他不提也罢，一提倒激起了我们的反感，就插话反问，你们有什么权利非要拍照？

这是公共场所，知道吗。那人振振有辞。

这不是公共场所，这是寺院。我也提高了声音。何况即使是你们认为的公共场所，我们也不是公共人物，更不是展览品。什么权利？知不知道肖像权？我的这番话夹在尼玛和普布的声音中显得很有力。

尼玛在据理力争地说寺有寺规。而普布的汉语，唉，他一定是气坏了，只会反复大声地说你们吃多了，吃多了你们。我忍不住想笑。这句吃多了准是跟四川人学的。就像有一次听得一个活佛蹙眉叹道，我的腰杆好痛哦。如今的拉萨，四川话绝对比普通话更像普通话。

我们就是有权利拍照。我们就是有权利。那两人挥舞着相机像挥舞着拳头。

你们吃多了。普布边说边站了起来。

寺有寺规。尼玛也站了起来。

你们凭什么有权利？我也站了起来。

那两个汉人女居士也站了起来。没说什么，而是走过去，把那两人劝出寺院。又像是把那两人委婉地赶出了寺院。

当然不会是赶，只是让我觉得有点像。倒也免得他俩没台阶下，虽然他俩自我感觉权力很大。而这种感觉或许来自他们浑身的摄影行头，或许来自他们内心的莫种情结。——本来嘛，在一个五十六个民族之一生活的土地上旅行，想干什么就干什么，我们没有权力谁有权力？哪一个敢管我们有没有吃多了！

2001年9月于拉萨

Appendix B

Translations of He Xiaozhu 何小竹

Selections from the poetry collections

6 Verbs, or Apples

《6 个动词，或苹果》

and

After Writing a 1000 Poems

《写到 1000 首诗之后》

Translations of He Xiaozhu

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Methods of Addition and Subtraction

1

I set about editing this poetry collection nearly a year ago. I reread my work from the 80s and was not pleased with many of the poems. I only chose a small number of these poems to form the two sections “Ann Dreams of Apples and Fish” and “Poetry Selection”, as well as 10 other poems divided among the other sections. Therefore, this collection called *6 Verbs, or Apples* is mostly “new composition”, namely work written after 1994. This is the method of addition-subtraction that was used in editing: adding new work and deleting old.

2

Throughout these 20 years, I’ve actually always been using a method of addition-subtraction in my writing. At the beginning of my writing career I spent a lot of time thinking about my work. I had a period of poetry writing that critics called “sorcerous poetry” or “surrealism”. The poem “Ann Dreams of Apples and Fish” and others were the best examples of that style, as was the selection of 10 poems generally titled “Ghost City” and published in 1986 in the inaugural issue of “Not-Not”. It was at this time that I was considered to be a poet with a distinct style. This so-called “distinct style” was really just that other people could read in my poems many implied things. But I personally think that besides the presentation of language there is not that much more that someone can read into. My original purpose was still very much one of “form-ism”. However, in another way, as Yang Li has described, the period’s ethos also influenced me, or unsuspectingly affected me. So then I thought that having some things for people to read into was not a bad idea. Thus, I consciously started to practice “addition”, that is to accentuate those “stylish” things as to let people make even more associations. Luckily, pursuing the essence of concision as well as “Non-ism’s” doctrine made it so I did not slide too far down this path. Quite soon after, that is after I had written “Dimazhuo’ou’s City”, I gave up this so-called “style”.

3

I started writing “Poetry Selection”, and it was 1988. Yet, in just looking at the text of “Poetry Selection” one can see it is still not “subtraction” but rather “addition”, thus it had more ideas than poems like “Ann Dreams of Apples and Fish”. However, it was also these poems with “more ideas” that consummated my later method of “subtraction”. It was really with “6 Verbs, or Apples”, “Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels”, and “Sequence” that there emerged a “subtractive” look to my poems. Then in 1992, I arrived in Chengdu and with Yang Li, Jimu Langge, Lan Ma, and other “Not-Not” colleagues lived and worked together. I also then wrote short poems like

"Sichuan Opera", "Diana", etc., which are closer to my "new composition". But, there was still something that I had not passed through. In 1993, I wrote the poem "Trying to use Plain Language". This poem's title was able to clearly indicate its intention. Then in 1994, I went on a trip to Kunming and stayed on the bank of an emerald lake at a lumberyard resthouse for half a month. While there I wrote close to 10 poems like "Winter 1994 in Kunming" and personally thought that they had an reinvented sense about them. I brought these poems back to Chengdu and gave them to Yang Li to view. He thought they were "non-poems" which inspired me greatly. My understanding is that this "non-" is a "non-self" (different from the past) poetry, and is an even more "Not-Not" poetry. To differentiate them from the already stated "poetry" I call all these later pieces (i.e. "Not one Cow, But a Herd", "Fu'ertuo Highway Maintenance", etc.) "new composition".

4

The true meaning of "subtraction" began from here. What did I subtract? In 2000, when I was being interviewed by "City Pictorial" reporter Wu Mei we talked about (what was subtracted was) meaning (including philosophy), as well as poetic meaning (including sentiment). But after canceling out the expression of meaning and the flow of poetic meaning, what is leftover? When Wu Mei asked me this, I answered "poetry" is what is left. That is to say that writing like this is giving up those things that are always the fundamental characteristics of "poetry's" composition; it's a new writing of "poetry". At Yang Li's "Eraser" bar in 2000, we added one more condition to the summary of "this new writing": anti-lingual sense (or could be called surpassing "lingual sense"). Possibly even more theoretically stated it should be "supra-semantics". This is one of the fairly important contexts for "this new writing" because according to my perspective lingual sense may also be part of "semantification" and "stylification". "Supra-semantics" is an essential proposition in Lan Ma's "pre-culture" theory and is also a key point in understanding "Non-ism". Yet, to explain it nothing but a long tirade could clarify it. This essential proposition was later elaborated by Yang Li in his "Yang Li Talks about Poetry", and was condensed into the phrase: "language of empty vessels". Later, this was also what we then called "nonsense". Of course, my "new composition" also had a more synergistic writing environment, that of Yang Li's, Jimu Langge's, Xiao An's, Han Dong's, Yu Xiaowei's, Yu Jian's, Ding Dang's, Zhu Wen's, and later Wu Qing's and others', practice of writing. I feel fortunate that I am able to occupy the same era as these excellent poets.

5

But why then do I want to "restrain" myself? Because this kind of composition is without a doubt a kind of "limitary" writing, and every instance of "subtraction" will confront "discoveries" as well as "deathtraps".

A miraculous rescue from a desperate situation is the best figuration possible to depict the mental state of this kind of writing. But “theoretically” explaining it is very complicated (actually even “theoretical explanation” can only partially show why we write like this and has nothing to do with the actual writing), and if done poorly will produce even more divergent interpretations causing people all the more confusion. Therefore, simply put, I look at poetry basically as a kind of game. Every game has its rules. Playing within the rules is the site of games’ initial and also final pleasure.

加法与减法

1

着手编这本诗选有将近一年的时间。我重新看了我在 80 年代的作品，满意的不多，只选了少量编成“梦见苹果和鱼的安”和“组诗”两辑，另有 10 余首分别穿插在其他小辑里。所以，这部名为《6 个动词，或苹果》的诗集，大多数是“新作品”，即写于 1994 年以后的作品。这是在编选上做的一道加减法，即增加新作品，删减旧作品。

2

近 20 年来，在写作上，我其实也在做着一道加减法。我在写作的初期，思考得很多。我有过一个被评论者称为“巫术诗”或“超现实主义”的诗歌写作时期，这时期以《梦见苹果和鱼的安》等作品为代表，也就是 1986 年发表在《非非》创刊号上以《鬼城》为总标题的那 10 首诗。从这开始我被认为是一个风格独特的诗人。所谓“风格独特”，就是别人可以在我的诗中读出潜在的很多东西。其实我自己觉得，除了言语呈现之外，并没有那么多让人解读出来的东西，我本意还是很“形式主义”的。但是，另一方面，正如杨黎后来说的那样，时代风气也在影响着我，或者暗示着我。那时候便觉得，能够有些东西让人去解读也不错。于是，我有意识地开始做起了加法，也就是，将那些“风格化”的东西做进一步的强调，以让人有更多的联想。好在，追求简约的天性，以及“非非主义”的“戒律”，使我没在这路上滑得太深。很快，也就是在写了《第马着欧的城》之后，我放弃了所谓“风格”。

3

我开始写作《组诗》，这是 1988 年。虽说，单从文本上看，《组诗》做的还不是减法，反而是加法，即比之《梦见苹果和鱼的安》那些诗想法更多。但也正是这些“更多的想法”，成就了我以后的减法。事实也是这样，到《6 个动词，或苹果》、《剩下一些声音剩下一些果皮》及《序列》，就呈现出了一种“减”的模样。然后，1992 年，我到了成都，与杨黎、吉木狼格、蓝马等“非非”同仁生活和工作在一起，又写了一些短诗，如《川戏》、《狄安娜》等，与我后来的“新作品”就更加接近了。只是，还有种东西没有穿透。1993 年，我又写了《我试着用平常的语言》。这首诗在标题上就很能表明其写作意图。然后，到了 1994 年，我去了一次昆明，一个人在翠湖边的林业招待所住了半个月又写了《1994 年冬在昆明》等近 10 首诗，自己也觉得，有脱胎换骨的感觉。这些诗带回成都给杨黎看了，他认为是“非诗”，这给了我极大的鼓舞。我的理解是，这“非”既是“非我”（即不同于以往）的诗，也是更“非非”的诗。为了将它们与已有的“诗”相区别，我将之后的写作（如《不是一头牛，而是一群牛》、《福尔沱道班》等）都称之为“新作品”。

4

真正意义上的减法从此开始。减掉了什么呢？正如我在 2000 年接受《城市画报》记者吴梅的采访时谈到的，（减掉的就是）意义（包括哲理），以及诗意（包括抒情）。当取消了意义的表达，诗意的流露，还剩下什么呢？吴梅这样问我的时候，我回答说，剩下的就是“诗”。也就是说，这样的写作，是放弃了那些曾经是“诗”的基本元素的写作，是“诗”的新写作。2000 年在杨黎的“橡皮”酒吧，我们在总结“这样的写作”时还加了一条：反语感（或者叫超越“语感”）。也许更理论化的表述应该是：“超语义”。这是“这样的写作”的一个至关重要的背景。因为在我看来，“语感”也是可能“语义化”和“风格化”的。“超语义”是蓝马“前文化”理论的一个基本命题，也是理解“非非主义”的一个关键词。但要解释起来却非长篇大论不足以说明。这一基本

命题后来被杨黎在《杨黎说：诗》一文中所发挥，浓缩成四个字："言之无物"。也就是后来我们所说的"废话"。当然，"新作品"还有一个更具亲合力的写作背景，那就是杨黎、吉木狼格、小安、韩东、于小韦、于坚、丁当、朱文以及后来的乌青等人的写作实践。我为自己能够与这些优秀的诗人同处一个时代感到荣幸。

5

但是，为什么要如此"约束"自己呢？因为这样的写作无疑是一种"极限"写作，每一次"减法"将面临的既是"发现"，也是"绝境"。绝处逢生，是这种写作状态最形象化的描述。但是要"理论"地解释起来，却很复杂（事实上，就是"理论解释"也只能一部分的说明为什么要这样写，而与具体的写作并无直接的关系），弄不好，会产生更大的歧义，把人搞得更加糊涂。所以，简单地说，就是我基本上是将诗歌写作当成一种游戏看待的。而凡是游戏均有其游戏的规则。在规则中游戏，是游戏最初也是最终的乐趣所在。

剩下一些声音 剩下一些果皮

1

多少年来
我梦想写诗就像谈话
说出来就是那样

多少年来，我也说了
说了许多，但说出来不是那样

我扪心自问：
这是为什么？为什么诗歌
总是不能直截了当
不能像鸟身上的羽毛
像桑树上的桑叶

2

上语文课的时候
年龄还太小
因而胆子也很大
咬文嚼字，那饿相
吞下去枣子连核也吞下

到现在才知道
语言早已像一把尖刀
割碎了我的内心
再也缝补不上
牛死于刀下
再也不能用舌头
去亲近那些新鲜的草了

3

有时害怕睡眠
是因为睡去之后语言变得零乱
难以控制和指挥
一些动词会在不恰当的地方去
就像苹果不总是
挂在苹果树上

但有时又渴望睡眠
渴望那个不合时宜的动词
进入到朝思暮想的领地
那是整个世界前言不搭后语

Leftover Sounds, Leftover Peels

1

All these years
I've dreamt of writing poetry like a conversation
Words coming out just like that

5

After all these years, I have also said
said many things, but what I've said wasn't like that

10

Pressing my conscience I ask:
Why is this? Why can't poetry
ever be straightforward,
can't it be like the feathers on a bird,
be like the leaves on a mulberry tree

2

When I was in Chinese class
I was still too small
but my courage was conversely big
munching letters gnawing words, that starving look of
swallowing the jujube and even its pit

15

Only now do I know that
from early on language was like a sharp blade
Cutting up my heart
never to be mended again
Cows die under the knife
and can never again use their tongues
to be near that fresh grass

3

Sometimes I am afraid of sleep
because after falling asleep language becomes gargled
difficult to control and command
Some verbs will go to ill-fitting places
Just like an apple not always
hanging on an apple tree

25

But sometimes I also yearn to sleep
Yearn for that untimely verb
to enter the dominion of perpetual thought
That is the whole world left with nothing to say

30

所有的镜子都支离破碎
话语也不全是出自口中
我最得意的一次
竟是从脚趾头上
发出恋人的絮语

4

我又要谈到鱼了
这纠缠我生命的东西
它每一次游动
都使我震颤

它咕咕地叫着
令我梦幻不断，这些声音
总要我误会
以为接近了源头
已经无需张口，不需要张口了

5

剩下一些声音
剩下一些果皮，我们如何处置？

在我幼小的时候
就喜欢拆开汉字，在那些
没有了意义的笔画中探寻一些隐秘
我不是汉人，却又远离自己的民族
我听不懂我的母语，那些歌谣
只好在汉语中做永久的客人

我还能做些什么呢？
或者永远倾听那些在心中旋舞的枫叶

All mirrors shattered to pieces
Words not always spoken from the mouth
35 The time I was most proud of myself
was when from the tips of my toes
streamed out the prattling of lovers

4

I'm again talking about fish
This thing entangled with my life
40 Every time it swishes
it makes me shiver

It gurgles
making me continuously dream, those sounds
always make me incorrectly imagine
45 that I'm close to the headwaters
I already have no need to open my mouth, don't need to open my mouth

5

Some sounds are leftover
Some peels are leftover, how do we deal with them?

When I was a child
50 I liked to break up Chinese characters, in those
meaningless brush strokes look for hidden secrets
I am not Han, yet also am distant from my own ethnicity
I don't understand my mother tongue, those folksongs
in the Han language are only ever guests

55 What else can I do?
Other than forever closely listen to those whirling maple leaves in my heart

黑森林

黑森林

每一棵树都是一个死者

月光让亡魂成群结队

飞出鸟巢

遍地的猎手们

染满兽血的胡须

5

我是黑森林部落的后裔

我骑着牛长大

在第二十二个大雪夜

学会了森林语音

从那天起

我就懂得了悬挂在门上的

那支火枪

懂得了神龛上

那具虎骨的全部意义

10

15

也许

我成为黑森林又一棵死亡之树

耳听着林妖的呓语

不能入睡

我会想起年迈的祖母

在村庄里

推着石磨唱的盘歌

20

黑森林呵

没有花朵的安息之地

落叶掩盖着亘古的脚印

孤独如潮湿的雾

除了祖母

我已忘却了山外的钟声

25

Black Forest

Black Forest

Every tree is a dead one

Moonbeams make the departed souls crowd together

Leaving the nest

Hunters are everywhere

With beards stained by beasts' blood

I am a descendant of the Black Forest tribe

I rode a cow to adulthood

On the twenty-second night of blizzard

I learned the speech of the Black Forest

From that day

I understood the whole meaning

Of that musket hanging on the door

And the tiger's bone on the shrine

Maybe

I have become another Black Forest tree of the dead

My ears hearing the forest's enchantment

Not able to sleep

I will think of ancient mother ancestor

In the village

Pushing the grinding stone to the circling melody

The Black Forest

Has no place where the flowers rest

Fallen leaves covering the footprints of the ages

Lonely like damp fog

Except for mother ancestor

I have completely forgotten the hum from beyond the mountains

桑之水

如水一样流散的人群
有谁还能举起他们的头骨攀摘太阳
日潮无边，人群在涌动中渐渐弯曲
有谁还能在新的雨季里，追述往事

银白的河谷，哪一棵草
是当年牧羊女痴爱的胡须
哪一朵矢车菊
曾经斜插进死亡的嘴里

我们还能见村落
那些土灶，灰烬里掏出发黑的羊蹄
那些板墙，那些书写在墙上的指纹
我们还能寻见树，那些石榴，那些枫树
祖父们上吊的枫树呵
留下的木板做成风箱
男人的孤独仍然在铁匠铺里同晚风
一起煽动

还有青青的桑树
青青的姑嫂们的头帕
青青的采桑调
那些炎热炎热的夏天呵
我象青青的幼虫
贪睡于她们冰凉的皮肤

呵，一切都如水流散了
喧闹的乌江密布着寒冷的洞穴
象几百只瞎眼，宁静得叫人透不过气来

这已不是风琴的时代，风铃子的季节
巫术气的风箱
连同神秘的手指
象乌木一样
封存在地壳里了
我们唯一从地面的树林
听见幽灵般的摸擦
水雾在树叶间穿行，雨滴缠绵，琴声
若现
呵，可是我洗濯梦幻之手的桑之水
我追忆的人群？

Water of the Mulberry

Like water the horde flows apart
Who can still lift their head to climb to the sun
The horizon never ends, the horde in the rushing water gradually bends
In the rainy season who can still hold onto the past

5 Silvery-white river paddy, which blade of grass
in that year was the beard of a shepherdess' unrequited love
Which cornflower
Crookedly came to death in the mouth

We can still visit the village
10 Those mud stoves, those blackened sheep hooves fished out of the ashes
Those walls, those fingerprints from writing books on walls
We can still look for the trees, pomegranate and maple
The maples that the ancestors used to hang themselves on
The left over wood being made into bellows
15 Men's loneliness is still in the smithy stirring
With the evening wind

There are also green mulberry trees
Green sister-in-laws' headscarves
Green melodies of picking mulberries
20 Those hot hot summers!
I am like a green grub
Longing to sleep on their cold skin

Everything like water flows away
The sonorous black river covers over the freezing den
25 As if a hundred blind eyes peacefully called to people that can't penetrate the air

This is already not the time of wind-strings or the season of wind-bells
The bellows with an air of witchery
Connect to the mystic fingers
Just like ebony
30 Sealed in the earth's crust
Our only forest from the ground
Hearing the phantom like touch
Fog passes between the tree's leaves, rain droplets linger, bells ring
As if manifest
35 But I wash my dreaming hands of mulberry water
And the horde I look back on?

这是谁家的牛

沿着小路下来
走来一头牛
牛的后面远远地跟着
一个人
这是谁家的牛
同路的人问
那个远远地跟在后面的人
高声地回答
是谢家的牛
哦，我们看了看谢家的牛
它已经往小路走上去了
一头不大的黄牛

5

10

Whose Cow is This

Down along the small road
came a cow
In the distance followed
a person
Whose cow is this?
asked a passerby
The person following in the distance
yelled out in reply
It's the Xie family cow
Oh, we had a look at the Xie family cow
It had already gone up the road
A smallish heifer

不是一头牛，而是一群牛

那天的确也是这样
先是一个农民牵来一头牛
让我们拍照
后来别的农民听说了
也把他们的牛从牛圈里牵出来
牵到雪地上
让我们拍照
副县长说，够了，够了
别牵来了
记者们没有胶卷了
但农民们还是把所有的牛都牵了出来
他们都想给自家的牛
照一张像

Not one Cow, but a Herd

That day really did happen just like this
First a peasant brought a cow
to let us take pictures
After which other peasants heard the news
5 and brought their cows out from the enclosure
leading them onto the snow
to let us take pictures
The assistant county magistrate said, "Enough, enough
don't bring anymore
10 The reporters have no more film"
But the peasants still brought out every cow
They all wanted to have their cow's
picture taken

海螺沟笔会

10 年前的 6 月

我们翻过二郎山到达泸定

讨论了两天少数民族文学的发展

第三天进入风景区

我们在一个叫磨西的地方开始骑马 5

那马很矮小

简直就不像马

路过一座山峰的时候

旅游局长请作家们

为那座山峰命名 10

作家们停下马来

一齐看着那座山峰

看了半天

也没能想出一个好名字

记得那天吃过晚饭

山中便下起了濛濛细雨

我坐在二号营地的木栏杆上

看见一对日本夫妇

身穿雨衣

骑着马往山下走

这情景使我觉得

很有诗意

第二天一早

我们继续向三号营地进发

目的是去看大冰瀑

在进入冰川地带的时候

我意外地看见了玉兰花

当我们越过玉兰花

看见贡嘎山的时候

那凝固的冰瀑

就在贡嘎山下

Conch Gorge Writing Conference

10 years ago in June

we crossed over Erlang mountain arriving at Hudong,

and for two days discussed the development of minority literature

On the third day we entered the scenic area,

and at a place called Moxi started riding horses

Those horses were very short,

really didn't even look like horses

As we passed a mountain peak

the travel agent asked the writers

to name the mountain 10

We writers stopped the horses,

and huddled together looking at the peak

After a long while

we still couldn't think of a good name

15 I remember that day after eating dinner

a misty drizzle fell in the mountains

I was sitting on a wooden railing in the number two campsite,

when I saw a Japanese couple,

decked out in raingear,

20 riding down the mountain on horseback

This scene gave me the sensation

of poetry

Early on the second day

we continued our journey towards the number three campsite,

25 our goal being a large frozen waterfall

When entering the glacier belt

I by chance saw magnolia flowers

As we passed the flowers

and looked upon Gongga mountain,

30 those coagulated falls

were just below the mountain

在昆明听张宇光谈西藏

张宇光，原来是西藏文学的编辑
我在昆明碰到他
他请我去打网球，请我
吃云南菜
张宇光，在西藏生活了五年
他说12月份
拉萨的阳光还是很灼人
因为那里空气稀薄
他最后告诉我
四川人在那里开了许多餐馆
于是我们就笑了起来
在拉萨完全可以说四川话

Listening to Zhang Yuguang Talk about Tibet in Kunming

Zhang Yuguang used to be the editor of *Tibetan Literature*
I ran into him in Kunming
He invited me to play tennis, and invited me
to have Yunnan food
5 Zhang Yuguang lived in Tibet for five years
He says that in December
Lhasa's sun is still quite fierce
because the atmosphere is thin there
Finally, he tells me
10 that many Sichuanese have opened restaurants there
We start to laugh because
in Lhasa you can speak Sichuanese wherever you go

背后站了一匹马

吃面条的时候
背后站了一匹马
我们当中可能只有很少数的人
注意到了
因为吃面条的时候
都把眼睛看着面条
只有一两个人
回头
看见了那一匹马

5

Behind stood a Horse

When eating noodles
a horse stood behind us
Probably very few
realized it
because when eating
our eyes focused on the noodles
Only one or two people
turned their heads
and saw the horse

等贵州省下雨

我爸来了
我妈还没有来
因为乌江还没有涨水
只通快艇
不通慢船
我妈晕船
只能坐慢船
不能坐快艇
我爸来了
我爸天天看天气预报
等着贵州省下雨
只有那边下雨
这边的水才会涨起来

5

10

Waiting for Guizhou Province to Rain

My dad has come
My mom still hasn't come
because the Wu river still isn't full
Only speedboats get through
the slow ferries can't
My mom gets seasick
can only take the slow ferries
can't take the speedboats
My dad has come
Dad reads the weather forecast everyday
waiting for it to rain in Guizhou province
Only when it rains there
will the water here fill up

风儿

一出门全是风
衣襟下的风儿托着你
这是你初次行走在高原城市
风儿托起你的双脚
你担心出了城门就是深渊
高原之城
如纸上的沙粒
在风中颤抖

5

Gust of Wind

Stepping out all is wind
wind beneath clothes pulls you
This is your first trip to a highland city
wind pulls at your two feet
You are afraid that outside the city is the abyss
Cities of the Highlands
Like sand granules on paper
Trembling in the wind

菖蒲

羊在山上跑
那人看雨从羊背上走近
于是采菖蒲的孩子

说刚才还看见
有一个太阳

菖蒲挂在木门上了
女人在洗澡
忽然想到那头牛了
两天前就生了病

牛车从很远的地方来
那人抱一捆菖蒲
晚上熬成汤

羊又在山上跑了
云很白很白
那人黑着脸

Calamus

Goats gallivant on the mountains
There a person sees the rain come in on the goats' backs
Whereupon the children picking calamus

5 say that just now they could still see
there was a sun

Calamus hangs above the wooden door
a woman washes and
suddenly thinks of that one cow
who two days ago got sick

10 The cow cart arrived from far away
This person grabbed a bundle of calamus and
in the evening stewed a broth

Goats are again gallivanting on the mountains
the clouds are so white, so white
15 But that person's face bares a black countenance

桉树的香味

我知道桉树的香味
从桉树皮下发出的香味
我曾经漫不经心剥下树皮
我曾将桉树的香味
挥洒在空气间
5 至今我还能闻到那样的桉树的香味

Fragrance of Eucalyptus

I know the fragrance of eucalyptus
The smell that exudes from eucalyptus bark
After I callously peeled the bark from the tree
I unintentionally released the fragrance of
eucalyptus into the air
Even now I can still smell that kind of eucalyptus perfume

雪中的电报

才是今年的初雪
那些飘落我围巾的雪花
被指尖的触动
像消失一声呼吸
我还是第一次 5
如此仔细地看见
雪花的形状，空气的雕刻
它们胜过人间任何一种花卉
它们如此新奇
使我年轻，使我 10
感觉想哭的轻盈

下午，雪越下越大
我听见雪的声音
钻进了锁闭的房屋
那声音送来了 15
雪中的电报

天已渐黑
电报说：“安病重速回”
我知道今晚的雪还会下大
街道和通往住宅的小路 20
一夜间都要变白
树要变白它们的羽毛
我知道明天汽车不能启程
我打了长语，我要在电话上
对安说：“这里正在下雪……” 25

Telegram in the Snow

It was only the first snow of the year
Those snowflakes whirling about my scarf
Touched by fingertips
disappear like a breath
This is my first time
to so carefully observe
snowflakes' shape, a sculpture of the sky
They surpass any manicured flower
They thus in novelty
make me young, make me
feel the tenderness of tears

In the afternoon, the more it snowed the harder it snowed
I heard the sound of snow
drilling into the locked room
That sound brought
a telegram in the snow

The day was already darkening
The telegram said: "Ann's seriously ill, return quickly"
I know this evening's snow will still come down heavily
All roads and paths to the house
will all turn white in the night
Trees will want to whiten their feathers
I know that tomorrow cars won't be able to move
I make a long call, I want to say
on the phone: "Ann, its snowing here"

一种语言

我不愿在
下午两点说出
这一种语言

这是两只
被梦幻击毙的猫头鹰
睡眠的眼睛
预感到一座雪山的死去

看我手势
然后向着那个方向
一直走去
就会听见钟声

我不愿在
天黑以前说出
这一种语言

那时我们都坐在
一扇门前
等待落日
默默地数着黑色的念珠

如果有人
穿过我曾经穿过的荒野
再向世界走去
我也无语可说
只合上我的双手
这是最后的箴言

A Type of Language

I am not willing at
two in the afternoon to speak
this type of language

This is two
owls being shot down by dreams
Sleepy eyes
foreseeing a snowy mountain's death

Watch my gesture
then head in that direction
continuing straight ahead
and you will hear the bell's ring

I am not willing
before darkness to speak
this type of language

At that time we are all sitting in
front of a door
waiting for the setting sun
silently counting the black rosary beads

If someone
passes through the wilderness I've already passed through
and then heads toward the world
There is nothing I can say
I can only clasp my two hands
This is the last admonition

去苏坡乡

这个村的男人在睡觉
一个女人在镇上走
另一个女人跟在后面
她们素不相识
这是我的猜想

5

此时月亮又大又圆
在成都难得看见
相隔十几公里
月亮的差异如此之大

我来到苏坡乡派出所
女警察在值班
她圆圆的脸庞
很像当晚的月亮
我问：“你就是李宁的同学？”
她一笑说：“李宁来过电话。”
事情就这样办妥了

10

15

Going to Supo Village

This village's men are asleep
A woman walks in the town
Another follows behind her
They are probably not acquainted
This is my guess

At this moment the moon is big and round
In Chengdu it is rarely seen
Ten or more kilometers
makes the difference great

I've come to the Supo village police station
There's a woman police officer on duty
Her round face
Looks much like tonight's moon
I ask, "Are you Li Ning's former classmate?"
She, smiling, says, "Li Ning called."
And with that, the matter was taken care of

梨花公路

梨花延续几里路
沿着公路的两侧
这就是梨花公路
它吸引了远方的汽车
虽然在交通图上
还没有标明
这样一条公路
但来往的车辆
它们碾过花瓣的轮子
已证明了梨花公路的存在

The Pear Blossom Highway

The pear blossoms extend over several kilometers
along the highway's two sides
This is the pear blossom highway
It attracts cars from distant places,
5 though on road atlases
they haven't yet marked
this type of road
But the coming and going vehicles,
their tires that have ground flower petals,
10 already testify to the existence of the pear blossom highway

到西昌

向吉木狼格学习
去不了的地方
写一首诗去

写我到西昌去
见到了吉木狼格
像以前去西昌一样
见面就要喝酒
但我对他说
这次恐怕不行
嘴上生疮
肚子里还在上火

其实我也明白
这哪里是理由
酒一定要喝
而且一喝就要醉
一生中去过西昌四次
加上虚拟的这一次
是五次
哪一次不喝醉

诗云：到西昌不喝醉
等于没到西昌
02/08/13

To Xichang

Learning from Jimu Langge
I write a poem about going
to a place I can't go

Writing that I've gone to Xichang
and met Jimu Langge
Just like times before
once meeting we will drink
But I say to him
I'm afraid I can't this time
My mouth is seething with pain
my stomach is still burning

But I really know
No matter what excuse
I'll definitely drink
and with one drink I'll be drunk
In my life I've gone to Xichang four times
With the addition of this fictitious time
it's five times
Which time did we not drink?

The poem sayeth: going to Xichang and not drinking
amounts to not going to Xichang at all
August 13, 2002

今晚有月光

今晚有月光
这是李白说的
李白说的时候
还躺在床上
他半仰起身来
从窗外望出去
于是他又说
故乡啊
我很想你
02/06/03

5

Tonight's Moon

Tonight there is a moon
This was said by Li Bai
When Li Bai said it,
he was still lying in bed
He raised himself halfway up
and gazed out the window
Thereupon he said again
My village home,
how I miss you!
June 3, 2002

去过和没去过的地方

1995 年去过昆明
从成都坐飞机去的
1988 年去延吉
坐火车去的
这一年坐了很多火车 5
去南京也是
武汉是坐轮船去的
也是 1988 年
广州去过三次
一次坐火车 10
两次坐飞机
去贵阳的次数
多得都记不清了
只记得
每次都坐的火车 15
还有拉萨
要去也肯定坐飞机
可以坐长途汽车去的地方
我已经想好了一个
四川马尔康 20
01/10/07

Places I've Been and Not Been

In 1995 I went to Kunming,
took a plane from Chengdu
In 1988 I went to Yanji,
went by train
I rode a lot of trains that year,
including to Nanjing
Wuhan was on a boat,
also in 1988
I've been to Guangzhou three times
once by train
twice by plane
The number of times I've gone to Guiyang
is too many to remember clearly
I just remember
that every time was by train
And then also Lhasa,
if I go it'll definitely be by plane
Out of the places I can take a long distance bus to
I've already decided on one
Ma'erkang, Sichuan
October 7, 2001

最近没有吉木狼格的音讯

每天，能看见他
但看见的是他的名字
他人在西昌
离成都千山万水
两地的气候
也很不一样
他很久没来成都了
我也很久没打电话了
其实像吉木狼格这样的朋友
若干年来
他都如一句俗语
说的那样
神龙见首不见尾
02/05/22

5

10

No News from Jimu Langge

Everyday I can see him
but it's only his name
His person is in Xichang
separated from Chengdu by many mountains and rivers
The two places' climates
are entirely different
He hasn't come to Chengdu in a while
and also hasn't called
But actually a friend like Jimu Langge
over all these years
has been like how
that saying goes:
You see the spirit dragon's head but not his tail
May 22, 2002

在塔公草原

1、我在高原上失眠
高原上
不是一个适合
睡觉的地方
这是我在塔公乡
第一个晚上失眠之后
想要写下的
一句话
然后我试图找寻
一两个失眠的原因
找了很久
找到天亮

5

10

2、往事重现折多河
所有重现的往事
与眼前的折多河
根本无关
当我明白这个道理后
决定带着往事
乘车离开此地
我知道这样一来
折多河注定了
要成为一条伤感的河

15

20

3、乡党委书记叫登巴
一表人材啊
这个叫登巴的藏族男人
他握住我的手说
我叫登巴
在这人烟稀少的草原上
这样的彬彬有礼
恰倒好处

25

30

4、四个藏族人
8月21日
我住在塔公乡
晚上失眠
起床夜解
看见隔壁房间里
有四个藏族人
在打麻将

35

On the Tagong Steppe

1. Insomnia in the Highlands
The highlands
are not a suitable place
for sleeping
This is the sentence
I wanted to write
after my first sleepless night
in the village of Tagong
Then I wanted to try and find
a couple of reasons for my insomnia
I thought about it a long time
All the way til dawn

2. The Past Remakes the Zheduo River
All of the reoccurring past
has nothing to do
with the Zheduo river in front of my eyes
But after I understood this truth
I decided to take the past
and leave this place by car
I knew from this point on
the Zheduo river was ordained
to become a sorrowful river

3. Dengba the Village Party Secretary
A human face,
this Tibetan man named Dengba
He shook my hand and said
My name is Dengba
On this grassland of few habitations
this kind of courteousy
was a nice surprise

4. Four Tibetans
21st of August
I was in Tagong village,
and couldn't sleep so
I got up in the middle of the night
and saw in the next room
four Tibetans
playing mahjong

5、在高原上不宜写诗 写诗会加速心跳 空气稀薄 每个词语都有可能消耗掉 一公升氧气	40	5. Highlands aren't Suitable for Writing Poetry Writing poetry makes your heartbeat quicken The air is thin Every word could consume one liter of oxygen
6、我差点被一块石头打中 在此之前，我 克制着，忧郁着 那块石头最终 与我擦肩而过	45	6. Almost Hit by a Stone Before this moment, I was restraining myself, worrying In the end, that stone brushed my shoulders as it passed
那是一块来自 雅娜神山的石头 它砸下来的方向 据当地人说 有三个多小时骑马的路程 我没有骑马 没有骑上马去 只是克制着，忧郁着 这块石头最终 不属于我	50 55	That was a stone that came from the Yana sacred mountain Its crushing trajectory down, according to the natives, takes three hours by horse I didn't ride a horse, didn't ride atop a horse, only was restraining myself, worrying In the end, this stone didn't belong to me
也可以这样说 在一个特定的环境下 我差点被一块石头打中	60	It could also be said that under specific conditions I was nearly hit by a falling stone
7、我只有躺着才能写诗 我只有躺在床上 让词语也平躺着 一切的动作 尽可能减少对氧气的 消耗	65	7. Lying Down is the Only Way to Write Poetry Only my lying on the bed makes the words also lie flat Every movement attempting to reduce the consumption of oxygen
我左手托着本子 右手拿笔 我知道这样的姿势 正压迫着心脏	70	My left hand holds the notebook My right the pen I know that this position presses exactly on my heart
但有什么办法呢 当一些词语缓缓而出 至少让我的呼吸 有所缓解	75	But what can I do? As a few words slowly come out, at least it relieves my breathing

就这样侧卧着 一个在高原上需要侧卧 才写得出诗的诗人 是多么奇怪的一种姿态 我是否可以这样宣布 我，一个侧卧的诗人	80	Side-lying like this A poet in the highlands who must lie on his side to be able to write poetry It's such a strange position From here can I proclaim I — the side-lying poet
8、采金船 这几天，我一直在想着 那艘采金船		8. The Gold-collector Ship These past few days I've been constantly thinking about the Gold-collector ship
我随一个摄制组来到 塔公草原 从营地到拍摄现场 每天往返都要看见 河滩上那艘庞大的采金船 就是在这开阔的原野上 它的体积也是够庞大的了 一个锈迹斑斑的庞然大物 它已经死了，无人问津 这毫无疑问 有问题的是 这几天我总是要想起它 关于这艘采金船 我可能想得最多的是 为什么没有人 将它从这高原上搬走	85 90 95 100	I followed a film production team to the Tagong steppe From the campsite to the movie set every day back and forth wanting to see everything That huge Gold-collector on the bank of the river out there on this vast wilderness Its capacity was also humongous, a mammoth with streaks of rusty patches It's already dead, nobody inquires This goes without question The problem is that I've kept thinking about it these past few days, this Gold-collector What I've probably thought about most is why no one has taken it out of the highlands

西昌的星空

像葡萄
水晶,或露珠
那些星星
就这样
挂在西昌的空中

5

我,吉木狼格
中茂,陈洁,秦风
和我的家人
走在这样的星空下

Stars of Xichang

Like grapes,
crystals, or dew drops
Those stars
like this
hang in Xichang's sky

I, Jimu Langge,
Zhong Mao, Chen Jie, Qin Feng,
and my family
walk beneath this kind of starry sky

Internet Chat with He Xiaozhu on March 6, 2005

我是茶叶... 22:54:17 (I am Tea-leaves)

你好达恬地,我是何小竹.你那边几点?

He Xiaozhu: Hello d dayton, I am He Xiaozhu. What time is it there?

datiand 22:58:39

你好, 我这边快十一点

D Dayton: Hello, It's 11:00 here.

我是茶叶... 22:58:55

上午?还是晚上?

HXZ: Morning or night?

datiand 22:59:41

晚上, 应该比你们那边晚两个小时差不多

DD: Night, we're about two hours ahead of you.

datiand 23:01:15

顺便, 谢谢你回我的信, 希望我们可以认识/合作

DD: Also, thanks for returning my letter. I hope we can get to know each other and help each other out.

我是茶叶... 23:01:14

那就还没错开得很厉害

HXZ: Ah, that's not too bad.

我是茶叶... 23:02:31

很高兴认识你,但怎么合作,我听你的

HXZ: I'm really happy to meet you, but what do you need? I'm listening.

datiand 23:03:35

是的, 就比中国往南边, 坐飞机要差不多八个小时

DD: Yeah, its just south of China. By plane its about 8 hours away.

我是茶叶... 23:04:12

有机会来中国,欢迎到成都来玩

HXZ: If you can come to China. I welcome you to come to Chengdu.

datiand 23:06:59

我就想理解你自己对文学的一些概念, 而且对做一个民族诗人是怎么样的, 我现在在研究然后未来想把我的论文出版, 希望以后可能可以帮你拿机会来澳大利亚

DD: I would like to know how you look at 'literature', and what you think of it as a minority poet? I am in the middle of researching and I would like to publish my thesis in the future. I hope I could maybe help get you an opportunity to come to Australia.

datiand 23:07:53

还有想翻译你的诗, 在中国外把它出版

DD: I also want to translate your poetry and publish them outside of China.

datiand 23:08:54

如果你有什么要求或意见请告诉我, 我可以想办法

DD: If you have any needs please ask me and I'll try and work it out.

我是茶叶... 23:09:26

没问题,我能够提供的帮助将毫不保留地提供.有问必答:)

HXZ: No problem. Any help I can give I will, and I'll answer any questions.

datiand 23:13:16

我知道你是参加哪个非非主义派, 而看过你的一些文章关于它

DD: I know that you have participated in the 'Non-ism' group, and I've read some of your articles on that.

datiand 23:13:37

你是一个苗族人, 对吗?

DD: You are Miao, yes?

我是茶叶... 23:13:50

是的,一半的血统,父亲是,母亲是汉族

HXZ: Yes, I'm half. My father's Miao. My mother's Han.

datiand 23:16:21

在你的诗内, 你觉得有没有民族的情调或目的?

DD: Within your poetry do you feel there is any 'ethnic' sentiment or goals?

datiand 23:17:12

所以你在家讲汉语或苗语或都讲?

DD: So do you speak Han or Miao or both at home?

我是茶叶... 23:17:13

早期的诗(25岁)以前有,后来的就淡化了.

HXZ: My early poetry (25 years old) had some, but afterwards it's disappeared some.

datiand 23:19:21

不好意思, 我不是想对你作一个采访, 但你知道些个论文就把老是想这一些问题

DD: Sorry, I don't mean for this to be a interview, but you know how writing a thesis goes: I'm always thinking about these issues.

我是茶叶... 23:19:43

没关系,我正在做着回答的准备.

HXZ: Don't worry about it, I am prepared to answer.

我是茶叶... 23:20:54

刚才有个电话打扰.马上就回答:)

HXZ: A call interrupted me, I'll answer immediately.

datiand 23:21:39

没关系

DD: Take your time.

我是茶叶... 23:23:33

我不会讲苗语,一直是讲汉语.我是在汉文化圈长大的.是写诗之后,才有意识地去接触苗族文化,也去了一些典型的保留了苗族文化生态的地方.曾经有过学苗语的打算,但没机会.在典型的苗族地区,你不会讲苗语,会被认为是假苗族.假苗族在当地话中叫"茶叶苗",哈哈

HXZ: I don't speak Miao. I've only ever spoken Han. I've grown up surrounded by Han culture. It was just before I started writing poetry that I consciously approached Miao culture and went to a few unspoiled places that still preserved Miao cultural environments. At first I planned to study Miao language, but there was no opportunity.

In the Miao areas, if you don't know Miao then you are said to be a "fake" Miao. In the local language a "fake" Miao is called a "Tea Leaves Miao", ha, ha, ha.

我是茶叶... 23:24:18

所以,我这个QQ的网名就叫"我是茶叶"

HXZ: So my QQ username is "I'm Tea Leaves".

datiand 23:25:54

我看你的非非主义方向好像有点反对传统概念, 你觉得这个有没有包括民族概念?

DD: It seems to me that the direction of 'Non-ism' is somewhat against traditional ideas. Do you think this includes ethnic ideas?

datiand 23:26:45

啊理解, 你网名挺好的

DD: Ah, I understand. You have an interesting username.

datiand 23:27:45

其实我刚刚说“反对”是太厉害了

DD: Actually, saying "against" is too strong.

datiand 23:28:44

我意思是说离开的

DD: My point is that it is moving away from those things.

我是茶叶... 23:29:13

非非主义跟语言有关,跟民族无关.我早期的诗既有民族意识的成分,也有语言意识的成分,主要的,还是更关注诗歌的语言及形式.

"反对"不厉害,因为,我的诗歌观念导致我后来走向"非诗"的程度.

HXZ: 'Non-ism' has to do with language, nothing to do with ethnicity. My early poetry had elements of ethnic awareness as well as elements of language awareness. Mainly though, I still paid most attention to poetry's language and form.

我是茶叶... 23:31:03

就是把诗写得不再是传统意义上的那个"诗"

HXZ: That is to say writing poetry that was not that traditional thing called "poetry".

datiand 23:32:09

对, 这个是我对非非理解的意思

DD: Yes, this was what I understood as the meaning of 'Non-ism'.

我是茶叶... 23:32:26

你看过我哪些作品了呢?

HXZ: What have you read?

datiand 23:35:42

我看过基本上都是6个动词或苹果里面的, 包括介绍

DD: Most of what I have read is from your *6 Verbs, or Apples*, including the introduction.

我是茶叶... 23:36:40

那基本上就是我自己认可的诗.早期诗选得比较少,前言里有说明

HXZ: Those are the poems that I personally approve of. I didn't choose many of my earlier poems. I explain that in my preface.

datiand 23:38:29

我在一些网上看过一两个你解释非非主义的文张, 但忘了题目, 不好意思

DD: I've read a couple of your articles on 'Non-ism' on the web, but I've forgotten their titles, sorry.

datiand 23:39:04

是，我看过前言

DD: Yes, I've read the preface.

我是茶叶... 23:39:29

主要的一篇就是<我与非非>.

我有一个个人主页,你可以看看:

HXZ: The main one is "Non-ism and I".

I have my own webpage. You can have a look at www.hexiaozhu.com.

我是茶叶... 23:40:07

上面有我大多数作品,文章,以及别人写我的评论

HXZ: There is a lot of my work, articles, and even some other people's criticism on there.

datiand 23:40:54

但你觉得虽然你写诗的方向现在不包括民族的目的，有没有民族的影响或概念在里？

DD: Although now you feel that the direction your poetry writing has gone doesn't include ethnic goals, do you think there is any ethnic influence or ideas in it?

datiand 23:41:07

好，我会去看

DD: Alright, I'll have a look.

datiand 23:42:05

你认为有没有算“民族文学”？

DD: Do you think it classifies as "Minority Literature"?

我是茶叶... 23:44:19

意识深处是有的,只是,都转化为语言问题了.也就是说,我不以表面的民族性作为诗歌写作的动机,更不会将民族风情当回事.但是,因为有苗族这一文化身份,使得我对汉语言多了一个参照,就像我也曾经将西方先锋文学当成参照一样.当初,我想有"外力"来拉我离开汉语言的传统,让我从汉语言的窒息中解放出来.

HXZ: There is deep in my consciousness, only, it all transforms into a language issue. That is that I don't use expressing "ethnicity" as my motive for writing poetry, and even more so don't want to take advantage of minority folk culture. But, because I have this Miao cultural identity it gives me an extra reference point on the Han language, just like how Western avant-garde literature has also become a reference point for me. Early on, I wanted to have an "outside force" to pull me away from the Han language's tradition and release me from the Han language's suffocation.

我是茶叶... 23:45:01

民族文学这个话题说起来很复杂.我们留到以后再说.

HXZ: The problem of minority literature is really complicated. Let's leave it for later.

datiand 23:49:38

不错，理解你的意思，还佩服笔法

DD: Nice, I understand what you mean. I really appreciate your writing style.

我是茶叶... 23:50:20

呵呵

HXZ: Hmm.

datiand 23:50:38

你会英语?

DD: Do you know English?

我是茶叶... 23:50:44

不会,一点不会

HXZ: No, not at all.

datiand 23:51:25

不好意思, 这个问题我不喜欢讲

DD: Sorry, I don't like to ask this question.

datiand 23:52:35

我就是想怎么样给你看我的翻译你的诗

DD: I was just thinking of how to let you read my translations of your poetry.

我是茶叶... 23:52:42

我准备不那么忙于写作了学一学英语.我对多学一门语言很有兴趣,一直只是没机会,就像没机会学苗语一样.你会汉语我很佩服:)

HXZ: I've decided that after I'm not so busy writing I'll study English. I'm really interested in studying another language, just haven't had the chance, like studying Miao. I admire that you know Chinese.

datiand 23:53:24

因为我要翻译地很接近你的意思而声调

DD: Because I want to translate very close to your meaning and tone.

我是茶叶... 23:53:56

我看不懂,但可以交流.我对翻译方面的一些问题很关注,毕竟,我们这年代的诗人都是读了很多翻译诗的,对翻译的问题比较关注,也有些了解

HXZ: I can't read it but we can talk about it. I am sensitive to translation problems. After all, we poets from that decade all read a lot of translated poems, pay a lot of attention to these issues, as well as understand some of these issues.

datiand 23:54:37

是,我好像是相反的,会语言但没有时间写作

DD: I seem to be the opposite; I know the language but have no time for writing.

我是茶叶... 23:54:46

你还年轻啊,哈哈

HXZ: You're still young, ha, ha.

我是茶叶... 23:54:54

有的是时间

HXZ: You have time.

datiand 23:56:00

还好, 刚刚上个星期过了生日, 已经不算太年轻

DD: Kind of, I just had a birthday last week; not so young anymore.

datiand 23:58:25

对, 可能最好是我们有时间的时候可以慢慢讲我翻译的, 作对比, 检查我有没有好理解诗歌的全面

DD: Yes, it would probably be best to slowly talk through the translations when we have time, compare, and examine if I've understood your poems entire meaning.

我是茶叶... 23:58:28

我的诗从某种意义上说,是比较好翻的,明白,不生僻,没那么多象征与暗示.但又特别不好翻,因为语气和声调,在另一种语言中以什么方式对应,是个问题.

HXZ: The words of my poems are relatively easy to translate, understand, and not too unusual. There's not so many symbols or hidden meanings. But there are also some that would be really difficult to translate because of mood and tone. What style to use in another language is a real issue.

datiand 23:59:55

对了,这是差不多我最大的问题,是诗的微妙

DD: Yes, this is my biggest problem: poetry's subtlety.

datiand 00:00:34

你有没有听说过沙马?

DD: Have you ever heard of Shama?

我是茶叶... 00:00:43

我见过的,彝族诗人.

HXZ: I've met him. He's a Yi poet.

我是茶叶... 00:01:01

吉木狼格现在也在成都

HXZ: Jimu Langge is also in Chengdu now.

我是茶叶... 00:01:43

你如果来成都,我们当面谈诗,你的翻译工作就会更愉快和轻松一些.

HXZ: If you come to Chengdu we could discuss poetry face to face. Your translation work would be faster and easier.

datiand 00:01:57

是,我比较交想来见你们,我七月份可能会有机会过来

DD: I hope to be able to come visit the two of you. I might be able to come in July.

我是茶叶... 00:02:09

那很好

HXZ: That's great.

datiand 00:03:56

我有机会参加北京师范大学的《中国100年现代诗歌》讨论会,想给谈我这个话题

DD: I have an opportunity to participate in the Beijing Normal University's "100 Years of Modern Chinese Poetry" conference, hope to be able to give my topic.

我是茶叶... 00:04:21

7月份吗?

HXZ: July?

datiand 00:04:28

你七八月份会在成都吗?

DD: Will you be in Chengdu in July?

datiand 00:04:54

那个是八月份几号

DD: The conference is in August.

datiand 00:05:08

好像十多号

DD: About the 10th or so.

我是茶叶... 00:05:45

估计会.我女儿今年6月高考,所以,7月要说不清楚一些,但8月肯定在.不过,到时候你可以提前跟我联系,我们可在时间上作出安排.

HXZ: I should be. My daughter takes the university exam this year in June, so I'm not sure about July but I'll definitely be here in August. You should ask again when the time gets closer. We can arrange the time then.

datiand 00:07:29

好啊,挺好的

DD: Alright, sounds good.

我是茶叶... 00:09:20

那么,今天就先谈到这里.有什么问题,你给我发邮件吧.

HXZ: Well let's end here for now then. If you have any questions just send me an email.

datiand 00:10:14

好,谢谢你,真开兴认识你

DD: Ok, thank you. Really happy to meet you.

我是茶叶... 00:10:44

认识你我也很开心

88

HXZ: Really happy to meet you too, good luck.

datiand 00:13:02

保持联系,祝,再见

DD: Keep in touch, take care, bye.

我是茶叶... 00:13:33

好,保持联系,再见

HXZ: Alright, keep in touch, bye.

Appendix C

Translations of Jimu Langge 吉木狼格

Selections from the poetry collection

The Silent Revolver 《静悄悄的左轮》

Translations of Jimu Langge

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Preface

In Xichang, besides friends who write poetry, I also have a lot of friends who don't write poetry and I enjoy their company. They don't write poetry nor even read poetry. They say poetry is a good thing, then go on with their lives.

Like many other places in China, people from Xichang are practical. And they're good at expressing themselves, or say they like to express themselves. Fantastic tales pour out of them one after another, and they all tell the stories of local events. Most often, they're not trying to recount something more clearly, but recount it with more imagination. This makes them only one step away from becoming poets. But it's also this one step that makes it so they never become poets.

My uncle lived in a place called Malayida, it's a village next to a small river. Every time New Year came (Yi New Year), we would all go there. When I was young I would always hear the adults say that this backwoods place was very poor, but the impression that Malayida gave me was that every family had meat and wine the plenty. And there was also Malayida's music.

My uncle was a talented moon-guitar player – his name and guitar chords had spread throughout the whole Yi region. His one of a kind style came to be known as Malayida music. When he played, those sitting next to me would whisper, "Listen carefully, there is speech in his strumming." Luckily, I didn't understand; the only things I heard were beautiful melodies.

Later on, my uncle passed away. It was very hard on me. My sadness wasn't just for my uncle, but also for my uncle's music. I thought, since Malayida had lost my uncle would it also lose its music?

In Malayida, from spring to autumn everyone labors away, and in winter they bring in the New Year. I imagined they could give up speaking but couldn't give up making music. My cousin still lives in Malayida. People said that he already played the moon-guitar better than my uncle. Is that possible?

But when I saw my cousin holding the moon-guitar, that harmony framed in him and his instrument seemed to make the whole world, or at the very least Malayida, come alive. In comparison to my uncle, he played even more nimbly, and more purely.

Leaving Malayida, the world is developing; humanity is advancing, including construction and environmental protection, transportation and communication industries. In the quest for fortune, people have increasingly sped forward. Collisions are impossible to avoid, as is competition and rivalry, as also is rashness. Society is like an enticingly made bed. Can one not be anxious?

Yet, I believe that poetry has a kind of force, a force of the people but different from them. It can be infinitely big but also infinitely small. I read a

good poem and it makes me feel happy, moves me. When my spirit and inner-workings are rattled, it gives me solitude and peace.

I drink with my friends who don't write poetry, and a new one among them (I don't know if he writes poetry or not) looking blankly asked me, "What is poetry?" If I had said poetry is just poetry that's bullshit. If I had said poetry is inside a poem that's the alcohol talking. But if I had said that poetry is of the people, or even in the flower of the people, that already doesn't seem like speech; it's already metaphoric, allusive, and symbolic.

While people from Xichang ponder over how to express themselves, Malayida preserves a long held brevity. Only things that follow the natural way Malayida music was inherited will continue down from one generation to the next.

自序

在西昌，除写诗的朋友外，我还有很多不写诗的朋友，我喜欢跟他们在一起。他们不写诗，甚至也不读诗。他们说诗是个好东西，说完就干别的事去了。

和中国的其他地方一样，西昌人务实。另外西昌人善于表达，或者说喜欢表达。精彩的段子层出不穷，讲的都是发生在当地的故事。更多的时候，他们不是想把一件事说清楚，而是想说得更有意思。这使他们只差一步就成为了诗人，而就是这一步，他们一辈子成不了诗人。

我的舅舅住在一个名叫马拉以打的地方，那是靠近小河边上的一个村子。每逢过年（彝历年），我们都要到那里去。小时候常听大人说乡下很穷，然而马拉以打给我的印象却是家家都有肉，家家都有酒。还有马拉以打的音乐。

我的舅舅弹得一手好月琴，他的大名和琴声传遍了整个彝区。对他独一无二的风格，人们称之为来自马拉以打的音乐。舅舅弹琴时，坐在我身边的人小声地说：注意听，他的琴中有话。幸好我听不懂，我听见的只是美妙的旋律。

后来舅舅去世了，我很难过，我的难过不仅为舅舅，也为舅舅的音乐。我在想，马拉以打失去了舅舅，会不会也失去音乐？

在马拉以打，从春到秋天，人们劳作，而冬天过年。我感到他们可以放弃说话，但不能放弃音乐。我的表弟仍然住在马拉以打，有人说，表弟弹月琴已超过了舅舅。这可能吗？

当我看见表弟怀抱月琴时，他和月琴构成的那种和谐仿佛使整个世界，至少使马拉以打生动了起来。与舅舅相比，他弹得更加娴熟，也更加纯粹。

离开马拉以打，世界在发展，人类在进步，其中包括建筑与环境保护、交通与信息产业。为了幸福，人在社会上也加快了步伐，冲撞是难免的，竞争、角逐是难免的，急躁也是难免的。社会像一张铺满诱惑的床，能不急吗？

但我坚信诗有一种力量，这种力量因人而异，它可以大到无限，也可以小到无限。我读到一首好诗，它让我喜悦，让我感动。我的精神和内分泌发生紊乱时，它带给我宁静与祥和。

我和不写诗的朋友一起喝酒，其中一位新朋友（我不知道他写不写诗）瞪着眼问我，什么是诗？如果我说诗就是诗，这是废话。如果我说诗在一首诗里，这是酒话。而如果我说是人间，甚至在人间的一朵花里，这已经不像话，已经是比喻、暗示和象征。

西昌人热衷于怎样表达的时候，马拉以打保持着一贯的少言寡语，只有马拉以打的音乐按照自然的方式，一代一代传延下去。

The Language of Dreams

During the fifties in the last century, Liangshan was in a state of isolation. It was a place able to cut itself off from the world, and precisely what it relied on to do this wasn't the high mountains but the Yi language. This was a world of Yi language. The principles of the daily life that were founded and protected by the Yi language including customs, traditions, and moral standards were completely untarnishable.

It wasn't until the People's Liberation Army entered Liangshan that it finally completely opened itself to the outside world, and then the thing that connected Liangshan and the world was, of course, the Han language. I was born in the Liangshan of the sixties in the last century, which means I lived in a world of two parallel languages.

At school what I studied was the Han language, and with a lot of other same-aged Yi children starting from "Long live Chairman Mao" became familiar with Han words. My parents, to this day, speak Han with a thick Yi accent. When I was at school, home, or anywhere else what I heard if it wasn't Yi was Han, and sometimes the two languages could be separated on the left and the right as it came into my ears. I often heard the question, "What did you say?" raised in the two languages. This phenomenon happened most often while on the street, especially when something was being bought or sold. There are those who know Han and those who know Yi with each speaking their own language and even gesturing differently according to the customs of the languages. At such a time, there only needed to be someone like me there to make a routine translation and the problem was easily solved. However, there was another phenomenon that I found especially interesting —

When I was young, I went with my mother to live at the township government not far from the county seat, which was next to a village that was lived in by both Han and Yi people — split about half and half between them. In the village, from the young to the old, Yi people knew Han language and Han people knew Yi language. When a Han and a Yi (or many Han and many Yi) got together to talk which language was used was determined by the spirit of the moment and the topic under discussion, and sometimes both were used — the first sentence in Han, the second in Yi. I've always looked on Han speaking Yi and Yi speaking Han with keen interest. This is especially interesting because the difference between the two ethnicities is apparent and obvious, such as the external construction of houses and the internal layout, and also in the preparation for the new year festival and the way of receiving friends and family — even all the rites and morals prescribed by each

language..... I am saying that they wear different costumes and use the thought process of their original language, but when opening their mouth what comes out is an entirely different language.

They skillfully handle two languages but for each one is dominant. One language is also dominant for me. I am a Yi but my main language is Han – in my dreams I think in Han. This is because in Liangshan villages Yi language is dominant and in places that are farther away than that, like in the mountains, there is only Yi language. However, in the Liangshan government offices the two languages exist side by side, but Han is dominant – the state's policies are dominant.

For me, Han is dominant but I don't need the customary “translation” and instead directly enter the Yi world. Actually, it seems there is a path that I freely use to come and go. I am in the Han language, yet I have never left Yi.

梦中的语言

上世纪50年代以前，凉山处于封闭状态，这一方土地能够与世隔绝，准确地说，它依靠的不是大山，而是彝语，这是一个彝语的世界。用彝语建立和维护的处世原则，包括风俗、习惯和道德标准，神圣不可侵犯。

直到人民解放军进入凉山，它才向之外的世界彻底打开，而把凉山和外界联系起来的当然是汉语。我出生在上个世纪60年代的凉山，也就是说，我生活在两种语言并存的世界里。

在学校我学的是汉语，与我同龄的很多彝族小孩是从"毛主席万岁"开始接触汉语的。我的父母说汉话至今还带着很浓的彝音，在学校、家里或者其他地方，我听到的不是彝语就是汉语，有时两种语言分别从左边和右边进入我的耳朵。我常常听见两种语言的一个提问：你说什么？这种现象大多出现在街上，尤其是出现在买卖东西的时候。持汉语的人和持彝语的人各说各的，连他们的手势也体现着各自的语言习惯。这时，只要来一个像我这样的人，一经翻译，问题也就随之解决了。还有一种现象让我感到特别的有趣——

小时候我随母亲在离县城不远的乡政府居住，旁边的那个村子住着彝汉两种民族，比例大约各占一半。在村子里，无论小孩还是大人，彝族会说汉话，汉族会说彝话。当一个汉族和一个彝族（或几个汉族和几个彝族）一起交谈时，他们会根据当时的心情和谈话的内容来决定使用哪一种语言，有时两种都用，前一句是汉语，后一句又是彝语。我总是兴趣盎然地看着汉族说彝话、看着彝族说汉话。这太有趣了，因为两个民族之间的区别是显而易见的，比如房屋外面的结构，房屋里面的摆设；比如逢年过节的安排，接待亲友的方式；以及两种语言所规定的礼仪和道德……我是说他们穿着不同的服装，本来是用这种语言思维的，可张嘴吐出的却是另一种语言。

他们熟练地操持着两种语言，尽管各自以一种为主。我也以一种语言为主，我是彝族，为主的却是汉语——在梦中我是用汉语思维的。这是因为，在凉山的乡下，人们以彝语为主，比乡下更远的地方，比如山上就只有彝语。而在凉山的机关，则两种语言并存，以汉语为主，以国家的政策为主。

我以汉语为主，但不需要通常意义的"翻译"便能直接进入彝语世界。的确，就好像有一个通道，可以任意出入。我在汉语里，我又从未离开过彝语。

Yi Festival of Fire¹⁵⁸

Butuo county has become known as the home of the fire festival. In Liangshan prefecture, the yearly fire festival in Butuo is counted among the most lively and special. The first time I went to Butuo to experience the fire festival has already been twenty years ago. The reason I've raised the issue of the passage of time is because the fire festivals of today, increasingly rambunctious with each year's planning and becoming increasingly well-known, are entirely orchestrated by the government. But in that year it was initiated and organized completely by the people themselves, and only this is enough to make one nostalgic.

My classmate Rihe was born and raised in Butuo. Much of what I had heard about Butuo and people's lives there came from him, so twenty years earlier I went with him there. The locality of the Butuo county-seat is also called the Butuo dam; in the tightly packed mountains of Liangshan prefecture this kind of dam is not often seen. On the day of the fire festival, the Yi people from the countryside dressed in all kinds of colorful costumes come from every direction to gather at the county-seat. The atmosphere of the festival is incredibly vibrant; bull fights, sheep fights, horse racing, wrestling, all kinds of arenas — everyone can follow their own interests to see what they like. On the avenues, young women each holding a yellow umbrella, or three for five, or two for three, stroll along the shops making one think of models on the catwalk. The young men are similar, walking and talking not without grace and style. Rihe said, "Don't look at them as if it was just an act, actually they are doing their utmost to attract others attention. Along the road in some hidden corner, there might be a few respected elders that are right now choosing who will be this year's 'Beautiful Maiden' and 'Handsome Man.'"

Running back and forth, I wanted to see everything. Though Butuo is in highlands more than two thousand meters high, the sun's rays in July still made me sweat profusely. Rihe said, "In the evening you won't have such trouble." He told me that the evening's activities were to sit and drink spirits; if I wanted to see the fires I didn't need to run about. "Once it's dark, the entire mountain will have streams of floating fire dragons," he said. In the throng of performances, only one was comparatively quiet: surrounded by people as in the old days, two elders wearing straw hats with red tassels sat across from each other, and before each them was set a bowl of distilled spirits. I realized that the people watching were trying to listen to the elders' speech; as one's words flowed out relentlessly, the other would raise the bowl

¹⁵⁸ This is often rendered as the "Torch Festival".

and take a drink. His manner seemed to be congealing his thoughts into the proper words, yet also seemed to be looking for the cracks in his partners'. Rihe told me this was called "the battle over words of wisdom."

In the afternoon, on the street I saw a peculiar event: there were people lining up bottle after bottle of spirits on the ground in a long row, I think there was about a hundred. I asked Rihe what was the reason for this? His response left me gaping. It really is true that a place's people come from its water and earth, and each place has its own way of life; what one ethnic group sees as something worthy of flaunting and garnering esteem, another somewhere else sees as shameful and immoral behavior. Rihe said, "The festival of fire is also a day for the meeting of lovers. Usually men buy candy and fruit, and women buy a bottle of spirits. You know that the Yi spirits are the best." I still didn't understand what exactly those bottles were doing on the ground so Rihe told me that it was a kind of bravado, each bottle represented one lover and however many bottles there were on the ground testified to the number of lovers he had — as his popularity increased so did the number of lovers. I'm also Yi but my village doesn't have this kind of custom. I asked Rihe, "Are all the people here so unbridled?" He said, "All the young people are up until their marriage." Seeing my surprise, he smiled and asked me, "Would like to hear about all the romantic and marvelous stories that have happened here?" Of course I did. He said, "In the evening, I'll tell the stories as we drink."

Using these kinds of stories to drink spirits how could I not be drunk, so drunk that everything became a blur and I didn't see the fires at the home of the fire festival. But, I don't regret a single drop.

火把节

布拖县被称为火把之乡，在凉山州，一年一度的火把节，数布拖最热闹，也最有特点。我第一次去布拖过火把节，已经是二十年前的事了，我之所以提到时间，是因为如今的火把节越办越热闹，名声远扬，一切都由官方来统筹安排；而当年则完全是由民间自发组织的，仅此一点，就足以令人怀念。

我的同学日合生在布拖、长在布拖，有关布拖和布拖人的生活，我从他那里听到了不少，二十年前，我就是和他一起去的。布拖县城所在的地方，又叫布拖大坝，在一座山接一座山的凉山州，像这样的大坝并不多见。火把节那天，乡下的彝人身着盛装从四面八方云集到县城，节日的气氛非常浓烈，斗牛、斗羊、赛马、摔跤，各有各的场地，人们根据自己的喜好前往观看。而大街上，年青的姑娘一人打一把黄伞，或三五个、或两三个并排着逛街，让人想起舞台上的模特儿；小伙子也一样，行走与谈笑无不风度翩翩。日合说："你别看他们好像若无其事，其实他们正竭力以引起别人的注视，说不定在街边的某个角落，几个有名望的老人正在评选今年的美女和俊男呢。"

我什么都想看，东奔西走的，虽然布拖位于海拔两千多米的高原，可七月的阳光还是让我出了一身汗。日合说："到晚上你就不用这么辛苦了。"他告诉我晚上的活动就是坐下来喝酒，即使要看火把也不用东奔西走。"天一黑，四周的山上到处是一条条流动的火龙。"他说。在众多节目中，只有一处显得比较安静，但依旧围了很多，两个头戴红须草帽的老人相对而坐，他们的跟前都放着一碗白酒。我发现围观的人是在听两个老人说话，当一个口若悬河滔滔不绝的时候，另一个就端起酒碗喝一口酒，他的神态似乎在凝思接下来该说什么，又像在寻找对方的破绽。日合告诉我那叫"克智"。

下午时分，我在街边看见一个奇怪的现象，有人把白酒一瓶一瓶地排在地上，排了好长一串，我估计不下一百瓶。我问日合这是什么意思？他的回答让我感慨不已，真是一方水土养一方人，一方人有一方人的生活方式；这个民族值得炫耀、引以为荣的事，在另一个民族那里也许就是丢脸的、不道德的行为。日合说："火把节也是情人相聚的日子，一般男的买糖果，女的则买一瓶酒，你知道彝族好酒。"我还是不明白那些排在地上的酒到底是怎么回事，日合告诉我那是一种炫耀，一瓶酒代表一个情人，地上排着多少瓶酒，就证明他有多少个情人，而他的名气越大，情人也就越多。我也是彝族，但我的家乡没有这种习惯，我问日合："这儿的人都这么风流吗？"他说："年青人都这样，直到结婚为止。"看我一脸的惊奇，他笑着问我："想不想听发生在这里的一些浪漫而精彩的故事？"我当然想听。他说："晚上一边喝酒一边讲给你听吧。"

用这样的故事下酒，我怎么能不醉，而且醉得一塌糊涂，以至于没有看见火把之乡的火把。可是，我一点都不后悔。

押韵是有瘾的

幸好我只吸烟
不押韵
我决不说
一二三四五
上山打老虎
这一刀切下来的韵太过分了
不论对六还是对七
老虎更惨，与五配对
老虎成了老五
我想让我的语言
像流水一样
而水是不押韵的
只管乱流、乱响
有些伙计
他们在音上加以注意
却忍不住到意上去玩
上句是东
下句必然是西
他们不懂他马的自由
是多么的自由
押韵像他们打着的一把伞
而自由
连天空也不要

Rhyming is an Addiction

Luckily I only smoke,
don't rhyme
I will by no means say
Eeny, meeny, miney, moe
5 Catch a tiger by the toe
The rhyme that this knife cuts is so excessive
No matter if its eeny or miney
The tiger is the most miserable, loosing its toe
it is left with a moe
10 I want to make my language
flow like water
and water doesn't rhyme
it only chaotically flows and gurgles
There are a few lads
15 They focus on sound
but can't stand to play on meaning
The first line is east
The second will of course be west
They don't understand fucking freedom
20 is so free
For them, rhyming is like opening an umbrella
And freedom
doesn't even need the heavens

平原上的朋友

我生于山里
在山里长大

我想环境非常重要
可以支配我的思想
与情感，优点以及缺点
我和平原上的朋友
在一起，却没有发现
和他们有什么不同
这有悖我的观点
鱼就是鱼，鸟就是鸟
只有疯子和一部分诗人
才会把鱼想像成鸟
把鸟想像成鱼

和平原上的朋友
谈天说地，走南闯北
怎么会没有区别呢
高山是那样的高
平原是那样的平
我们使用同一种文化
干同样的勾当
甚至很多感觉
也相似得无法接受
干脆喝酒
希望区别就在酒中
我观察他们的姿势
那种行云流水的喝法
说明他们已经豪放到
不想再豪放了
这使我的情绪此起彼落

当我正要对自己的观点
产生怀疑时
我终于发现了一点
与他们的不同
我拼命寻找区别
而他们大概不会

Friends from the Lowlands

I was born in the mountains,
grew up in the mountains

I think that one's environment is really important
as it guides my thinking
and emotions, virtues and shortcomings
When my lowland friends and I
are together, I don't recognize
how I am different from them
This goes against my point of view that
a fish is a fish, and a bird is a bird
Only crazy people and some poets
can make a fish into a bird
and a bird into a fish

When I'm with my lowland friends
discussing everything and going everywhere
How can there not be a difference?
Mountains high as they are
Lowlands flat as they are
We make use of the same kind of culture,
have the same kind of dealings,
and even so many feelings
similarly can't handle
so go straight to the drink
I hope the difference is in the alcohol
I observe their attitudes
That cyclical way of drinking
shows that they're already uninhibited to the point
of not wanting to be anymore uninhibited
This made me feel at once high then low again

Just as I was beginning to doubt
my own perspective
I finally realized a point
that I was different from them on
I try to dig up differences
and they probably never would

西昌的月亮

如果我说西昌的月亮
像一个荡妇
正人君子会骂我流氓
如果我说西昌的月亮
像一个流氓
5 人民会笑我胡说
皓月当空的时候
我站在（坐着也行）
月光下看一本书
10 连标点符号都清晰可见
西昌的月亮什么也不像
它只是很大

Xichang's Moon

If I say Xichang's moon
is like a harlot
Respectable gentleman will call me a hooligan
If I say Xichang's moon
5 is like a hooligan
People will laugh at my nonsense
When the bright moon fills the sky
I stand under (sitting is ok too)
the glowing moon reading a book
10 Even the punctuation can be clearly seen
Xichang's moon isn't like anything
It's just really big

九十九个球

一个小孩对一个小孩说
我有九十九个球
这是让我坐下来的原因
我感兴趣的不是球
而是九十九
九十九是一种态度
九十九写下这首诗
在我的家乡，它
早已不是一个数

我在九十九中成长
抒情也离不开九十九
一个小孩和一个小孩
他们把九十九变成了九十九
他们还不明白
九十九座山九十九条河
在语言的后面
九十九相当傲慢
继承与发扬，激情和忧郁
一切交给九十九
只有小孩（那两个）
直接到了一百

我推开门看见九十九
睡觉梦见九十九
九十九
说到底就是这个堕性
它消耗着我的勇气
摆脱它使我如临深渊
一个小孩和一个小孩
写完这首诗
我决定跳下来

Ninety-nine Balls

A child said to another child
I have ninety-nine balls
This was the reason I sat down
I wasn't interested in the balls
but ninety-nine
Ninety-nine is an attitude
Ninety-nine wrote this poem
In my native village, it
from long ago wasn't a number anymore

I grew up in ninety-nine
My feelings can't leave ninety-nine
One child and another
They made ninety-nine into ninety-nine
They don't understand
the ninety-nine mountains and rivers
behind the language
Ninety-nine is quite obnoxious
Inheritance and enhancement, enthusiasm and melancholy
everything given to ninety-nine
Only children (those two)
move straight to a hundred

I push open the door and see ninety-nine
Sleep and dream of ninety-nine
Ninety-nine
at the end is just this aborted-ness
It consumes my bravery
breaking away from it brings me to the edge of the abyss
One child and another
finished this poem
I decide to jump

当我在文化的时刻

不在文化的时刻

我在哪里

这一问，竟然无以回答

我在自己里，这算什么

灵魂出窍，是从头顶上升

还是从屁股下降

面对眼前的事物

城市、少女和路

视而不见又算什么

我在最负责和最不负责的时候

都要指责文化

而且心情比较激动

冷静后并不觉得崇高

也不认为低调

与文化对立

我出现在镜子中

砸碎镜子，我跟着成为碎片

是不可能的

决定了指责文化

那么文化像阳光我就指责阳光

阳光照着我

我就指责自己

如果对自己手下留情

对其他也网开一面吧

你看，这世界值得反对的

已经不多

When I'm in Culture

When not in culture,

where am I?

This question actually has no answer

I'm in myself, this amounts to what?

The soul's exit hole is up through the top of the head

or down through the butt

The items before the eyes

city, little girl and road

Seen but not recognized also means what?

When I'm most responsible and irresponsible,

I always want to denounce culture

and my emotions get riled up

After I've calmed I don't think its at all high-and-mighty

nor do I think its low-key

Opposite culture

I appear in the mirror

Smashing the mirror, my following into broken pieces

is impossible

I decide to denounce culture

But if culture is like the sun I am just denouncing the sun

The sun shines on me

I just denounce myself

If I am merciful under my own hand

I must also give others a way out

See, what is worth opposing in this world

is already very little

毕摩来了

感到了不祥
去请毕摩
并把东西准备好
树枝、草
当然还有一头羊

5

毕摩坐在上首
一边照规矩扎草
一边和蔼地闲聊
他的跟前放着一碗白酒

羊被牵羊的人牵着
神色安详而老练
好像彝族喂的羊
生来就有这个义务
其实人和羊不同
人一生要经历很多次
这种场面
而羊只有一次
随之将被宰杀
羊头和皮给毕摩带走
肉由大家分食

10

15

20

傍晚毕摩收起了笑容
开始诵经
节奏分明的经文
类似黑人的说唱
再加上东方的神秘
毕摩数次举起铃铛摇晃
清脆的铃声伴着念词
于深夜传向屋外
也传进人们的心里

25

毕摩来了
妖魔鬼怪将被降服
人畜兴旺家庭和睦

30

有名的毕摩都很忙
在其他村寨
同样的声音

35

The Coming of the Bimo

When feeling jinxed
I go invite the Bimo
and get some things ready
branches, grass
and of course a lamb

The Bimo sits at the head
bundling grass according to custom
and chatting genially
while a bowl of wine is placed before him

The lamb is led by the person leading it
its expression sedate and seasoned
as if it was raised by the Yi
from the time it was born to fulfill this duty
Actually, people and sheep are different
People, in a lifetime, have to experience many times
this spectacle
but sheep only have one chance
after which they will be slaughtered
The lamb head and pelt given to the Bimo
and the meat shared among everyone

At nightfall the Bimo sobers his smiling face
beginning the recitation
Rhythmically clear the scriptures are
akin to black people's singing
with the addition of Eastern mysticism
The Bimo steadily lifts and swings the bells
a crisp ringing accompanying the reading of words
It spreads into the darkness outside the room
and into the hearts of the people

The Bimo has come
Ghosts and goblins will be subdued
Man and beast will live in harmony

The famous Bimos are all very busy
In other villages
the same sound

敲打着宁静的夜晚
哪怕外来文化
像傍晚的牛羊
纷纷进入山寨

resonates with the serenity of the evening
Even if outside cultures
are like the cows and sheep at nightfall
entering the mountain villages in waves

达伙扎里

一九九七年
在通往布拖县的路上
我又一次听到了达伙扎里这首歌
我乘坐的车里
同时在放一首
包装精美的流行歌曲
我把头探出窗外
对面山上走着一位
穿小裤脚的彝族男人
虽然相隔遥远
我仿佛看见他的脸上
挂着一丝挑衅的笑意
他在唱
有时只差一点
又好像在叫
这首著名的彝族歌谣
唱了多少年代
歌声早已比荒漠的高原
更高。《达伙扎里》
没有舞台上的歌曲甜蜜
但每一次听到
都让我心跳加快

一九九七年在布拖
达伙扎里用大山包装
河流伴奏
星星和月亮作为灯光

Dahuozhali

In 1997
On the road to Butuo county
I again heard that song "Dahuozhali"
The car I was riding in
5 had, at the same time, playing
a spectacularly promoted popular song
I stuck my head out the window
On the opposite hill there was walking
a Yi boy wearing traditional tights
10 Though he was far off
I seemed to see that on his face
hung an almost defiant laughter
He was singing
and at times it was almost
15 like he was shouting
this celebrated Yi folksong
Sung for so many eras
From early on its vocals were already higher
than the wild highlands. "Dahuozhali"
20 doesn't have that melodic sweetness of the stage
But every time I hear it
it always makes my heartbeat quicken

In 1997 at Butuo
25 "Dahuozhali" was promoted by the massive mountains
accompanied by the rivers' flow
while the stars and moon were spotlights

岭南的早晨

从梦中出来
空气多么一般
我翻上衣领
告别岭南的早晨
沿途排列着
新鲜的事物

5

Morning in Lingnan

Coming out of a dream
The air so ordinary
I flip up my collar
Saying farewell to Lingnan's morning
Along the way are rows of
Fresh things

甘洛，一条街的小城

离开甘洛后
我去过许多地方
但有机会总要回到甘洛来

一条街从南到北
构成了这座县城

5

十月的早上
我走进一家临街的面馆
街上车辆往来不绝
陌生的面孔匆匆而过
那些掉在地上的树叶
也无片刻安宁
它们被过往车辆的气流
卷起后刚刚落地
又被另一阵气流卷起

10

十年前我吃一碗面
要点很多次头
打很多次招呼
我那时的心情
像静静铺在地上的树叶
面越吃越从容

15

20

十年后
我也成了陌生人中的一员

Ganluo, A One-street Town

After leaving Ganluo
I've gone to many places
But when I get the chance I always go back there

One street from south to north
makes up this county seat

An October morning
I walk into a roadside noodleshop
Cars rush by endlessly on the street
Faces of strangers hurriedly pass
The leaves that have fallen
are also never at rest
Just as they've settled after being rustled into the air
by the wind from the passing cars
another gust carries them up again

Ten years ago when I ate a bowl of noodles
I had to nod many times
and make several greetings
My frame of mind at that time was
like those leaves silently lying on the ground
The more I ate the more settled in I felt

After ten years
I have also become one of the strangers

十月的抒情句子

回到故乡
才看到泥土的颜色
还有每年都要飞来的白鹤
怀着从前的心情眺望
对面山上
房屋和果树
可以看见的道路
山下是小河
它流向远方的县城

5

October's Sentimental Lines

Returning to the native village
Only then seeing the color of earth
And the every-year return of the white cranes
In the mood of reminiscing on the past, I look out
On the opposite mountain
Houses and fruit trees
The road that is possible to see
Below the mountain is the small river
It flows towards the distant county seat

我想起一个错误

从前，提起回老家
就会有一种莫名的兴奋
我的老家在雷波
父亲说：这是你的大伯
那是堂姐
你应该喊他舅舅
除此而外
我对那里是比较陌生的

5

在老家
我认识了一位少女
没有人介绍我们的亲戚关系
我希望她是我的表妹
太阳落山时
她使我又一次肯定
最漂亮的女人是彝族女人
在草垛下，她说
曾经做了一件错误的事
她的脸先一红
接着又有些苍白
也许因为夜晚就要来临
也许我这个假定的表哥
来自远方
那件错误的事
她最终没有说

10

15

20

I think of a Mistake

In the past, when going to the homestead came up
I would feel an indescribable excitement
My family's homestead is in Leipo
My father said: this is your eldest uncle
she's your cousin
You should call him uncle
Other than this
I'm fairly unfamiliar with the place

At the homestead
I got to know a young woman
No one introduced how we were related
I hoped that she was my younger cousin
As the sun went down behind the mountains
She made me again decide that
Yi women are the most beautiful
In the haystack, she said
Once she made a mistake
Her face became red at first
and then became a bit pale
maybe because night was falling
Or maybe because of me, this supposed older cousin
from far away
That mistake
she never did tell

大理有一个阳光酒吧

大理有一条洋人街
被称为东方的瑞士
这条街有二十多家酒吧
其中阳光酒吧闻名中外
它有两样东西
让外国人咂舌
有一样是冰淇淋
听说阳光酒吧的老板
是个女的（好）
而且还是我的同乡（很好）
如果我到大理不到阳光酒吧
我他妈不是人
就像你到成都不到橡皮酒吧
你就是个傻瓜

Dali's Sunny Bar

In Dali there is a street for foreigners
that has been called the Switzerland of the Orient
This street has twenty odd bars
Among them the Sunny Bar is famous both here and abroad
5 It has two things
that make foreigners lick their lips
One is ice-cream
I've heard that Sunny's boss
is a woman (good)
10 and is from my hometown (very good)
If I go to Dali and don't go to the Sunny Bar
I'm fucking not a person
Just like if you went to Chengdu and don't go to the Eraser Bar
You're an idiot

我爱中国

中国的历史
一部战争史
思想史、文学史
中国人没有理由
不会轻易出击 5
人人牢记后发制人
中国有道家理论
桃花源记
佛教到中国就生了根
说明中国人 10
在现实中寻找敌人
但理想是和平
我反对任何大国小国
强迫中国
只有在艺术上 15
我没有国籍
据说越中国
才越他妈世界

I Love China

China's history
a history of war
of ideas, of literature
The Chinese have no causes,
won't rashly make an attack
Everyone holds to the principle of the counter-attack
China has theories of Daoism
Records of the Peach Blossom Garden
Buddhism grew its root once it came to China,
showing that the Chinese people
are looking for the enemy of real life
But the ideal is peace
I am against any large or small country
that infringes upon China
Only in art
do I not have a nationality
That is to say, only after more of China
can there be more of the fucking world

谦虚

在文学界
距今不远的时代
因为缺少东西
（物质的和精神的
虽然我还少
但经历过那个时代）
有一种现象或者说
整整一个时代的风气
就是谦虚
不谦虚绝对行不通
谦虚是一种美德
要有美德才能成为大人物
而不谦虚就是狂妄
狂妄就成不了大人物
成不了大人物
就是小人物
小人物就是
他马的小人物
还有什么写头
你看，一不小心
我又被那个时代影响了
那是一个多么反动的时代啊
因为多么谦虚

我喜欢不谦虚的人
更喜欢狂妄的家伙
他越狂妄我越尊敬他
相反他越谦虚
越使我看不起
哪怕我知道他是在
谦虚

今天
我的儿子说
人应该谦虚
这是老师教他的
我沉默
我想你还小
等你长大后
能够独立思考后
我要你做的第一件事

Humility

Within the literary world
of an era not distance from today
because something was missing
(materially and spiritually
5 though young,
I still experienced that era)
There was a phenomenon, or say
an entire era's style,
of humility
10 If not humble then nothing was possible
Humility was a moral virtue
Only with moral virtue could you become an important person
and not being humble was arrogant
Arrogance would not make an important person
15 Not becoming a big important person
meant you were an unimportant person
A little unimportant person was just
a fucking peon
Nothing else could be written
20 See, one step out of line
and again I'm being influenced by that era
It was such a rebellious era
because it was so humble

I like people who are not humble
25 and like even more arrogant chaps
The more arrogant he is the more I respect him
And vice-versa the more humble he is
the more it makes me look down on him
Even though I know he has
30 humility

Today
my son said
"People should be humble."
This is what his teacher taught him
35 I was silent
I thought, "You're still young,
wait til you get older.
After you can think for yourself,
the first thing I want you to do is

就是不谦虚
不谦虚就要狂妄
狂妄就要不谦虚
当然你不行硬说行
是要吃亏的

但这已经和谦虚无关

- 40 not be humble.”
Not being humble needs arrogance
and arrogance does not need humility
Of course if you say something forced
you will eat your own words
- 45 But this already has nothing to do with humility

旧社会

天是黑沉沉的天
地是黑沉沉的地
中国人民究竟如何
大家都知道

有很多外国人来到中国
他们个子比中国人高
他们权利比中国人大
他们钱也比中国人多
主要是从中国人手里抢的
不过在外国人当中也有好人
比如白求恩

旧社会的夜晚真黑
枪声时常滑过夜空
游击队时常转移
英雄随着音乐
一般死在松树下

革命需要武器
那些军阀为什么没有革命的头脑
我想是由于他们反动
假如军阀也要革命
就不成其为军阀了

段祺瑞啊段祺瑞

旧社会中国人民一直劳动
一直吃不饱
关键是喘不过气来
直到解放的那天
中国人民才喘了一口长长的气

Old Society

The sky is a black sky
The earth is a black earth
Chinese people are thus
Everyone knows

5 Many foreigners come to China
They are taller than the Chinese
They are more powerful than the Chinese
They also have more money than the Chinese
Mainly stolen from the Chinese
10 But there also some good foreigners
like Norman Bethune¹⁵⁹

Old society's night is really dark
Gun shots often flash in the night
Guerillas are often marauding
15 Heroes following the music
usually die under a pine tree

Revolution requires weapons
Why don't the warlords have a mind for revolution
I think its because they rebel
20 If the warlords also wanted revolution
they wouldn't have become warlords

Ah, Duan Qirui, Duan Qirui¹⁶⁰

The Chinese people of the old society labored constantly
and never had enough to eat
25 The point was that they couldn't catch their breath
Not until the day of liberation
did the Chinese people finally take a long soothing breath

¹⁵⁹ Norman Bethune was a Canadian physician who went to China as part of his Marxist convictions. He was a friend of Mao Zedong and highly respected by the Chinese people.

¹⁶⁰ A powerful warlord in northeast China during the Republican period.

中国诗人

他们都是一些聪明的人
他们使中国语言光彩夺目
又使中国诗歌远离人群
我离不开他们
不管喜欢与不喜欢
假如我喜欢的诗人突然消失了
我只好去找不喜欢的诗人
喝他们的酒或者请他们喝酒
这是聪明的办法。因为
写作在家里，交往在酒吧
当年我在一位诗人的书房
亲眼看见了一种
十分坦白的面目
还有他们的谈话
以及诗句过于书房
经不住风吹雨打
诗人说艾青不写诗后
成为了诗人
书房里欢声笑语
那一瞬间的无聊
足以消磨我一生
他们把诗歌谈得太多了
就像把使命谈得太多
那种神情让我想起古代的忠良
他们名垂青史的功绩
终于在皇帝面前光荣地
跪了下来
我感到，当时
在远离诗歌的丛林发生了爱情
年轻的男女抛开其他目的
他们只想彼此靠近
不要把爱情搞复杂了
尤其在书房里
我不喜欢热烈的话题
但我喜欢才华
它真是妙不可言，就这样
你的诗句跃然纸上
同意自己去找不喜欢的诗人
喝他们的酒或者请他们喝酒
这是聪明的办法

Chinese Poets

They are a bunch of smart people
They make the Chinese language shine
and also make Chinese poetry distant from the masses
I can't leave them
5 No matter I like it or not
If the poets that I like suddenly disappeared
I'll have to go find poets that I don't like
Drink with them or take them out for drinks
This is the smart thing to do, because
10 writing is done at home, while exchange is done in the bar
This year I was in a poet's study
I saw with my own eyes a
very frank face
And their conversation
15 as well as lines of poetry exceeded the study
continuing through gales and downpours
Poets say that after Ai Qing¹⁶¹ stopped writing poetry
he became a poet
In the study there were cheers and laughter
20 That instant of boredom
was enough to waste away my whole life
They talk about poetry too much
Just like talking about one's vision too much
This expressiveness made me think of the loyal of antiquity,
25 their merits written down in the annals of history
And in the end in front of the emperor honorably
kneeling down
I feel that, at that time
in a forest far from poetry, love emerged
30 Young women and men threw away other motivations
save wanting to be close to one another
Don't make love so complicated
especially in the study
I don't like hot topics
35 but I like artistic talent
Its wonder exceeds words, thus
your lines of poetry just leap onto the page
I approve of me going out to find poets I don't like
drinking with them or taking them for drinks
40 This is the smart thing to do

¹⁶¹ A poet of the early Republican period in China.

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